

Publisher

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WEEKLY

Eight cover photo finalists announced

In an announcement exclusive to the Arkansas Press Association Forums (APA Forums), the eight finalists in the annual Directory Cover Photo Contest were revealed three weeks ago. The competition to determine the cover photography for the *Arkansas Media Directory* has been conducted each year since 2003 (for the 2004 edition).

The top three winners will be awarded cash prizes with first place earning \$100, second place getting \$50 and third place netting \$25. Photos judged as honorable mentions will be featured inside the *Media Directory* as space allows. Production has begun, and the publication will be available next month.

For the second time in the history of the contest, one participant got two photos in the top eight. (The judging is conducted without the judges knowing the identity of the photographers of the submitted entries.) This year's finalists are (alphabetically):

- **Becca Bona**, *The Daily Record*, Little Rock, for "Broadway Bridge";
- **Kay Bona**, *The Daily Record*, Little Rock, for "Arkansas River at Two Bridges";
- **Kay Bona**, *The Daily Record*, Little Rock, for "Crystal Bridges Stream";
- **Dodie Evans**, *Westside Eagle Observer*, Gravette, for "Apple";
- **Frank Fellone**, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Little Rock, for "Tupelo Trees";

- **Scott Harvey**, *Pine Bluff Commercial*, for "Lightning";

- **Michael Orrell**, *El Dorado News-Times*, for "Butterfly 2"; and

- **Cindy Stewart**, *White River Current*, Calico Rock, for "Trumpeter Swans."

Previous winners of the annual contest were (chronologically): "Boxley" by **James Lemon**, *El Dorado News-Times* (2003); "Lightning" by **Scott Smith**, *De Queen Daily Citizen* (2004); "Babe Ruth" by **William Harvey**, *Pine Bluff Commercial* (2005); "Little Missouri Falls" by **Steve Eddington**, Arkansas Farm Bureau, Little Rock (2006); "Evening at City Park Lake" by **Randy Moll**, *Courier-Journal*, Gentry (2007); "Grape Festival Ferris Wheel" by **Michael Woods**, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Little Rock (2008); "At the Fair" by **Larry Singer**, *El Dorado News-Times* (2009); "Argenta Sunset" by **Eric Francis** of dogtownwriter.com (2010); "Sunrise Over the Arkansas River" by **Kay Bona**, *The Daily Record*, Little Rock (2011) and "Little Rock Skyline" by **Kay Bona**, *The Daily Record*, Little Rock (2012).

Those wishing to see the photographs that finished in the finals this year—for the 2013 edition of the *Media Directory*—can find them in the Photography Forum. The APA Forums can be accessed via the APA website or at onlineservices.arkansaspress.org/forums.

APS needs rate cards before year's end

Arkansas Press Services, Inc. (APS) is still in need of Arkansas newspapers' rate cards for 2013, and now there are only a few days left before the new year is rung in. The 2013 rates from all members of the Arkansas Press Association (APA) are necessary to update the advertising division's accounting program and enhance sales.

Ashley Wimberley, director of marketing, said some members have already provided their rates for next year, but that it is important to have all newspapers' information in order to

plan effectively for the coming year.

"We are beginning to develop some statewide 2013 ad campaigns for clients and need to know rates — especially if they are going to change — in order to provide accurate estimates," said Wimberley.

Advertising managers are urged to send a copy of their 2013 rate cards (regardless of whether or not any rates have changed) to **Rebecca McGraw**, APS' senior media buyer, by email (rebecca@arkansaspress.org) or by fax to 501.374.7509.



*Best wishes for
a joyous and
peaceful new
year.*

from the staff of
**The Arkansas Press
 Association**



Tom's

Potpourri

APA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TOM LARIMER

Nobody can accuse **Reed Anfinson** of avoiding controversy. Reed, publisher of the *Swift County Monitor-News* in Benson, Minn., and immediate past president of the National Newspaper Association (NNA), recently wrote a column on reaction to his newspaper's editorial in support of same-sex marriage. It proved, not surprisingly, to be a topic that struck a nerve among the newspaper's readers.

