

Social media may be fun, but for the facts, we need newspapers

I love social media. It keeps me in touch with dozens of friends, whom I might otherwise have contact with just every few years, or every few decades.

It lets me share articles that I think bring greater understanding of a subject, usually with a comment of my own, and enjoy similar sharing by others.

It lets me share my own writing, reaching a wider audience than I did when I worked for newspapers, and be part of national, even international, conversations.

I hate social media. It has become the default sources of information for most Americans, and major sources of misinformation – even disin-

Guest Column

Al Cross

Al Cross is professor of journalism and director of the Institute for Rural Journalism at the University of Kentucky. He was a weekly newspaper editor and manager, political writer for the Louisville Courier Journal and president of the Society of Professional Journalists.

formation – that polarizes the country and drives us into media echo chambers.

It has added to the confusion between fact and opinion, and to our natural desire for information that confirms what we believe, rather than information that may challenge those beliefs.

It has led Americans

to spend more time online in virtual communities instead of the geographic communities where we live, pay taxes and elect local leaders.

My love-hate relationship with social media stems mainly from the fact that I am a journalist who believes that freedom of information is essential to our democratic republic, and who has done most of my journalism for newspapers – which are the main fact-finders in our society.

Newspapers are finding it more difficult to perform that essential function, mainly because much of their audience and more of their advertisers now prefer social media.

Newspapers have as

many readers as they ever did, but the audience is mainly online, and reached through social-media posts that bring them no income. There's a bill in Congress to address that, called the Journalism Preservation Act, but what news media also need is more citizens who appreciate and support their work.

Newspapers are not only the main fact-finders for citizens; they are institutions that speak truth to power and hold it accountable. That's why our founders put the First Amendment into the Constitution, to guarantee freedom of speech, press, petition, assembly and religion.

Freedom of the press demands certain respon-

sibilities of those who exercise it. Too many citizens don't realize that journalists have a set of generally agreed-upon ethics, and that journalism is a collective enterprise, with editors and other colleagues who help each other deliver a fair report.

My favorite description of how journalism is supposed to be practiced is in *The Elements of Journalism*, a book by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel. They list 10 elements; here are the first five, which are the most fundamental:

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners

must maintain an independence from those they cover.

5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.

The element I quote most often these days is No. 3, about the discipline of verification. It means that we tell readers how we know something, or we attribute it to someone.

Social media has no discipline and no verification.

And it's mainly about opinion, not facts.

Journalism, especially in newspapers, is mainly about facts, not opinion.

Opinions are the heartbeat of a democracy, but they should be based on facts. And for the facts, we need newspapers. ■

Making a secret officially news

In late July or early August, they put a call out for locals who wanted to be extras in the movie, *A Journey Home* (now called, *When Jack Came Back*). It was to be filmed in Iowa Falls over Labor Day weekend and I had written the initial story, but I had kind of forgotten about it.

Then the evening before filming, I got a reminder text letting me know where the cast and crew would be, and when I could go if I wanted to take some photos for the paper. There were three locations... the Methodist Church, the Popcorn Stand and the Princess.

Thank goodness I got that text, or I would have missed out. I was told they'd be filming at the church between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., so I figured I go there around 2 p.m. to take some photos. I just thought that sounded like a good time.

At 2 on the dot, I pulled up to the church and there were quite a few cars outside, but I found a spot, parked, and took my cell phone and the big company camera with me. I walked inside and was greeted by two women with fingers pressed against their lips. They were filming downstairs and I needed to be quiet.

Chairs were lined up, so I sat down beside the women and silently waited. Soon a gal wearing headphones motioned for me to follow her, and I went down the steps to the Fellowship Hall where extras were seated at tables. Apparently, they were filming a scene that occurred after a funeral.

Scanning the room, I saw some locals, but the actual actors who had lines didn't look familiar. I picked up the camera but was looked at every time I snapped a photo. The camera made a clicking sound with each push of the button and that sound must have been too loud, so I put it down and used my cell phone to take photos instead.

At the end of that filming session, I thought I had enough pictures, so I turned to leave but was stopped. Apparently, the biggest actress wasn't even in that scene, she was upstairs and did I want an interview with her? I asked who it was... Lindsay Wagner... the Bionic Woman! What?!? Of course, I wanted an interview.



Little Pieces
Elaine Loring

Elaine Loring is the editor of Times Citizen and resides in Iowa Falls. She can be reached at eloring@iafalls.com.

