



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2019 Entry Form

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What is the subject/title of the entry?

The Community Importance of a Local Newspaper

Date(s) of publication?

Grieving for Maryland newspaper

Thursday, July 5, 2018

Newspaper seeks reader input on new draft policy

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

Softening online scourge of long-past indiscretions

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

Southeast Missourian joins Google in test to elevate civility

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

Life in Cape and Jackson: Some of the top stories in 2018

Wednesday, December 26, 2018

Google, FTI, LMA select SE Missourian as 1 of 10 in North America; Missourian seeks

reporter

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation?

Under 50,000

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

Too often the public takes the local newspaper – and local, responsible journalism – for granted. Regularly in his weekly columns, Southeast Missourian publisher Jon Rust seeks to engage readers in thinking about newspaper issues. He does this in part by inviting readers to participate in deliberations around new policy, and transparency is a big part of his philosophy. As a result, his columns are among the most commented online. And, we believe, his messages create a trust and credibility in the community that is difficult to measure, but which shows up in powerful ways, including when the newspaper digs aggressively into community ills. His columns on newspapers, in subtle style, seek to build a relationship that ensures the future for one of the community's most important institutions: the newspaper itself.

OPINION

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we lift up hands of praise to you, our King of kings. Amen.

OUR OPINION

Grieving for Maryland newspaper



JON K. RUST

It's easy to pick on the media. I receive phone calls weekly complaining about one thing or the other. Regularly, there are threats. Advertisers have said they would pull all their ads if the newspaper didn't do something they wanted; we didn't. They did. There have also been bomb threats, though none recently, and tire slashings. And, I'll never forget during an earlier part of my career when I wrote columns more regularly, receiving several anonymous letters over a period of time with stories about murders, including sniper killings, clipped from publications (usually USA Today) with the words scrawled, "You're next."

I informed the police. In that case, it turned out to be a warped individual, a self-described "activist" who wanted attention. When he left town, I was relieved. But the threats had no influence on the newspaper's judgment about what was right to do.

The most impact a threat had was when I instructed an article to be removed from one of our newspaper websites temporarily as we contacted various law enforcement agencies, who helped track down the detailed threat to a formerly local individual then living in California. As soon as we understood the threat was (at least an immediate) bluff, the local publisher put the story back up. What was it about: The man's involvement with a bomb and a stalking on a local college campus a few years prior. Apparently, the article was harming his dating prospects. He had also gotten into trouble in California, we learned, and was restricted from leaving the state.

Threats and risk have always been part of the media business. Southeast Missourian lore includes tales of newspaper founder George Naeter keeping a pistol in his desk. When known belligerents came in to complain, and if that person's emotion turned high, Naeter would calmly open his drawer and pull out the gun, not holding it, but placing it on the desk in full sight. The action apparently sobered the complainer, who toned it down, or so it was told.

Would that work today? I don't know. Seems stupid and dangerous to me, possibly illegal, to display a gun as intimidation, especially against an overheated complainer. A firearm should only be shown if your life or the life of someone else is in grave and immediate danger.

Last week's shooting in Maryland at the Capital Gazette newspaper was the worst kind of nightmare: tragic, heartbreaking and maddening, like all of today's shootings. Looking at the faces, reading the biographies of those killed, I knew those people. Not personally, but in their commitment, their love of what they did, the attraction of working on a talented team, among "family," seeking to impact their community for good.

When asked only hours after the shooting if they were going to put out a newspaper the next day, reporter E. B. Furgurson III, told the New York Times, "Hell, yes."

His colleague, Joshua McKerrow, said, "'It's a real newspaper and like every newspaper, it is a family.' He began to cry. Then he added: 'We will be here tomorrow. We are not going anywhere.'"

It takes a special breed to work in local newspapers, especially in today's world. It is not a place one works to maximize income; it's a place one goes to be thrilled by camaraderie and collaboration and excellence, and to be involved in a larger purpose: seeking truth, celebrating local accomplishments, connecting communities.

I grieve for those in Maryland. My heart weeps for their families, their children, their colleagues, their community. And I am inspired by them, too. We should all be inspired by them.

Jon K. Rust is publisher of the Southeast Missourian.

POLL QUESTIONS

Have you or will you purchase fireworks for the Fourth of July?

Do you agree with the decision of some cities, including St. Louis, to no longer pursue charges for most low-level marijuana offenses and instead redirect resources toward more serious crimes?

See results on the Perspective page Sunday.

SPEAK OUT

Lights on Broadway

Cape is already a brighter place to live. Drive down Broadway. No longer the most boring town. Thanks, Mayor Fox.

Jackson council

The Jackson City Council agenda can be summed up as follows: Go through the motions. Ignore citizen comments and input. Then vote to waste money, place

the interests of businesses over individuals and hurry home to Facebook.

Bad decisions

The City of Cape thinks they can solve South Cape's problems by closing one liquor store and the City of Jackson thinks they can promote tourism by building a \$300,000 park bathroom. Both are wrong and both are ridiculous.

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- **Online:** semissourian.com/opinion



Lost in the noise



MIKE JENSEN

History will not likely portray this time in our nation as our finest hour.

We are indeed in the midst of an ideological civil war that threatens to undermine confidence in our federal government.

Having spent the last half of the 1960s on a college campus, I am familiar with protests. Changing attitudes and policies on civil rights and the strong and growing opposition to the war in Vietnam combined to incite countless protests across this country from coast to coast.

But these protests were organic in nature.

Today's protest — pick your topic — are highly-organized and well-financed by progressive groups hell-bent on upending the foundational beliefs and policies of our nation.

Truth is, it's difficult to define the point of the protests because they

range the gamut of left wing causes. At some point, their message — whatever that may be — gets lost in the noise.

If Maxine Waters and Nancy Pelosi are indeed the faces of the new Democratic party, their days are numbered.

One talking head described our time as the summer of rage. And given the political stakes that are in play, I suspect that description is accurate.

But as they say on the playground, it's all fun and games until someone gets hurt.

One highly respected pundit on the right said the issue that will define the outcome of the November elections has yet to come.

If that's the case, then I suspect one of two events will shape that important election outcome.

Either the division over the Supreme Court appointment will erupt into political chaos or the long-awaited Mueller report will somehow implicate the President in some

concocted scheme.

Either event — and both are somewhat likely — will shape the future of our country for years to come.

The left is willing to unravel the very fabric of this nation, to alter the culture, to bring financial ruin all in the name of power.

Open-border advocates are insane. They are not compassionate and caring. They are simply insane.

Today's obsession with immigration is just the latest in a long line of upheaval promoted by those who seek to undermine the will of the people and unseat a duly-elected President.

What is sorely missing from our current national dialogue are moderate voices from the Democratic party. Surely not every elected Democrat buys into this leftist movement to undo the progress gained.

Surely?

Michael Jensen is the publisher of the Standard Democrat in Sikeston, Missouri.

The IRS can save American health care

Editor's note: The following column was published July 1 by The Wall Street Journal.

By REGINA HERZLINGER AND JOEL KLEIN

Health care is fast becoming an unsustainable expense for American families. This year the total cost of insurance for the typical family of four eclipsed \$28,000, according to the Milliman Medical Index. Rising insurance premiums are also eroding worker compensation, as companies shift increased costs to employees.

Health care in the U.S. suffers symptoms of what Justice Louis Brandeis once termed the problem of "Other People's Money." Often a patient ordering and receiving medical care mistakenly believes he is not the one paying for it. This misconception is due in large part to the employer tax exemption for health insurance, which conceals the true cost of coverage from most workers.

Companies that buy health insurance on behalf of workers are, in effect, giving them some of their compensation in the form of benefits. But employers get to use pretax dollars when they purchase this insurance. If workers try to buy their own policies, most don't get the same tax break. This inequity has cemented the dominance of employer-sponsored insurance in the U.S.

It might seem like a small question, but who is buying makes all the difference. Employer-based coverage subtly drives up health-care costs by enhancing the bargaining power of medical providers. A large company must include nearly all local doctors and hospitals in its health plan's network, since different workers will need different services. Only 8 percent of employers even offer a choice of a tighter network, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported last year. This gives major hospital chains that dominate local markets carte blanche to charge high prices.

The solution is simple: The Internal Revenue Service should give all workers the chance to purchase health insurance with pretax dollars — just as employers do — using Health Reimbursement Arrangements. Companies would give employees a fixed amount of money in these HRAs to go out and buy the best plans for their families on the ObamaCare exchanges. The plans there would be

subject to the Affordable Care Act's requirements on essential health benefits and cost-sharing limits. Employees could use this tax-free money only for the purchase of health insurance, but would pocket any leftover savings as taxable income.

