

Perspective

TUSCOLA REVIEW EDITORIAL BOARD:

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A final Review

Around 1959, the Review was located downtown, on the south side of West Sale Street, where, I believe, the accounting firm of LWH is now located. The walls were covered in greatly enlarged press photos. And also in years of grime, dust and cigarette smoke residue, back when people smoked in offices.

One of my first odd jobs as a young teen that year was cleaning the walls of the Tuscola Review of that gunk. The Assistant Editor, Bob Hastings, landed me the gig of cleaning the walls, which I did by rubbing them with a fist full of clay, kneading it every few wipes.

The editor/owner at the time was Bert Quackenbush. Helen, his wife, taught fifth grade at the old South Ward school. She was very nice and so was Bert. Bert soon sold his interest in the paper to Bob.

From there I developed a close relationship with Bob, primarily in baseball where I played for him in American Legion and El league ball. Later, Bob was instrumental in getting me elected Douglas County State's Attorney in 1976.

When Bob became ill around 1990, and could no longer write weekly editorials, I wrote in his absence. I wrote over 200 editorials for his paper, before his sons (first Randy, then Craig) assumed that role.

It was a privilege to write for Bob and for Tuscola. I had been bitten by

the writing bug in the 80s, inspired by Phil Deaver who had by then acquired national literary acclaim. Phil also got his writing start with Bob's Tuscola Review during summer breaks from college. Besides some basic reporting, Bob let Phil write the "Society" column.

Phil confided to me that he sometimes just made stuff up, stuff like "Boyd and Bernice Kerouac welcomed their son, Jack, home. He'd been "on the road," all over America, traveling with his friends."

He did it to see if anyone was reading this section. He said no one ever said a thing, although I know people in town loved to read about what everyone else was doing. When I relayed this story to Bob many years later, I thought he'd have a heart attack.

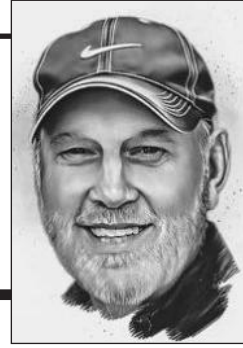
The paper was wonderful, a local treasure that people used to line up early, on the night it came out, in the stores where it was sold, to snag a hot-off-the-press copy. They didn't want to wait for it in the mail.

After Bob died, his wife Bev and his family kept The Review going. Until, eventually, Bev sold her interest to the News-Gazette. The News-Gazette was buying up all the small town weeklies, which were only too willing to sell given the deteriorating business model of small town newspapers. Advertising—the life blood of a newspaper—was drying up as retail business had

I'm just sayin'

By Mike Carroll

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moved to the cities and advertising had moved to the internet. Bev knew it was time.

But the News-Gazette did not follow in the Hastings' tradition of a friendly local paper that celebrated the town and its citizens, especially its children. The News-Gazette wanted big-city hard-hitting dirt. Plus they purged staff and salaries. The quality dropped.

Bev, being Bev, had seen enough and moved into action. She reopened a competing newspaper under the masthead of "The Tuscola Journal," another century-long weekly that had folded up a few years earlier.

The News-Gazette privately mocked her newspaper and proclaimed that Bev could not possibly out-duel the massive News-Gazette conglomerate. They didn't know Bev and they didn't understand Tuscola loyalty and the amount of goodwill for the Hastings family. The News-Gazette soon closed up shop.

A few years ago, the Journal sold again. But the old name "The Tuscola Review" was not being used. Enter Dave Porter, who had earlier worked as a re-

porter for Bob on the Review back in the 80s. He wanted to start another Tuscola weekly, just like the good old days when we always had two weeklies. The Hastings gave him their blessing to use the Review masthead.

Dave called me for my advice which I gave along with my promise to do whatever I could to help him out.

I made that promise to Dave for many reasons. First, he was a died-in-the-wool Tuscolian, graduated TCHS class of '83, with deep family roots and more local relatives than he can possibly remember. I knew his heart would be in the right place.

Secondly, David was born to write, to be a reporter, and to manage a newspaper. When you cut him, printer's ink flows from his veins. (Or is that cigar smoke?) His print pedigree involved serving as an important executive with the Illinois Press Association, owning two other papers, as well as giving lectures and drafting "how-to" manuals concerning the news industry.

And we'd worked together before, with Bob. And I knew he'd carry forth the Hastings tradi-

tion. Which he has.

The Tuscola Review is gone, once again, probably for good. There's still the Journal and other area papers for which Dave has committed to work for a while, and I wish him the best.

Soon, retirement, or a new adventure—who knows? Dave says—awaits David and Jennie—who has loyally supported him in every way throughout this newspaper "labor of love." I say "labor or love," because there certainly wasn't any profit in the venture.

The business model for newspapers in general is abysmal. Even large daily papers have either closed or downsized. Look at the News-Gazette that sold its printing machines, left their shiny big building downtown and moved into much smaller digs.

CBS's "Sixty Minutes" program ran a special a few weeks ago about the death of newspapers across the national landscape. Especially troublesome is the elimination of trained, qualified investigative journalists who used to be paid to do "deep" research and help us uncover—just for one famous example—the Watergate scandal that led to the resignation of President Nixon.

Our nation's founders, by Constitutional design, guaranteed freedom of the press, knowing that only a free and flourishing press—the "Fourth Estate"—could keep the citi-

zens adequately informed and make public corruption and skullduggery harder to engage in.

