

The Death of Newspapers

Their Immigration Coverage Hasn't Helped

By DAVE GORAK

"A long time ago, in a newsroom far, far away . . ."

On a recent Sunday morning, I again saw evidence of how the newspaper industry has changed—and continues to change—since I became part of it more than 40 years ago.

The owner of the small grocery store in the Wisconsin town to which we moved last year told me that, beginning December 1, he would no longer stock copies of the *Chicago Tribune's* Sunday edition. The nearest outlet, he said, would be Madison, about 75 miles from our bustling community of 326 people.

The decision by the *Tribune* to shrink its circulation area, a move made earlier by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, reflects the hard times that have fallen on large newspaper markets across the country.

News of this sort, while not surprising, always sends my mind back to March 23, 1959, when, as a 17-year-old just out of high school, I first set foot in the newsroom of the now defunct *Chicago Daily News* as a copy boy (also an extinct species).

Working within the walls of that magnificent example of Art Deco architecture next to the Chicago River was made possible because the brother of my third grade teacher, who worked

there as a printer, made an inquiry on my behalf. He was a large, profane, ruddy-faced Irishman with a booming voice easily identified above those of his coworkers. (It was months after being hired that I finally worked up the nerve to introduce myself and thank him for getting me the job.)

During its 102-year history the *Daily News* garnered 15 Pulitzer Prizes and earned worldwide respect for its Foreign Service reporting. Among

these award-winning correspondents was George Weller, whose story about an emergency appendectomy aboard a U.S. submarine during World War II was woven into the storyline of the 1943 Cary Grant movie *Destination Tokyo*.

I didn't know it then, but it was the tail end of the "hot-type" era, linotype machines and mammoth presses that shook the floors beneath your feet. It was when printers, engravers, editors and reporters more often than not worked at their craft beneath clouds of blue cigar and cigarette smoke and had on their breath just a hint of the lunch time shot and

a beer downed at watering holes like the legendary Billy Goat Tavern that recently became the subject of a book.

There were no cubicles in the *Daily News's* sprawling newsroom—just a sea of large, green desks occupied mostly by men wearing wide ties and heavily starched white dress shirts rolled up to the elbows. Twenty four hours a day, six days a week, they sat hunched over typewritten stories, surrounded by the background chatter of Associated Press and United Press International teletype machines.



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When I wasn't running copy from a reporter's desk to an editor, shagging coffee or sandwiches for either of the above, hoofing it down Madison Street to pick up copies of the city's competing newspapers, or watching the police department drag the Chicago River for "jumpers" or drunks



who inadvertently rolled over its banks while they slept, I watched, listened and learned from some of the best of that era about what good reporting should be. How could I not learn in the presence of the likes of the late columnist Mike Royko and reporter Eddie Eulenberg, the man credited with coining the phrase that served as a warning to all young reporters: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out."

What I learned was that there are two sides to every story and that your readers, regardless of how much they paid for their daily paper, would be cheated if you broke this cardinal rule. In that day, editors were unforgiving of reporters who turned in stories poorly written or with quotes that reflected only one view:

"Hey, kid, do you know how to use a phone? This is the worst piece of crap I've ever read!"

were among the more civil forms of verbal abuse directed toward those who thought being a "news-paper man" was only about glory and being fawned over by "flacks," i.e., public relations agents eager to have their clients' names appear in print. Those who took this scolding lightly either ended up writing obituaries on the graveyard shift or were politely told to pursue other careers.

In those days, this brand of biased and lazy journalism was the exception where today, sadly, it prevails throughout the mainstream media.

And nowhere, as VDARE.COM has so thoroughly chronicled (see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#)) is this the case as in immigration reporting.

Even worse, this sloppy work ethic often is rewarded with a job in management or a promotion to the editorial board, not because of what the journalist knows, but because he has learned not to step on advertisers' toes or to "offend" certain groups within their "diverse" communities.

Unlike some of my former colleagues, I have no formal journalism training. I like to say I learned about responsible reporting the same way I learned about sex—on Chicago's streets and in its alleys.

And the only journalism award (or shall I say "reward") I ever received was having had the opportunity and privilege of breathing the same air as those long-gone wordsmiths and their editors who took pride in generating fair and balanced news stories.

A final note to those who believe newspapers will somehow manage to remain a primary source of information for an American society suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder: years ago, when people began talking about how TV news would eventually doom daily newspapers, an industry wag argued that that would never happen because, "You can't take TV news into the bathroom with you."

Yeah, right. ■