We have run separate simulations, at Harvard Business School and Oscar Health, to project the implications of this policy, and the conclusions are similar. Giving employees the tax break would result in their buying cheaper, more-tailored policies compared with the employer plans in which they are currently enrolled. After doing so, workers would take home the extra income: \$129 billion, after tax, in Oscar Health's study and \$160 billion in the Harvard Business School's. The federal government, now taxing that additional income, would receive between \$46 billion and \$65 billion in new tax revenue.

The benefits would be significant. Increased competition from the influx of new consumers in the individual market would drive down premiums. Workers would have more policy options (today 81 percent of employers offer a "choice" of only one type of plan, Kaiser reports). Employers would be freed from the hassle of administering health benefits, a fast-growing line item, allowing them to focus on their core businesses.

If these results sound too good to be true, it's only because the depth of inefficiency in American health care is worse than you imagine. This proposal would create a more efficient health-care system in three principal ways.

First, when employees are free to keep the savings after choosing a policy that works for them, most will pick a more-tailored group of providers than is currently on offer. They won't aim to have every doctor and hospital in their policy's network, only the ones they need. The insurer then would be empowered to negotiate lower prices with hospitals, which know that exclusive networks can make or break patient volume. On the ObamaCare exchanges, policies with tighter provider networks are at least 18 percent cheaper without sacrificing hospital quality, according to a McKinsey analysis last year. In its own markets, Oscar Health has observed cost differences of up to 25 percent.

Second, this proposal would alter

the consumer mindset in health care. Today, when care becomes more efficient, the principal beneficiaries are employers. Thus employees lack a strong financial incentive to seek out cheaper options, such as using a telemedicine service to diagnose pinkeye or having a hip replaced at an ambulatory surgery center instead of a hospital. But if patients start getting to keep the money they save, more will act as dogged consumers. Outpatient care constitutes nearly 60 percent of all health expenditures for adults with commercial insurance. Since there are many alternative options, giving people an incentive to shop around can bring down costs.

Third, competition means health-care companies would have to improve to survive. In a Gallup poll last year, only 38 percent of Americans had a positive view of the health-care industry, which beat only the pharmaceutical industry and the federal government. But if insurers were forced to compete, they would embrace innovations that seem foreign today: free telemedicine, cost transparency, instant appointment scheduling, smartphone health records, and the like. In turn, insurers would demand a better consumer focus from the doctors and hospital chains they work with.

Gridlock in Washington often relegates proposals like this to the political dustbin. But Congress need not act here, as Duke Law School's Barak Richman has pointed out. Under current law, the IRS can simply adjust its technical definition of Health Reimbursement Arrangements so that they can be used to pay insurance premiums and to satisfy the ObamaCare employer mandate. Once that is done, the Department of Health and Human Services, along with the Treasury, could work with enterprising governors and employers to offer these HRAs to workers.

This is a straightforward proposal, but a powerful one. It would finally begin to address the rising cost of health care, and it isn't subject to a Senate filibuster. For the sake of millions of American families, the IRS should act — and soon.

Regina Herzlinger is a professor at Harvard Business School. Joel Klein is chief policy and strategy officer at Oscar Health, as well as a member of the News Corp board of directors.

OPINION

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord Jesus, may we guard our words and honor you in what we say. Amen.

BOARD COLUMN

Newspaper seeks reader input on new draft policy



JON K. RUST

Today the Southeast Missourian announces a DRAFT of a new policy regarding misdemeanor crimes reported in the newspaper. For the next two weeks (until August 8) we will take comments on the changes. News management, publisher and assistant publisher will review the comments before finalizing policy.

The new policy seeks to strike a balance between the Southeast Missourian keeping the public informed and recognizing, sympathetically, that in today's world of instant digital search, long-past minor indiscretions can play a disproportionate role in a person's online identity.

To understand the draft, it is important to understand the concept of "delisting" stories. Delisting will not remove a story from the Southeast Missourian archives — in print, microfilm or digital. The story will still be searchable through these channels. However, the story would be "delisted" from access to Google, Bing, Yahoo and other search engines so these search engines will no longer serve the story when queried.

For example: A person is arrested on a misdemeanor, which is reported in the local crime report. Later, a search of the person's name in Google results in the search engine serving the Southeast Missourian story about the person being arrested. Over the years, if the person does not do much creating more online activity — or if the misdemeanor information is the most "popular" of the search results as deemed by search engine algorithms — the crime story may remain at the top of search results regarding that person for a long time, maybe "permanently." Under the new policy, after six years search engines would no longer have access to the crime report in the Southeast Missourian. Thus, a search for that person in Google would not surface the original story.

Here are a few reasons why we are looking at the new policy.

One aspect of the policy governs the daily crime report. Included in these reports are arrests that may never lead to convictions. We believe that the public has a right to understand police activity, community complaints and arrests, but it is not fair to keep these listed indefinitely for online search, particularly because some or all of the charges may be dropped. In the new policy, after six years, crime reports would be delisted.

In contrast to the automatic delisting of crime reports, which are exclusively generated by law enforcement, stories written by our reporters about cases that result in misdemeanor convictions would only be delisted after six years following a specific request as outlined in the policy. No stories concerning felony convictions would be delisted. However, cases that started with felony charges but ended in misdemeanors or not-guilty judgments could be.

We believe it is important the public understands who their neighbors are — and what is taking place in their community. At the same time, in the same way that we believe bankruptcy laws are important in America because they give individuals an opportunity for a second chance after personal financial failure, we believe that it may not be healthy for everything in a person's past to be so easily and immediately findable, universally, through an online search.

To be clear, this new policy would not remove the newspaper's record of previous infractions. As already stated, these stories and crime reports would be available through print archives; microfilm at the newspaper and various libraries; and on semissourian.com. But each of these channels is much less universal — and regarding print, less searchable — than the major search engines. This maintains the newspaper as "the first draft of local history" while balancing an individual's opportunity to move on with their life.

Informing our perspective on these issues are laws in Europe regarding "the right to be forgotten." I won't delve into this matter here. But I encourage you to search this term and read on your own about its philosophical and legal complexity. Such a "right" does not align with the U.S. Constitution and the American legal framework, and we would argue against it as fiat from government (in our view, unconstitutional). But we think that media can and should establish their own rules to address some of the modern challenges that have come to life through technology. With this new policy, we are attempting to do that. Your comments and perspectives are welcomed.

The draft policy is printed nearby. Mail your comments to Southeast Missourian, c/o Draft Policy, P.O. Box 699, Cape Girardeau, MO 63702 or email: policy@semissourian.com. Or, if online, make your comments directly under this column or under the draft policy itself. We will review all. Thank you.

Jon K. Rust is publisher of the Southeast Missourian.

SPEAK OUT

Simmons, Cardinals

With all the changes taking place on the St. Louis Cardinals, now is the time for the Redbirds to sign Cape Girardeau native and current free agent Shae Simmons. Simmons is a talented pitcher who could help the new-look Cardinals reach the playoffs this year and beyond.

Vote record

I have been interested in politics for a long time. I have voted in virtually every election at the local, state and national level. When it comes to voting for a president, I am now

almost certain I will go to my grave having been most proud of the fact that I did not vote the current one.

Strzok damage

FBI Agent Peter Strzok might be the worst thing to happen to the Democratic Party since Hillary Clinton ran for President.

FBI agent

After watching CSPAN and seeing the disgraced FBI agent being grilled by the House overnight Committee, I now understand why Hillary Clinton lost the election.

Ryan Lochte suspended after posting picture of himself on banned IV drip...



POLL QUESTIONS

Will you or did you attend the Jackson Homecomers celebration this year?

Do you agree with a new Missouri law that raises the marriage age from 15 to 16, requires 16- and 17-year-olds to have parental permission, and prevents individuals 21 or older from marrying someone 17 years of age or younger?

See results on the Perspective page Sunday.

A party in search of 'opportunity'?



MIKE JENSEN

With an incendiary president capable of mass alienation and mid-term election history on their side, the Democrats should be poised for the upcoming November election showdown.

Instead, the Democrats find themselves in search of a message.

Still stinging from their massive defeat in 2016, a vocal and energized wing of the Democratic party believes the road to success lies in socialism.

Their platform includes a guaranteed universal income for all, free college education for all, universal healthcare and the abolishment of ICE.

But within the Democratic party are a strong majority of moderates who feel rightfully that this hard-left approach is a losing combination come November.

Many of those moderates gathered in Ohio this weekend to plot a path forward.

They have rebranded themselves no

longer moderates but rather "opportunity" Democrats.

These Democrats acknowledge that the energy lies currently with the socialist wing of their party and they risk being "drowned out" if they remain silent.

In a message I find unbelievable, the "opportunity" Democrats confirmed they favor capitalism, as if that confirmation is somehow remarkable.