After getting the OK from Lindsay herself, I was told to come upstairs. I didn't have a pen, or a note pad... just the big, clunky company camera and my cell phone. A door opened and I was left alone with Lindsay... Ms. Wagner?... the Bionic Woman! I asked if I could record the interview and she hesitated for a moment, then said sure.

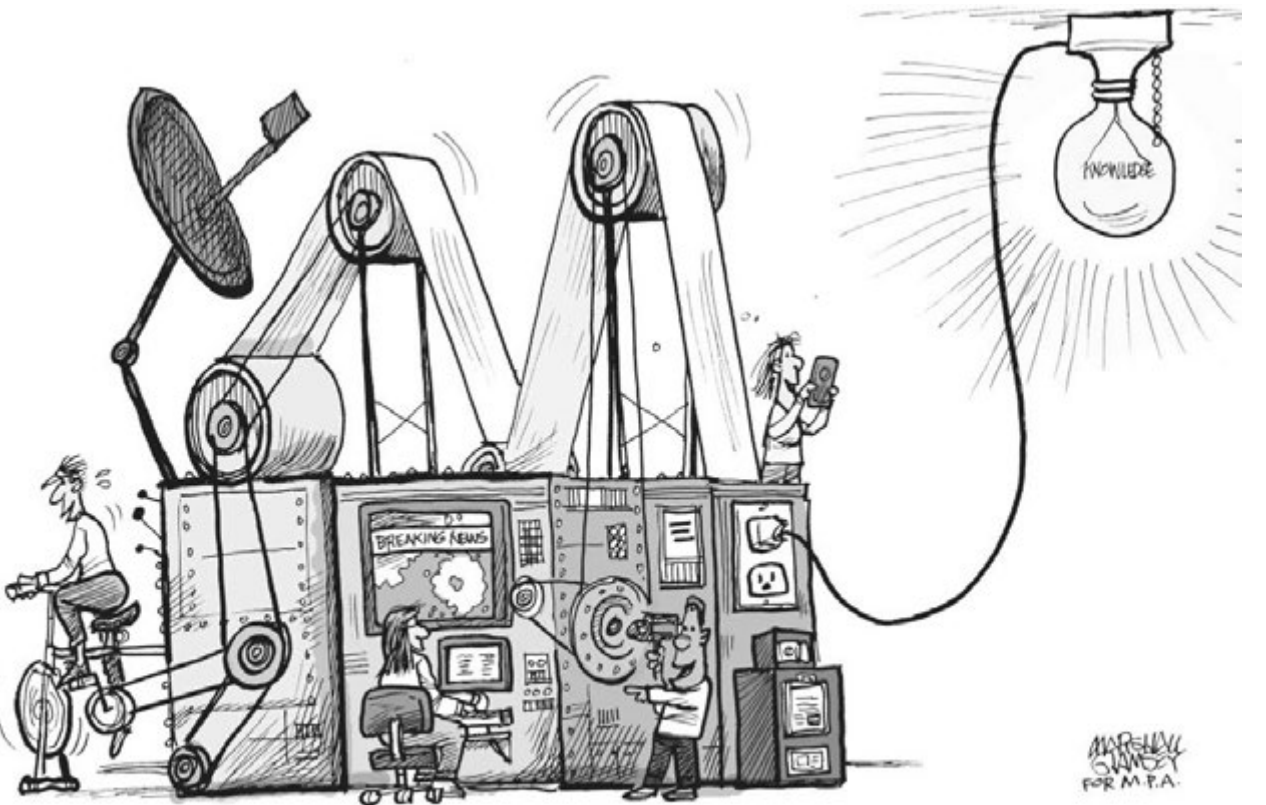
What a beautiful soul. Tall, slender, well-spoken, and elegant. She made me feel comfortable, and I asked her all kinds of things. We have kids the same age, which was interesting, and grandkids. She told me how she was discovered, a little bit about her career and what she was doing now. We talked about her being the Bionic Woman. I said I had wished I were her when I was a kid watching the show. She said she wished she were her as well, because then she could clean her house in record speed. We laughed.

Almost a half an hour passed, and a gal came in to do Lindsay's make-up for the next scene. It wasn't near enough time for me to ask questions – I had so many more – but I thanked her and left. Downstairs I watched the other actors read their lines and I took more photos. Soon it was over.