I say "not surprisingly" because I doubt Swift County, Minn., readers are any different than readers in the majority of other counties in the country. This topic like few others, save perhaps for abortion and gun control, is guaranteed to provoke a reaction.

And this one certainly did according to Reed's column, which was re-printed recently in the *Publisher's Auxiliary*, the house organ of the National Newspaper Association. It cost the newspaper subscribers.

Yet I doubt the newspaper ran the editorial simply to provoke a reaction...to see if anyone was still paying attention or still cared. It was taking a stand on an issue for which the newspaper's editorial board felt strongly. Obviously, their readers: not so much.

In an effort to avoid such occasional conflict with readers, a lot of newspapers have simply discontinued their editorial pages. Many no longer publish editorials of any kind, settling instead on being a messenger of news and a purveyor of advertising. Many no longer endorse political candidates feeling perhaps like this is just going out of the way to alienate some readers.

There's no arguing that this is the safe way not to offend anyone, and certainly not to create the sort of stir as they experienced at the *Monitor-News*. But is this truly what readers expect of us?

I think most readers expect to not always agree with their newspaper. Shucks, I would have thought less of myself if everyone always agreed with the editorials and columns I've written over the years. It's not exactly provoking thought when you're just regurgitating what everyone else is already thinking, now is it?

Years ago I used to publish a column written by a community activist. It didn't help that he was an obvious "Yankee" and a bit of a carpetbagger who came to the Arkansas Ozarks to run a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, part of FDR's "New Deal" program to pull the country out of economic depression. His weekly columns seldom failed to offend some segment of the community. Indeed it was clear he went out of his way to do so.

And almost every week I'd get calls from readers expressing their displeasure with this column. It wasn't always the same people, which was a pretty good indicator that this columnist was an equal opportunity offender. Most threatened to cancel their subscription if we didn't stop running the column, but few if any ever did.

One day I was at the coffee shop where all the community wisdom collective always gathered to cuss and discuss whatever topic was hot on a given day. On this day, it was this column, or rather this columnist.

During the discussion virtually all of those in the collective admitted to never missing reading the column, though few ever agreed with it. Some even said they read the column to "get fired up." I took this

to mean they read the column so they could get mad about something.

One thing was certain. Everyone in the community, who read the newspaper was aware of this column, discussed it often, ranted, sometimes called the local editor to complain, and then read it again the next week. The important thing here was that they were reading, and they were thinking about the subject matter.

This was an important lesson for a young editor of a country weekly newspaper. Not everyone is always going to agree with everything you may opine in the columns of your newspaper. But they will read it and they will discuss it, and they lose no respect for you for having expressed your thoughts on the matter.

In fact, I think it's something newspaper readers have traditionally come to expect of their local newspaper. Unfortunately, a lot of them are depriving readers of this element in favor of taking the safe route to not risking readers or advertisers by potentially offending someone.

Of course, that does happen from time to time. I think we've all experienced that at some time or another. Sometimes it can be economically painful taking a stand. The readers of Swift County, Minn., definitely sent that message to Reed and the *Monitor-News*, but at the end of the day, I'll guarantee the readers were at least thinking about the opinion.

That doesn't mean any minds were changed, but at least some thought was provoked and a community discourse on the topic was definitely launched. And, of course, the newspaper was at the center of it.

If you're going to offer opinion on topics of importance to your readers, you have to be prepared to accept this sort of reaction at times. But you know what? It just means readers are reading you, and they'll continue to read to see what else you may have to say on the topic or your reaction to the community pushback on your original opinion.

"If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything," is a quote often invoked in support of offering an opinion in print...taking a stand so to speak. Although nobody seems to know for sure exactly to whom to credit this quote, it is certainly appropriate in this discussion.

Newspapers should stand for something and in doing so become a voice in the community on which readers AND the community as a whole depends. It is what newspapers have traditionally done, and what they should continue to do.

Of course offering readers their own voice in the form of letters to the editor or op-ed columns from community leaders and activists is also important and these, too, provoke thought in any community.

Here's a thought: When we hear comments about nobody reading the newspaper anymore, consider that perhaps that's because there's nothing, or certainly nothing of substance, to read.

Happy New Year to one and all!

Tom