One moderate Iowa Democratic congressman summed up the dilemma of his party when he said, "A small but vocal subgroup that is unhinged from evidence will be wrong in the long run, regardless of how loud they are."

"Unhinged from evidence ..." — what a perfect term to define these socialists.

The party's swing to the left puts moderate Democrats like Claire McCaskill in a tough position to say the least.

Democratic voters in Missouri may indeed abhor President Trump but they will fall far short of adopting the stances adopted by the radical wing of their party.

McCaskill will have to walk a fine line to position herself against the

momentum that is moving her party toward socialism.

My Democratic friends are fiercely loyal to their party and will march in lockstep to support virtually any and all candidates who wear the party label.

But I can't help but believe they will stop short of supporting those who advocate the unraveling of capitalism in favor of income equality.

Truthfully, I believe but a very small vocal fringe of the Democratic party honestly supports this socialist agenda.

But our friends in the liberal media have fully embraced this fringe element and they have joined in full force to promote their growing left agenda.

In an irony for the ages, the left-leaning media may well be driving the Democratic party straight off the cliff.

By pretending that a majority of Democrats embrace this growing socialism, the media has become the best friend the Republicans could imagine.

Michael Jensen is the publisher of the Standard Democrat in Stikoston, Missouri.

Draft policy for delisting reports

The Southeast Missourian newspaper is considering changing its policy regarding online retention for public search. The draft policy is as follows:

The daily crime report will be "delisted" from search engine accessibility after six years of being online. The report will remain online and searchable on semissourian.com, but, subject to search engine practices, it will not be readily available for easy public consumption through search engines (like Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.).

Similarly, the Southeast Missouriian will generally remove staff-written crime stories about misdemeanors from search engine accessibility after six years under the following conditions if a formal request is received:

■ The requestor must provide URL links to the story or stories in which he or she is named that requestor seeks "delisting." The newspaper will not review stories for delisting outside of what requestor identifies. The

Southeast Missourian may remove stories where felony charges were filed, if the charges were eventually lowered to misdemeanors at the time of sentencing.

■ If the status of the misdemeanor is not mentioned in the story that the requestor wants delisted, the requestor must provide evidence that the crime or crimes was/were a misdemeanor at the time of sentencing. In a case where multiple crimes were accused or committed, all crimes must have been reduced to misdemeanors for the story to be delisted.

■ The Southeast Missourian will not delist a story where felonies were not reduced to misdemeanors. In such a case where the requestor's sentencing was reduced to a misdemeanor but other suspects or crimes in the story were not, the requestor may ask for an editor's note at the top of the story that his or her crime was reduced to a misdemeanor. The requestor must provide the evidence of the charge reduction.

■ The requestor must provide a

driver's license identification (or other acceptable form of ID) that he or she is the person mentioned in the story.

The newspaper retains editorial control to make exceptions to this policy regarding whether to delist a misdemeanor crime. In some cases, because of other factors, delisting may not be approved. Newspaper policy is to never delist stories regarding felony convictions.

To summarize: the story will remain on semissourian.com, but the website will turn off access to these stories via search engines. It may take a bit of time for the search engines to execute the switch, maybe even months. But eventually they will discontinue searching the link after the website makes the change.

The newspaper will not discontinue archiving articles and police reports, and they will still be retained in other ways. People may still use newspaper archives to do background checks by contacting the newspaper for research.

TO THE EDITOR

Voting no on Prop A

On Tuesday, Aug. 7, Missouri voters will render a decision on what is labeled a Right to Work law. It would eliminate union shops in favor of open shops or non-union work places.

A union shop is a workplace where all bargaining unit employees are members of the labor union representing them.

An open shop is a workplace where employees are not required to join a union even though they receive the same benefits provided by the local union and paid for by the dues of the union members. This means the workers who do not join the union have more money in their pay checks because dues are not withheld from their paychecks. In other words, they get to free-load.

I am 71 years old and retired. I have been employed in

places that had union shops, open shops, or no union at all. From personal experience I know that in terms of pay, benefits, and safety, the union shops are superior and worth the added money paid in dues.

Consider this: In 2011 Wisconsin became a Right to Work state for public employees. Membership in unions dropped by 36 percent. Then the average value of benefits, in the form of health care and pensions, declined by 21.1 percent from \$27,811 to \$21,971. Additionally, for a full-time worker annual wages are 3.1 percent or \$1,558 lower in Right to Work states.

To help insure economic justice, I encourage everyone to vote no on the Right to Work law.

JOHN R. PIEPHO, Cape Girardeau

OPINION

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father God, thank you that we have victory through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

BOARD COLUMN

Softening online scourge of long-past indiscretions



JON K. RUST

Last week the Southeast Missourian implemented a new policy to govern how crime reports are made available to search engines. As I wrote when announcing a draft of the change, “The new policy seeks to strike a balance between the Southeast Missourian keeping the public informed and recognizing, sympathetically, that in today’s world of instant digital search, long-past minor indiscretions can play a disproportionate role in a person’s online identity.”

For more information about the policy itself – and how it specifically works– please see my past columns or visit semissourian.com/help/delisting.

Today, I want to share with you excerpts from some of the feedback received after the draft policy was shared.

■ Upon seeing the policy draft article, I feel a lot of things all at once. Pride, relief and hope, among other things, but these three really stand out. I love everything about the idea behind delisting prior misdemeanor or rulings and reportings. The sense of pride I feel from seeing this in my long-time local newspaper before any other source is unbelievable. The very idea of these things no longer haunting people we all know in our personal lives is astounding. I really hope this comes to pass because second chances are what being human is essentially about. **Thank you, Colby**

■ Thank you so much for considering this compassionate new approach.

I do not envy those who have grown up in the Internet age. Being a little older myself, I am grateful for the fact my minor youthful indiscretions have been lost in the mists of time. The way I see it, the mistakes I made when young, the disappointment I saw in the faces of others, and the guilty feelings about the hurt I caused are part of what formed the conscience I developed early on and I have lived by ever since.

I would not do those things today, of course. I’m just not that person anymore. It would be awful if someone who didn’t like me or disagreed with me politically could just Google my name and read all about it in my hometown paper before attempting to do me harm.

Thank you again. You are showing leadership I hope others will follow. **Sincerely yours, David**

■ This is a highly emotional and personal topic for me as this very issue has plagued my family for a decade, and I have seen over and over the pain inflicted over online Google searches. As you know, a prosecutor is free to file as many charges against an individual as they are so inclined to. This does not make these charges a true part of history — only a snapshot of a moment in time when a prosecutor for whatever reason felt inclined to do so. I won’t go into the details of charges brought against a boy 15 and 16 years old at the time the accusations were made — but I will say all charges were reduced to a simple misdemeanor.

Whatever your decision, we are extremely appreciative of any efforts to help the many people affected by this modern problem. **Sincerely, Tracy**

■ People don’t need an internet trail tracking them forever. New policy is a sound one. Please implement. **Terry**

■ I wholeheartedly support your proposed policy... placing an expiration date on the online searchability of misdemeanor arrests. Sadly, advances in technology seem to have granted outsized power to many who do not wish us well! Thank you for your efforts to make it much harder to cast that first stone. **Sincerely yours, Robin**

■ As technology has changed the world, a virtual information trail can be extremely damaging. I see this especially affecting young people as they attempt to journey beyond Southeast Missouri. To succeed in a competitive job market, one must be confident and free of fear. No person, young or old, who has successfully transcended a tumultuous time in his or her life, deserves to have opportunities thwarted because of a prejudicial newspaper article from the past.

Throughout the years, I have known The Southeast Missourian to be a strong supporter of the community, the university and the region. I consider this proposed change a wise, appropriate and timely move to continue its positive force. **Most sincerely, Renee**

■ I applaud your sensitivity on this subject and encourage you to move forward with the new policy. I think all newspapers across the country should join you.

Having raised three children who are all adults now and thankfully have not been affected by the internet trail, I know from some of their friends and colleagues it has had a devastating effect on careers and personal relationships.

Thank you for inviting comment on this highly important subject. **Best Regards, Cheryl**

■ Everyone makes mistakes, and smart people learn from them. Let’s give the people who have learned from their mistakes a fresh start in the digital world so they can move on with their life.

■ Thanks for allowing input into this matter. **Respectfully, Nancy**

■ The timeframe proposed is not short, but recognizes after a period of time, an individual who has steered clear of trouble should be allowed to move forward without non-felonious transgressions affecting their ability to live a productive life free of unnecessary hurdles thrown in their way because of today’s technology. Those who have worked to better themselves deserve society’s support in their efforts.