Then, as I was getting ready to leave, the director stopped me and said I couldn't do a story or use Lindsay's name or photo until the movie was completed and I got a press release. What?!? How disappointing! He even shook my hand, so I promised I wouldn't. I had all kinds of photos on the camera and on my phone, too.

Well, lo and behold, I got the call last week that everything is good to go, and I can now say yes, Lindsay Wagner is in the movie. Unfortunately, I can't use the photos I took of her because her agent would have to approve them and there's no time.

That's OK. I'm sure some people in town have already found out she is in the movie, but now my little secret is official out. She is... and what a gem. ■



THE POWER OF THE PRESS

Letters

Reader appreciates story on ash trees

TO THE EDITOR:

Thanks to Teresa Lancaster... what a nice thing to do with diseased ash trees. Sure hope the cute squirrel statue is carved in Iowa Falls, also.

JEANETTE BROER
IOWA FALLS

Ethanol plants and pipeline companies

TO THE EDITOR:

Whether or not you believe in climate change, global initiatives to reduce greenhouse gasses are and will continue to affect each and every one of us. Ethanol

provides a market for approximately 50 percent of the corn grown by corn farmers and increasing production and finding new markets for their product are a constant undertaking. In Iowa that includes government mandates on private companies to sell E15, a 15 percent ethanol blend of gasoline.

Currently, three private companies are proposing to install pipelines in Iowa and other midwestern states to transport liquid carbon dioxide (CO₂) from ethanol plants to be stored underground or to other sites in surrounding states for processing. CO₂ is a by-product in ethanol production and has become public enemy #1 as a major contributor to climate change.

A globally traded carbon credit was introduced during the 1997 Kyoto Accord and equates to one metric ton of carbon emis-

sions. Carbon credits are bought and sold in either Compliance or Voluntary Carbon Markets. Compliance markets are government regulated and sets carbon emission limits. Voluntary markets are a sort of pay to play venture; if you want to do business with us, lower your carbon intensity score (emissions).

Industries have three options, alter their manufacturing methods to emit less CO₂, buy carbon credits to offset the amount of carbon above the threshold, or pay someone to get rid of it. Enter carbon sequestration (pipelines).

Many landowners do not want a pipeline on their property; their land, their choice. The Iowa Utility Board (IAB) regulates pipelines and are being asked to approve pipeline projects and to grant the use of eminent domain to bury a pipeline on lands owned by individuals

who oppose the projects.

There is no consensus in science especially when it comes to climate change. Ethanol plants' contribution to climate change is an unknown? How will a pipeline increase market potential of ethanol when vehicle production is switching to EV's? California, a market the pipeline companies are touting is mandating ALL new vehicles be electric by 2035. Who knows if this will happen.

In a nutshell, we have two private entities (ethanol plants and pipeline companies) proposing to engage in a business transaction (payment to get rid of CO₂) but they need government intervention (state leaders, legislators and regulators) to make it happen. I predict eminent domain will be approved. Reelection campaigns cost money.

JIM STOTSER
IOWA FALLS

Carefree days in New York City

New York has always been a magical place to me. Growing up in New Jersey it was only a short drive over the George Washington Bridge. It was a popular destination to experience the glamorous lifestyle and enjoy the sights and sounds of entertainment.

Strolling on Broadway was a literal walk in the life of celebrities and the shows they starred in that made people come from miles around to experience. It



Half a Mind
Linda Halfpop

Linda Halfpop lives in Hubbard with her husband. She is a former paraprofessional. Reach her via email at linnie1945@yahoo.com.

was also a famous dating destination for us because the drinking age was only 17. It was called, and still is, "The city that never sleeps."

As a teenager, it was a great place to have a

delicious meal and a glass of wine at a famous restaurant. We would all get dressed up and pile into the car for a night in New York's magical atmosphere. We would end our night at a night club, do a little dancing and have a cocktail. No one ever got drunk, it just wasn't in our DNA to do that.

I haven't been to New York in years. The last time I was there, we went to "Little Italy" and had the best tomato pie ever (pizza).

It really was a wonderful time, everyone dressed so beautifully. That's when real glamour ruled Hollywood and women and men both imitated the fashion of the stars. There were no faded or torn jeans, no sweatshirts, no scuffed shoes. People were different then.

I miss those carefree days and walking on the streets of New York with my friends. I miss those incredible hot chestnuts wrapped in a paper cone; I can still taste them. ■