As the Fourth Estate morphs from print to the less impressive (to me) digital world, I fear a void in the performance of protecting and informing the public. I certainly don't think our elected leaders can be trusted to serve that critical function. Clearly, our government officials don't want anyone aware of their goofs. They probably welcome the end of deep prying eyes.

To me, the death of any small town weekly is a town tragedy. As a chronicler of the best of small town life, a celebration of births and deaths and lives well lived, as a body of rich and evolving history, as a tradition that binds us culturally, and so much more, small town weeklies like the Review are precious communal assets. Perhaps, but too late, people will realize what has been lost in our culture with the demise of print newspapers with their local and accountable reporters.

I will not write for any of the other papers Dave will be involved with since they are not owned by Dave. I feel I've fulfilled my promise to him.

Thank you David for letting me write for your paper. It was fun. Sorry that, once again, this piece is too long.

Best of luck to you and Jennie. Now get some sleep. You deserve it.

mike carroll

Meet Becca and Joe

After receiving several tons of political propaganda in the mail from both parties over the last few weeks, I was pleased to come into contact with some regular, down-to-earth folks. Let me tell you about two such people:

Recently, Cathy and I spent some time in Bay City, Michigan... and no, I did not see the Scottish rock band, the Bay City Rollers. Bay City is a small city located at the mouth of the Saginaw River and Lake Huron. Cathy and I had stopped our walk while in downtown Bay City and we were standing across the street from a store called "Soul Sister," a business that sells hand-crafted pottery. We were staring at Cathy's phone as she scrolled through the internet searching for a good place to grab a bite to eat. After discussing the possibilities for about 10 minutes, we still had not reached a decision and continued to talk while Cathy read out loud the names of the restaurants and the reviews from customers.

Suddenly, a woman of about 50 years old with dishwater blond hair exits Soul Sister while wearing an apron smeared with bits of dried

brown pottery. She walks toward us and as she gets closer I notice she is massaging a ball of dark brown clay. As she approaches us, she introduces herself as Becca, the owner and head pottery-maker at Soul Sister. Becca explained that she had observed us through the front window of her shop and, since she knows almost everyone in Bay City, she correctly surmised that we were from out-of-town and may be lost or looking for something.

After telling Becca our story, she gave us detailed reviews on several restaurants and offered us her own recommendation. We thanked her profusely and mentioned to Becca that it was awfully kind of her to notice two strangers needing assistance and interrupting her work to walk across the street (while still manipulating a soon-to-be pottery piece) and provide help.

Becca thought nothing of it and we learned from Becca that she and her husband have lived in Bay City three different times and they keep coming back because of the quality of the people... and she added that it is also nice that the cost

of living in Bay City is relatively inexpensive and the many lakes in the area are an additional benefit.

Becca told us of how downtown Bay City is becoming revitalized with several shops that cater to artists and retail businesses, as well as restaurants. She told us about her family, two grown children who live nearby and a husband that tolerates her late-career decision to open a pottery store. Becca told us that her store sells pottery but also offers classes on pottery-making and encourages groups of friends to come in for an evening adventure to learn the craft of potter-making.

Becca was the type of person who seems genuinely interested in others and she quizzed Cathy and me on our own personal history. After sharing tidbits from each other's lives for 15 minutes or so, Becca gave us her phone number and went back into Soul Sister, but not before telling us to call her if we needed anything during our stay in Bay City.

The second example of a helpful person is named Joe. Joe is a master automotive

So there I was

By Pete Buckley

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technician at Ford. I had heard some strange noises coming from my car and had tried (quite humorously) to duplicate these noises by making weird sounds with my lips as I tried to explain to Joe how these noises sounded. Joe wisely decided he would rather ride with me and listen to the noises himself. As we were driving, Joe quickly identified what he thought was the problem, and after putting the car on the lift and conducting further examination, he diagnosed my issues as something to do with ball bearings and the transmission.

When I told him how impressed I was that he was able to figure out my car's issues so quickly, he explained that he

was a master technician and had completed 550 hours of automotive repair schooling and was required to pass multiple certification exams in order to become a master technician. Joe was justifiably proud of this accomplishment and he asked me if I would like to see the plaques that he had earned by becoming a master technician. Of course, I said "Yes," and Joe took me into the inner sanctum of his workshop where he had an assortment of tools and a work desk, a place where customers are not usually allowed.

Joe opened up a desk drawer and gingerly pulled out a variety of plaques bearing his name. These plaques were gorgeous, and were made of pol-

ished wood affixed to a metal statute of an automotive technician with inscriptions etched in bronze, highlighting the fact that Joe had successfully completed copious hours of training to be awarded the title of master technician. It made me smile to see the look on Joe's face while he showed me his plaques. I had no doubt that Joe was qualified to examine my car and make the correct diagnoses.

When looking back at my interaction with Becca and Joe, I realized that not once did we talk politics or whether or not we were Democrats or Republicans. Rather, these encounters were just decent human-beings... one shop owner who observed two people in apparent trouble and offered to help. The other was a guy who wanted to assure a cynical customer that he really was qualified to help diagnose a problem with a car.

I'll admit that I am a skeptical person and too often think that people are only looking out for themselves. It's nice to know that I am usually wrong and that most people are like Becca and Joe.