In times like these, which can be so negative, it’s heartening to read of efforts to change our culture in small but significant ways. It’s a perfect example of what should be done in civilized society, and I commend your actions. **Sincerely, Elle**

The excerpts above are only a representative sample of the comments sent in. Many more – often long perspectives – were shared. Many were personal. Others, more conceptual. At the Southeast Missourian, we want to be transparent about how we manage such information. Thank you for reading.

Jon K. Rust is publisher of the Southeast Missourian.



POLL QUESTIONS

Have you ever attended a rodeo?

Do you think professional athletes and entertainers should weigh in on politics or social issues?

See results on the Perspective page Sunday.

New levels of hostility and a lack of civility



MIKE JENSEN

Way back in the 1970s, a brainy group of MIT professors and researchers developed a computer model predicting the “end of civilized life as we know it” by 2040. And as part of that computer prediction, the first major change that will usher in this decayed social structure will occur in 2020.

Now please understand, predictions on the apocalypse are a dime a dozen. In fact, two “end-of-civilization” predictions based on Scripture came and went within the past two months. Remember the “blood moon” soothsayer forecast two weeks ago?

Given the 1970s prediction came from the highly-respected minds at MIT, it’s worth exploring their thought process.

The MIT model was based on trends in “pollution levels, population growth, availability of natural

resources and quality of life.”

And to be fair, some of those dire forecasts have proven true. But what grabs your attention is the 2020 date as the starting point for this global disaster.

With that magical date just around the corner, it obviously brings to mind a presidential election.

Coincidence? Perhaps.

I put little stock in such dire predictions. And though I disagree with the rationale of this MIT forecast, it does make you think.

If civilization as we know it is in its final stages, it will not come from pollution or over population. The lack of civility will be the ruin of civilization.

And it doesn’t take an MIT researcher to see the erosion of civility that has become our world.

Long-abandoned civil discourse has been replaced with angry polarization. The battle lines are no longer blurred. It has become us versus them. And each of us is left with defining the us and the them.

Peaceful protests have been re-

placed with violence. Fiery rhetoric leads to open wounds, and anarchy today is more than just a word from the history books.

Long-simmering racial tensions have resurfaced to new levels of hostility. The tsunami of illegal immigration clearly threatens society on countless levels. And the open hostility on other issues of the day relegates civility to the back burner.

The core problem is the lack of an obvious path out of this newfound anger and distrust.

One stark observation of this computer model prediction is at the center of this downward spiral.

“Sovereignty of nations is no longer absolute. There is a gradual diminishing of sovereignty, little by little by little.”

Absent the ability of nations to control their borders, this long-forgotten prediction may well come true.

Michael Jensen is the publisher of the Standard Democrat in Sikeston, Missouri.

‘Mythical mammals’ and the wonders of the real world



KATHRYN LOPEZ

Have you seen the Nature Valley (the granola bar people) ad out of Canada? It has been making the social-media rounds lately, because it seems to capture something that is well within our power to fix. It portrays different generations of families talking about their childhoods. Scripted or not, its point has certainly struck a nerve.

“When you were a kid, what did you do for fun?” different people are asked. “We would pick blueberries,” one woman says. Another woman recalls how they would plant watermelons and plantains in her youth. One man recalled his homemade toboggan. The second generation then talks about playing with friends and using their imaginations — keeping themselves entertained with fort-building, playing hide and seek and the like.

But then comes the current generation of children. They try making their best case that they know what fun is, but there’s a certain joy lacking in their words, as they describe playing video games and texting.

“I feel like he’s missing out on what’s out there in the beautiful world,” one woman says of a child.

That beautiful world includes a Blug and a Dally. You likely have no idea what either of those are—I didn’t until recently, when they appeared on my desk, the creation of Matthew Mehan, a high-school teacher and lecturer at Hillsdale College’s Washington, D.C., campus. He’s all about the liberal arts and their power to unlock the minds, hearts and souls of children.

Mehan’s book is called “Mr. Mehan’s Mildly Amusing Mythical Mammals,” which launches this month. It’s delightfully captivating and challenging. It is a work of art that comes from the heart, that invites people into not only Mehan’s whimsical world but into the fullness of life — the mystical life, even. Its poetry and beautiful illustrations show a true collaborative effort between the author and the illustrator, John Folley, whose friendship shows through. It’s a treasure for all of us who need a time-out to refresh ourselves and remember who we are. Perhaps we never even knew.

It has its moments of melancholy, too. I was still thinking about the Nature Valley ad as I was flipping through the book’s glossary and happened upon the entry for “Blueberry Hill.” Mehan writes: “(W)hile there are many places with this same, common name, this very real hill is one uncommonly special to me— too special to describe in a glossary; I

hope you have a special place in the woods where your heart and you can go now and again.” That’s what these children are missing. It’s what we are allowing ourselves to be robbed of as we live our lives seemingly unable to look away from screens or the drama of a presidential tweet storm.

In his book, Mehan writes: “We all love lions, but we all hate pride. ‘Adult’ readers may well be denied. I suggest you try your best to become a child once more. Doing so will bring you through poetry’s locked door.” And as we are a little less distracted we will notice the childhood we are depriving not only children of these days, but ourselves. We need kids in the throes of wonder as much as their precious hearts desire it. They don’t want the anesthetization the screens provide any more than we want the drug, but it’s addicting. Especially in our current historical moment, which seems so mired in hopelessness. Something beautiful is a game-changer. Creativity taps into the wonder within all of us to live and love and explore greatness.

I don’t know if Nature Valley sold me on granola bars with its commercial, but it sure sold me on introducing people to “Mythical Mammals” and the wonders that reside beyond our back door.

klopez@nationalreview.com

SPEAK OUT

Cape County

The majority of Cape Girardeau County supported the Right to Work legislation proving once again that Union leadership has no leverage here.

\$3.3 trillion

The Washington Post reported that Senator Bernie Sanders’ universal healthcare plan would cost the federal government \$3.3 trillion more dollars per year. The Democrats don’t have

a plan that doesn’t include spending more of taxpayers’ money. Looks like their only platform remains Russia and hating our President.

Union money

Union members should be thrilled to know that their labor “leaders” spent over \$15 million against Proposition A, outspending supporters by a more than 3-to-1 margin. Your union dues continue to light the cigars of those you let lead you.

SHARE:

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OPINION

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, may our words honor you and reflect your grace and mercy. Amen.

BOARD COLUMN

Southeast Missourian joins Google in test to elevate civility



JON K. RUST

The Southeast Missourian will be participating in a pilot program with Jigsaw, a division of Google's parent corporation, to test whether technology can help elevate online community discussion. Your participation and perspective will be vital. Together, we have an opportunity to shape future online commentary not only locally but across the country (and world).

Is this project important? Yes. The recent tragedy in Pittsburgh, where a crazed anti-Semite was revealed to have egged himself on via an extremist social network, underlines the danger of toxic commentary. It also underscores the trend for people to huddle within groups of the like-minded, creating echo chambers, which turn differences of opinion into tribal warfare. Newspaper commentary zones are an anti-thesis to the echo chambers, because they exist for the broader community and not just for specialized interests (or self-selected "friends").

The challenge is to create a robust, inclusive place for the free exchange of ideas, which elevates community discussion without egregiously limiting it. One of our questions in this project is determining whether lowering the obnoxiousness of comments broadens and increases participation. (Confession: 19 months ago we removed anonymous commentary from semissourian.com with the goal of elevating comment quality. The identities of commenters are now verified and comments must be "signed". Fewer people are commenting.)

Is this project complicated? Yes. There are many people who are concerned that big technology companies — let alone media organizations — are biased against their perspective. To combat suspicion, we are going to be fully transparent about what we're trying to do. Meanwhile, the Southeast Missourian has to do this all in a way that is sustainable — which can live beyond a pilot program. For example, some digital sites retain a large staff to review commentary before it is posted. That's not possible for us. It would cost too much. Instead, we are going to rely on Google's technology and you to help us weed out uncivil comments. We appreciate Google providing this technology, as well as a grant to offset programming and personnel expenses during the trial.

As background: Semissourian.com already looks to our community — you — to help police comments. If a reader comes across something objectionable, if registered, he or she can alert a review team to inspect the comment for removal. The drawbacks of the current system, however, are many, including: 1) If no one reports the objectionable content, it can sit on our site for hours or longer, infecting the flow of the discussion. 2) The review team does not work 24 hours a day, so, even if something is reported, it might be several hours before it is reviewed. 3) Only those registered for commentary can report content, something that was implemented after more than a few online users abused the alert function by reporting comments they disagreed with, but which were not toxic. 4) Our biggest accountability tool is banning users who flagrantly (via a single incidence) or regularly (via constant pushing of the envelop and thus sapping our attention) violate community standards, which in itself is a blunt instrument.

Here's the plan.

Starting today, we are turning on Jigsaw's technology (called "Perspective API"), which will internally rate comments on a continuum of civility from non-toxic to toxic with "uncertain" in between. Upon completion of a comment, before it's posted live online, the commenter will receive feedback. Comments that fail community guidelines (defined by us through interaction with our user community and not by Jigsaw) will be rejected immediately. Those in a questionable range will be posted for others to see but at the same time be immediately forwarded to an expanded review team. Meanwhile, we very much want users to continue to use the "report comment" button to let us know when they see objectionable content. This will allow us to review how the technology is flagging content. Lessons we learn will be shared with Google.

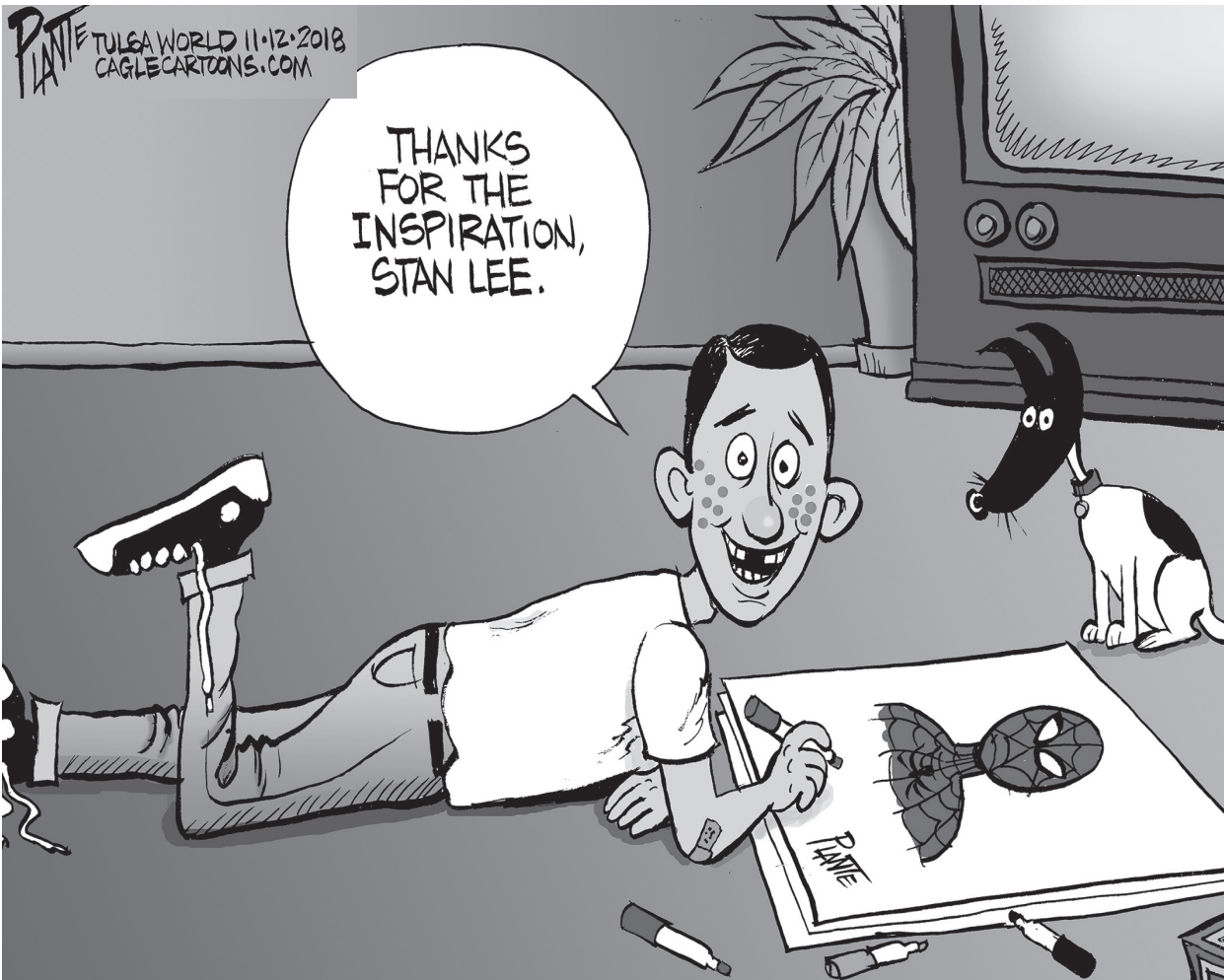
Finally, if you make a comment that you feel is within community standards or otherwise worthwhile, but which is disallowed, we'd like you to send us a note about that, too. Understanding "false positives" is a key aspect of the test.

Launching in a few weeks, we'll also test the technology on our sports-focused semoball.com site, which still allows anonymous commentary.

Over time, on semissourian.com and semoball.com, we will tweak thresholds to determine how such changes affect participation. Important to us with this whole project is elevating commentary style — making it more civil — while not limiting commentary topics or perspectives. The exceptions: Comments under news articles are meant to be germane to the story content so, if notified, we're more likely to remove comments that belong elsewhere even if they're within community standards. More freewheeling discussions are encouraged to take place in the forums. We also reserve the right to shut down and ban users for obscenities and other violations of community standards, including racist comments and charges of racism. Decisions about these exceptions remain the purview of Southeast Missourian staff and not Google's technology.

Let us know your thoughts. Try out the new commentary tools. And send feedback to commenting@semissourian.com. We're looking to learn along with you.

Jon K. Rust is publisher of the Southeast Missourian.com.



POLL QUESTIONS

Do you use an app or wearable device to track health and fitness goals?

Do you use a Health Savings Account or similar account for medical expenses?

See results on the Perspective page Sunday.

Counting votes is not rocket science



MIKE JENSEN

closed.

And when the outcome of those missing ballots is in the hands of a partisan politician, it taints the electoral process now and forever.

All we ask as Americans is a fair and honest election. Our democracy is based on this singular principle.

Yet if you think this fiasco is bad, can you imagine the potential fraud and abuse that would occur with expanded voting, mail-in ballots, early voting and even the potential for internet voting?

In the case of Florida specifically, what logical argument can be made for allowing non-citizens to vote?

Critical recounts rarely if ever occur in rural areas. It's the urban swamps that miraculously discover

missing ballot by the thousands. And though my memory may be fuzzy, I am hard pressed to cite an instance where those missing votes favored the Republican candidate.

I assume that is just a coincidence.

If the urban argument is too few polling locations which results in long lines, then by all means, increase the voting outlets.

And if partisan politics is ever remotely part of the problem, put some law enforcement agency in charge of the counting process.

In our rural region, we are blessed with dedicated volunteers who serve at our election locations. These poll workers may carry a party label but I would bet good money they would never consider fudging the votes in their partisan favor.

Urban centers are different monsters. And our faith and trust in the electoral process is severely damaged when the appearance of fraud comes into play.

I am most certainly not labeling all Democrats as evil, election-manipulators or fraudsters. Far from it.

Trying to illegally impact any election result is a non-partisan crime and should be treated accordingly.

Honestly, I am less concerned about

the recount results than I am with the erosion of trust in our electoral process.

The current mantra is "every vote counts." But perhaps more accurately it should be "every legal vote counts."

You have to admit that in our current political, polarized electorate, it looks as if ample wrongdoing is underway.

We still have no answer to the IRS targeting conservative groups. We still have no answer to the highly questionable chain of events that led to the Mueller probe. And last I heard, Mrs. Clinton's mysterious 30,000 emails were still in hiding.

But more than the wrongdoing, where are the consequences? Why are officials not held accountable?

Perhaps when the smoke clears on the recounts, a finger will be pointed directly at someone who played loose and fast with the law.

And in a perfect world, that person or persons would face the consequences of the law.

Now that alone would be worth a recount.

Michael Jensen is the publisher of the Standard Democrat in Sikeston, Missouri.

The necessity of adoption



KATHRYN LOPEZ

her syndicated radio show — she is self-described "Queen of Sappy Love Songs," with some 9 million listeners. She's also the mother of 13 children, 10 of whom are adopted. As she tells the story, she only intended on adopting one child — "maybe two." But then she started hearing horror stories about what happens to children when they are stuck in foster care.

"My kids should be getting this award because they went through hell and they survived," she explained. "They survived the foster-care system. My kids from Africa survived situations you guys wouldn't even believe if I told you. ... Not only that, they are awesome people, wonderful human beings — much better than I am. If I had gone through what they went through I would not be kind, I would not be loving."

Her adoption story begins when she and her husband were matched up with a little boy and arranged to take him and his siblings camping. In the middle of the night, his younger brother "reached his little hand"

from across his sleeping bag and asked Delilah: "I was just wondering: Could I call you mom, too, since I don't have a mom?"

Both those boys, 9 and 11, had been in foster care for over five years — the 11-year-old with 11 placements, the 9-year-old, seven. "I went from being a mom of two to being a mom of five in a six-month span."

"For some reason, our governmental systems think that it is better to leave children languishing in foster care so that the birth parent can have opportunity after opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to abuse them and break their hearts while they are moved again and again and again."

This is tough stuff to hear. And it doesn't take away from the selflessness of parents who realize they are not in the best position to care for their children and the generosity of foster families who make room in their homes for children temporarily. Delilah was speaking in Washington, D.C., which gave her words extra resonance. Present at the event were some key administration officials, congressional staff, and activists.

One of the "Friend of Adoption" awardees was the Democrat mayor of the nation's capital, Muriel Bowser, who had just won re-election; she's the single adoptive mother of Miranda.

Delilah was especially passionate talking about the almost 20,000 children who aged out of foster care in the United States last year, pointing

out the majority of them tend to wind up in jail before they are 25 years old.

"How many of you have 18/19/20-year-olds right now?" she asked those gathered. "Are they capable of navigating life on their own? Without health-care insurance? Without a place to live? Without a life plan? Without a mom to call when they just got in a fender bender? How is that OK?"

The National Council for Adoption exists "to ensure that more children are adopted from foster care, that women facing unintended pregnancy receive comprehensive information on the positive option of adoption, and that intercountry adoption remains a viable, ethical option for building families." Its hall of fame includes Democrats and Republicans, sports stars and Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's.

The clock is ticking for children in foster care, for frightened pregnant women who feel like there is no one who will help them. Our feelings about the state of the world aside, they need families; they need the kind of radical hospitality that can transform lives.

There are children alive today who need help, birth mothers who need an out. They deserve an opportunity for a family and some semblance of stability. Our country may just need their lives and resilience. We can't let them continue to suffer. We can't let them be unrealized gifts.

klopez@nationalreview.com

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OPINION

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord God, may the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. Amen.



Out with the old



MIKE JENSEN

Somewhere deep in the recesses of my desk are a heap of rubber-bound calendars dating back to the 1970s. It's a company ritual that each year around this time, neat, new cellophane-wrapped calendars mysteriously arrive at our desks. Being an obsessive scribbler, I favor the flip calendars instead of the desk models. Opting for a desk calendar would result in a mishmash of unreadable notes and pseudo-artsy designs only a mother could love.

So come next week, the 2018 model — worn thin with once-important memos — will take its place in the dark corners of my desk, to be replaced with a shiny and unblemished 2019 model.

I've foolishly pledged on countless occasions to someday revisit those old calendars to refresh my faltering memory of seemingly critical notations that were once so very important.

Turns out, those past plans have yet to materialize. But there's always tomorrow, right?

It's funny, in a way, how we mark time.

Way back in the day, as I tried to make a mark in this business and in this community, those calendar pages were chocked full of appointments and meetings, committee obligations, board assignments and a full array of responsibilities that make for long days and short nights.

Time has diminished those calendar pages. Yet the days remain too long and the nights too short.

Once the old calendars are relegated to the desk dungeon and the new ones replaced, I follow one more year-end routine.

I clean my desk.

As a borderline hoarder, I keep unusual news items or somewhat interesting tidbits, in the expectation that they may perhaps somehow make their way into a column or provide fodder for conversation.

They rarely do.

So with trashcan at the ready, I meticulously sort through this flotsam and jetsam of once-interesting oddities and one by one, discard them to the file of forgotten treasures.

And with that, my year comes to an end.

Up next are New Year's resolutions, yet another task in which I don't excel.

Truth is, I long ago abandoned the ritual of New Year's resolutions. All those countless resolutions only proved my weaknesses or lack of discipline.

Why subject myself to this self realization.

This year, like no other I can recall, does not offer much hope or promise on several levels. Granted, on a personal level — when it comes to family — I remain full of optimism and full-throated excitement.

But in my small world of news digestion, the trend is obviously more pessimistic than optimistic.

And just to put an exclamation point on the upcoming year, think what 2020 might well offer.

And with that, I wish everyone a Happy New Year, slightly in advance.

Michael Jensen is the publisher of the Standard Democrat in Sikeston, Missouri.

SPEAK OUT

No. 1 traffic light

The best traffic lights in Cape Girardeau is at Mt. Auburn and Hopper Road. If you are making a left turn onto Hopper Road, you don't have to wait by forever like at other lights. If traffic is slow it will change to give you a green light.

\$5 billion

Just think what \$5 Billion would do towards building roads and bridges for the entire country

if Trump pushed improving infrastructure that is failing across the U.S. If we are going to mortgage our children's future, at least spend the money on things the country needs instead of giving billions of dollars to third party immigrant jails and the new generation of Halliburtons, Blackwater and other corrupt insider companies owned by the DeVos, Prince, Mercers and other gazzillionaires. Wasteful and ridiculous.

POLL QUESTIONS

Do you support President Trump's decision to pull troops out of Syria?

Do you think economic conditions in the United States will be better or worse in 2019?

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2018: Cape, Jackson move forward with big stories, milestones



JON K. RUST

As 2018 comes to a close, tumult plagues the national and international scenes, while locally, progress presses ahead.

Along with President Donald Trump, the leaders of France, England and Germany stand precariously,

their popularity on the wane and protests in the streets. In Washington, the government is "closed", and one of the president's most important and able advisers, Sec. of Defense Gen. James Mattis, has resigned in protest of another rash Trump decision. Meanwhile, the stock market, thanks to an autumn slump and December collapse, in part sparked by concerns around the president — trade policy, Mueller investigation, lack of seriousness or personal discipline — combined with an incoming Democratic House and rising Fed interest rate, injects concern and anxiety into millions of Americans. The general economy, meanwhile, continues to hum, and unemployment remains at historic lows, conditions that are overshadowed.

Thankfully, at home in Cape Girardeau and Jackson, the world stands calmer, and as we prepare for a new year, it's a good time to reflect on what happened during the past one. Here are some of my top local stories from 2018, in no particular order, in some cases assisted by traffic statistics on semissourian.com.

Government and Politics

Trump came. A packed Show Me Center (composed of thousands who braved heavy rains and strong winds) saw the president make his final pitch before the 2018 midterm election. He left. Venit, vidit, discessit?

It was the fourth visit by a sitting president in Cape Girardeau's history, taking place only after a previously scheduled Trump rally was canceled due to a hurricane elsewhere. Among the highlights, when a woman collapsed and was prone on the floor for several minutes; the crowd's spontaneous singing of "Amazing Grace" and the president's patient compassion. Besides that: the enthusiasm caused by the throwing of red MAGA hats into the crowd and the raucous reception for celebrity speakers, including native Rush Limbaugh, was palpable.

Cape Girardeau state Rep. Kathy Swan was one of many who voiced her concerns about a Republican governor's indiscretions, and she was among the first Republican officeholders to call on him to resign. Ultimately, Eric Greitens did. The new governor Mike Parson visited several times, including in an attempt to rally support for an increase in the gas tax to rebuild state infrastructure. It lost. Medical marijuana won. For U.S. Senate, the politically talented Josh Hawley vanquished the politically talented Claire McCaskill.

Harry Rediger successfully completed eight years as mayor of Cape Girardeau; city councilman Bob Fox was elected, unopposed, to replace him. Incumbent Cape County Presiding Commissioner Clint Tracy kept his seat, as did incumbents Swan and U.S. Rep. Jason Smith, overwhelmingly. Barry Hovis won a first term in the Missouri House, replacing Donna Lichtenegger, who had been term-limited. The four Scott Co. government seats up for election flipped from Democrat to Republican.

The Missouri Supreme Court set wrongfully convicted David Robinson free after nearly 18 years of imprisonment. The Sikeston police detective at the heart of the matter, exorciated in a special investigation by the court, lost his job, belatedly. For his reporting on the case, Southeast Missourian editor Bob Miller was recognized with a B Magazine Newsmaker award — along with 13 other individuals who make a difference. Ruth Dickerson became Cape County's first-ever female sheriff; John Jordan, a U.S. Marshall.

Business and Restaurants

At the Cape Chamber annual dinner, Bob Neff was recognized with the Limbaugh Award, and a new award named after the Drury family was announced to recognize entrepreneurial success. Marco Construction Products won Small Business of the Year. In Jackson, for a lifetime of service, Billy Joe Thompson was bestowed the R.A. Fulenwider Award. Dr. Karen Hendrickson was recognized with the Zonta Lifetime Achievement Award. Navy veteran and long-time business leader Raymond Buhs won the prestigious Southeast Missourian Spirit of America Award.

Local business progress was a big theme in 2018, and the new, flashy B Magazine (a sister product of the Southeast Missourian) was launched to popular acclaim to cover it. A new

102-bed behavioral health hospital was announced, now moving forward as a partnership between SoutheastHealth and Universal Health Services but without Saint Francis. The Town Plaza area continued its resurrection — soon to include Dogwood Social House, Krispy Kreame Donuts and Rosati's Pizza Sports Pub. Harbor Freight opened there in the summer. Buffalo Wild Wings, which used to be in the Plaza, opened an attractive new venue on Siemer's Drive. In fact, many new eating spots opened in 2018 (or are near opening), too many to mention. But among them: news about Sugar-fire Smokehouse near Panda Express, Zaxby's on the southwest side, and Sugar Chic Creamery in downtown with its new ice cream mobile, all registered high in semissourian.com page views.

A majestic new hotel, Courtyard by Marriot, opened in the historic H&H Building. The interior details, meticulously recreated by a developer team led by Scott Rhodes and Jeff Maurer and executed by Boulder Construction, are sights to behold. Across the street, the Marquette Tech District flourished — with Codefi, its main tenant, and the Tech District Foundation, named recipients of a \$400,000 grant from the Missouri Tech Corporation to expand their tech startup competition:1st50K. Meanwhile, youth coding camps under the auspices of Codefi also grew, making this area more conducive to the future economy. Kohlfeld Distributing acquired Bluff City Beer, Drury Southwest purchased the Lorimont complex, Realty Executives acquired the Lorimont Place realty company.

Cape Girardeau opened a new police station and municipal court building and overwhelmingly passed the extension of a city sales tax to fund storm water projects and local parks improvements, including a new, still-to-be-finalized (and much debated) aquatic center. After voters in Jackson approved a new sales tax measure for police and fire, Jackson and the Cape County Commission finalized plans on a new police station and courthouse, respectively, both to be built by Penzel Construction. The Southeast Missouri Regional Port was offered \$19.8 million in a federal grant to help fund a \$33 million project to construct two loop tracks and a terminal along the Mississippi River: project on hold until additional funds secured.

Hip, hip, hurrah!

In sports, among many noteworthy accomplishments: Cape Central won its third-straight state swimming championship, and Southeast Missouri State University football made history by winning its first-ever national football playoff game. Redhawks coach Tom Matukewicz was named OVC coach of the year and his contract extended. The SportsPlex packed touring teams into top-notch competitions (as well as into local hotel rooms and restaurants) while opening for more weekday sports leagues. Basketball phenom Lisa Leslie inspired the crowd with grace and beauty at the Semoball Awards, which also featured bring-the-house-down remarks by Cape Girardeau Central stalwart Terry Kitchen, who received the Semoball lifetime achievement award.

In entertainment, a new full-day music festival, Shipyard, dazzled all who attended in downtown Cape Girardeau, even as they danced through the rain. The Vintage Now fashion show wowed its crowd at the Show Me Center with a circus theme, all to benefit the Safehouse for Women (which broke ground on a new building). Southeast Missouri State survived another year of budget cuts, won business and cybercrime competitions — and re-organized its departments — while producing amazing productions at the River Campus, including Southeast faculty member and writer Kenn Stillson's "An American Hero," which won Best in Festival at the New York Musical Festival in July. The Cape Catfish, a new summer-league baseball team to start play at Capaha Park in 2019, was announced alongside a major redesign of the field's amenities. A new skate park was built in Arena Park. The city approved the placement of a statue featuring a black Union soldier in Ivers Square. The Esquire Theater was approved

“All of the above was originally reported in the Southeast Missourian, and drawing from it, I could have written about so much more: the many heroes in our midst, the volunteers, the teachers, the philanthropists, the churches, the hardworking men and women who make America great.”

for a redevelopment TIF (though construction is delayed as property lines are sorted out). United Express added additional jet flights to Chicago (and boardings grew closer to the million dollar goal: 10,000 in a year). More delivery services opened in the area, while Cargo (with much thought and careful preparation — though not enough for the chief of police) began delivering alcohol — leading to debate around rules for such things. The Southeast Missourian embarked upon a test with Google to elevate civility and engagement within online commentary via technology and more human moderation. Former mayor, current university regent and long-time banker Jay Knudtson earned his undergraduate degree, "36 years after" he started, and delivered a rousing address to December graduates. With the installation of new LED lamps, Broadway got brighter. Long-time federal prosecutor and genuine good man Larry Ferrell retired.

LaCroix church and hundreds from around the area came together to pack meals, more than 800,000, for Feed My Starving Children. Thousands of local residents marched, walked, ran, volunteered, and donated to help others, to fight cancer, to beat Alzheimer's, to feed and clothe the needy, and to do so much more, selflessly, nobly, inspirationally. Toybox and Toys for Tots coordinated closer than ever before, delighting even more children during Christmas.

Sad farewells

In 2018, our community buried good friends and strong leaders, several whose accomplishments marked historic firsts. Among them: councilwoman Loretta Schneider, singer Neal Boyd, Judge Marybelle Mueller: We said goodbye to Dortha Stack, famous for growing farmers, and Gary Friedrich, for comic-book writing. Long-time museum director James Parker brought art to Southeast Missouri, while designer and businessman Harry Rust turned people's homes and businesses, literally, into livable art. From business and community leadership, among others, we lost Melvin Gately, Dr. Ray Ritter, Gene Penzel, Leland "Freck" Shivelbine, Mike McKinnis, Lowell Peterson and a bartender who brought the sun in with his smile: Marcellus Jones. A longtime university first lady succumbed to a vicious disease and had her name lovingly memorialized in the Jeanine Larson Dobbins Conservatory of Theater and Dance at Southeast's River Campus.

Then this week we lost one of Cape's friendliest and most civic-minded, long-time Schnucks manager Dennis Marchi. Incomparable in his high spirits (even against high odds) and with a boundless desire to help, Dennis touched the lives of an entire community. We lift up our prayers for his wife Kathy and their family.

Meanwhile, Mark Ervin, a former meat cutter for Schnucks, inspired the living with fun and humor, told through his Southeast Missourian obituary. Among its lines: "He died as he lived, in dramatic fashion and without pants. He would have liked you to believe he was still younger than 62 years old. ... He was preceded in death by almost every person who ever lived on this planet, including, but not limited to, Abraham Lincoln and John Bonham."

On the national level, but in many ways, part of our own: through heartfelt ceremonies, prayers and commemorations, we marked the lives and contributions of the Rev. Billy Graham, former first lady Barbara Bush, Sen. John McCain and President George H.W. Bush.

In news of death and renewal, the old gum tree at the top of Cardiac Hill on Southeast's campus split during a windstorm; a new one was planted.

Thank you for reading today — and thank you for reading every day, for your support of this newspaper, for your subscription. All of the above was originally reported in the Southeast Missourian, and drawing from it, I could have written about so much more: the many heroes in our midst, the volunteers, the teachers, the philanthropists, the churches, the hardworking men and women who make America great. This is what the Southeast Missourian does every day, in more detail, in more breadth, it tells the story of our community — of our neighbors and our local institutions, of our places of prayer and our gatherings for fun; of our families, of ourselves. It does it in words and photos, thanks to the hard work of those who work here. Thanks to your contributions and contacts. Thanks to your support, your readership, your encouragement.

Happy New Year! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all! May you be blessed in 2019.

Jon K. Rust is publisher of the Southeast Missourian.

OPINION

TODAY'S PRAYER

Almighty God, this season's beauty is yet another example of your masterful creation. Amen.

OUR OPINION

Google, FTI, LMA select SE Missourian as 1 of 10 in North America; reporter sought



JON K. RUST

I need your help. The Southeast Missourian is looking for a new business reporter. Do you know anyone who might be interested? Think about it. Are you interested? Although our plan is to hire a full-time reporter, we would also consider hiring several people — if especially talented — on a part-time basis. So, if you have experience writing, and can do so on deadline, and you like the idea of covering business development (and more), let us know. Send email to editor Bob Miller at bmiller@semissourian.com; carbon assistant publisher Lucas Presson, lpesson@semissourian.com.

Marybeth Niederkorn has been the business writer for the Southeast Missourian for most of the past two years. She is moving on to work with a website company attached to Codefi. For those who've been interviewed by Marybeth or been the subject of one of her articles, you know how delightful she is. She's also a talented poet, having recently published the book, "Times Knew Roamin'." We will miss Marybeth and wish her the very best. She has been a big part of the upbeat personality of the Southeast Missourian newsroom.

In today's classified section of the newspaper, you will find a description of what the editor is looking for. Here is an excerpt: "The Southeast Missourian is looking for a business reporter to cover a thriving business community. The ideal candidate is a creative story-teller who is fair-minded and enjoys networking and finding fun, engaging and important stories. Candidates should be able to demonstrate the ability to write breaking news, feature stories and analysis pieces with precision and accuracy. At least two years of experience of daily newspaper reporting is preferred but not required."

Hiring great talent is important for any business. In this case, it's extremely helpful (although not necessary) to find talent with institutional knowledge of the area. If you already know Cape Girardeau and Jackson, you have a leg up.

At the Southeast Missourian, we believe in the saying, "Everything we do should be measured by the test of truth and grace." We do not believe in "gotcha" journalism. Instead, we seek to report with context and fairness. And we seek the good. The same principles guide our culture: We seek a culture of truth-seeking and open dialogue, while privileging kindness and positivity. Constantly seeking improvement is vital. Doing so in a team ethos, helping each other, is foundational.

If you'd like to be part of a dynamic team, please email us.

Underlining that this newspaper is special — regularly winning the top award in the state and, frequently, recognized among the top in the nation for our size — on Monday the Local Media Association announced the Southeast Missourian was one of 10 newspapers in North America selected for something called the Google News Initiative Digital Subscriptions Lab. This lab involves an aggressive, six-month study, which will take me and part of the team here to Google a couple times (not to mention many video calls) and bring teams from Google, Local Media Association and FTI Consulting to Cape Girardeau. The focus is on building a sustainable strategy around digital subscribers and other reader revenue.

Too often people take for granted the hard work and expense that go into covering a community through original, ethical journalism. Unfortunately, in some parts of the country, many communities have learned recently what it's like to go without newspapers as their papers have failed, in part because of the lack of local support.

Even here, locally, it's amazing for me to see exchanges on Facebook where someone laments that they can't see a Southeast Missourian article (because they've surpassed their free views for the month), bad mouths the newspaper and asks for someone else to copy and paste it into a news feed, which someone eventually does. It apparently never occurs to those in the discussion that this is actually a form of stealing. Inevitably, if everyone did that, there wouldn't be a local newspaper.

On the good side, the fact people want the story, yearn to read it, and ask for someone to copy and paste it (after exhausting their free views) underlines the future opportunity.

I'm excited about the future of newspapers. At the Southeast Missourian, we've seen more than a 46% increase in the number of digital subscriptions since last year. And print will always be a big part of what we do, because so many people value and rely on it. Part of my optimism has to do with the fact more young people are subscribing to media than ever before. Still, it takes people valuing what we do. And, it takes good people to create what people value, which brings me back to the beginning of this column.

We're looking for a new business reporter — to join a dynamic team, involved in nationally impressive projects, right here in charming, economically diverse Cape Girardeau. Pass it on!

Jon K. Rust is publisher of the Southeast Missourian.



POLL QUESTIONS

Should the Obama Justice Department be investigated for how it coordinated with the Clinton campaign, including how it handled the Steele Dossier?

How often do you visit a public library?

See results on the Perspective page Sunday.



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What once was a compliment is now considered sexism



MIKE JENSEN

The Joe Biden sexual sensitivity roller coaster is gaining steam just about the time his poll numbers are starting to spike.

Don't, for a moment, think this is a coincidence.

Creepy Uncle Joe is working overtime defending his interaction with women

in the past. And what we are learning should serve as a lesson in the over-sensitizing of an innocent act.

Joe Biden is a touchy-feely kinda guy. His brand of charm involves hugging and, on occasion, smooching members of the opposite sex.

But in today's hyper-sensitive culture, what was once innocent is now labeled as lecherous behavior in the era of #MeToo.

Poor Joe comes from another generation. I truly believe he means absolutely no harm.

What Biden forgets is that he is about to join a crowded field of Democratic presidential hopefuls. And entering that arena puts a bulls-eye on his back.

There is no longer a difference between highly inappropriate sexual contact and the innocent actions of an elderly man.

Someone forgot to remind Joe times have changed and we have adopted new "no-go zones" when it comes to our dealings with the opposite sex.

But over-sensitivity is not isolated to a presidential candidate. Far from it.

A mini-drama unfolded in St. Louis this week when a longtime host of St. Louis Public Radio quit his job over the most innocent comment imaginable.

Don Marsh, the 80 year-old host of a popular radio program, was interviewing a retired female television anchor. Prior to the on-air interview, Marsh greeted his 75-year-old guest and told her "she looked great."

The guest, Karen Foss, later said she accepted the greeting as a "common way for those of us who are aged to greet each other."

She later added, "As a woman who has long argued for the equitable treatment of women, I am alert to sexism and discrimination and I sensed none of that in his greeting."

But that didn't stop the radio management from meeting with Marsh after someone complained that his off-air remark was inappropriate.

Well, kudos to Marsh. When told his remarks were "right

on the edge" of being inappropriate, Marsh said, "That's it. I'm done." And walked.

The now-resigned radio personality said he was humiliated that someone, anyone, would take his remark as sexist.

He said that many people feel our culture of over-sensitivity was "out of control."

It's easy to point to these two examples as "generational" insensitivity but it goes far beyond a simple explanation.

Today, we live in an era where the rules of interaction are changing on a daily basis. And subjective, not objective, evaluations are made on behavior that has always been viewed as innocent and, in some cases, downright gentlemanly.

No longer are compliments always seen as complimentary. We are forced to be vigilant for actions previously deemed as innocent.

When we lump Joe Biden and Don Marsh into the same category as Harvey Weinstein or the others caught in the #MeToo web, we do a great disservice to those who mean no disrespect and hold no ulterior motives.

Michael Jensen is the publisher of the Standard Democrat in Sikeston, Missouri.

Pelosi, not AMLO, is driving the border issue



RICH LOWRY

When historians look back to this era, they will wonder why we insisted on outsourcing our border control to a foreign country.

President Donald Trump's threat to close down the southern border with Mexico isn't a sign of strength, but of frustration fading into desperation.

He is reacting with understandable alarm at a spiraling migrant crisis on the border, and is looking to Mexico to address it because we are unwilling to do it on our own — not unable, unwilling.

There were more than 100,000 apprehensions at the border in March, an increase from the 76,000 in February. The numbers for both months were the highest in 10 years. The total for the fiscal year could hit a million, a historic surge completely overwhelming our capabilities.

We built our border facilities to hold single men, back when illegal migrants were largely adult males from Mexico, rather than family units from Central America. This means that they are ill-suited for the needs of women and children. Regardless, the sheer numbers are leading to authorities releasing migrants almost as soon as they are caught.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen warned Congress last week of "the real-time dissolution of the immigration system."

It's not that border control has been tried and failed; it hasn't been tried. Thanks to court decrees and congressional enactments, we don't permit ourselves to quickly return minors

“Mexico has done more to play ball with the U.S. under Trump than most people would have thought possible, yet all the migrants showing up at our border are still traveling through the country. Mexico doesn't make controlling these migrants a high priority because they will end up here, not there.”

from Central American countries, or to detain them for any significant period of time. They get released, along with the adults accompanying them.

The asylum process is broken. The initial so-called credible-fear interview to determine whether asylum-seekers get to the next step of the process approves almost all of them, even if they are unlikely ultimately to win asylum. In the meantime, they are waved into the country and probably never removed.

The migrants coming in increasing numbers realize that we are helpless to exclude them and, indeed, surrender to Border Patrol agents when they get here.

Congress could fix all this in an afternoon, with a few key changes in the law. Trump has a Nancy Pelosi problem much more than an Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador problem. But, since Pelosi is unmovable, Trump has to try to work the Mexican president, known by his initials, AMLO.

Mexico has done more to play ball with the U.S. under Trump than most people would have thought possible,

yet all the migrants showing up at our border are still traveling through the country. Mexico doesn't make controlling these migrants a high priority because they will end up here, not there.

The talk of cutting off the border isn't aimed at the migrants, who largely don't come through ports of entry, but at forcing the Mexican government to do more. Maybe the mere threat of the resulting economic disruption will work.

But if Trump goes through with closing the border, the strategy has some of the same weaknesses as the government shutdown earlier this year. Where does it end? If Mexico doesn't act quickly, how long are we going to keep the border closed? The longer it's closed, the more pain will be felt in the U.S. economy at a time when there are already signs of softness. What if Mexico initially buckles, then backslides? Will we shut down the border again, or threaten to?

Even if this gambit were guaranteed to succeed, it's insane that a sovereign country of unparalleled power has tied its own hands such that it must try to bully and cajole a foreign nation to do immigration enforcement for it.

In a more rational world, Congress would take seriously the spectacle of U.S. officials — and humanitarian organizations — scrambling to handle a flood of humanity showing up every day, and give them the legal authorities and resources to get the situation under control. That it won't is a dereliction of duty of the highest order

comments.lowry@nationalreview.com

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