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The Free Paper Industry's NEWS SOURCE

JULY / AUGUST 2020  
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# THE EVOLUTION OF AN INDUSTRY



## SIGNIFICANT INDUSTRY CHANGES

## “BEST OF THE BEST” AWARD WINNERS

PROUD OF ALL OUR YEARS OF PARTNERING WITH AFCP!

# CONGRATULATIONS ON CELEBRATING 70 YEARS!

1977

**SPEED AND EASE OF DELIVERY**

STEEL CITY CORPORATION

1977

1979

**STEEL CITY CORP**

**Super Roadrunner**

**Cheaper can cost more!!**

**Consider these extra values before buying motor route tubes**

STEEL CITY GIVES MORE VALUE FOR YOUR BUDGETS

1979

1980

**24 HOURS OF ADVERTISING AT 1¢ PER WEEK**

**Super Roadrunner**

**FACTS**

**STEEL CITY CORPORATION**

1980

1981

**TUBES SHOPPER LIKE TIRES**

**look alike**

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**LOOK FOR LONG LIFE, ECONOMY OFFERED WITH.**

Our greatest testimonial is the **MANY MANY YEARS OF SERVICE** performed by quality **Roadrunner** motor route tubes in all types of weather

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1981

1999

**The economical motor route tube designed exclusively for Total Market Coverage**

**TMC MarkeTube**

**FEATURES**

**STEEL CITY CORPORATION**

1999

2015

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**F-2015 Digital Display Rack**

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2015

2000

**1940's** **CHARTER** Developed EVA lined Round Motor Route Tube.

**1950's** **CHARTER** Developed EL steel Square Tube made with round corners, bifurcated letters. Featured a heavy duty metal mounting bracket.

**1960's** **CHARTER** Developed a new Deluxe Plastic Tube featuring a built-in money pocket, raised ribs, drainage tubes for improved lettering, rear view window and reversible bracket.

**1970's** **ROADRUNNER** Developed the Super Roadrunner Tube made of rolled Charpy-tempered steel. Featured a reversible bracket, date, one return built mounting bracket.

**1980's** **ROADRUNNER** Developed the Hi-Flow Roadrunner Tube made of super strong 31-600 resin featuring massive rolled head, solid corners, rear drain tubes, durable strong paper anchors.

**1990's** **ROADRUNNER** Developed a 3 Tube, Easy-Lock self-stretching bracket for the Hi-Flow Roadrunner Tube. Also added the TMC MarkeTube.

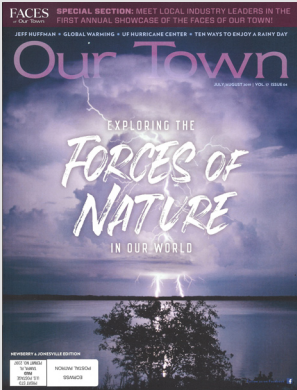
**2000's** **60 YEARS OF PROGRESS TO TAKE YOU INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM!**

**STEEL CITY CORPORATION**

1970-2000



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**COMING** next month

The September issue of INK will look at recent changes in consumer trends and how those changes are impacting advertising and marketing programs. We will also explore how some publications are utilizing social media to enhance print ad response.

**AFCP/NANI HEADQUARTERS:**  
 Loren Colburn, Executive Director  
 Cassey Recore, Associate Executive Director  
 135 Old Cove Road – Suite 210  
 Liverpool, NY 13090  
 Toll Free: 877.203.2327  
 Fax: 781.459.7770  
 Email: [loren@afcp.org](mailto:loren@afcp.org)  
 Web: [www.afcp.org](http://www.afcp.org)

**EDITOR / COMPOSITION:**  
 Barbara Holmes  
 P.O. Box 773840  
 Ocala, FL 34477-3840  
 Phone: 352.598.3500  
 Fax: 352.347.3384  
 Email: [FreePaperINK@aol.com](mailto:FreePaperINK@aol.com)

**MARKETING REPRESENTATIVE:**  
 Wendy MacDonald  
 3105 Camino Del Arco  
 Carlsbad, CA 92009  
 Office: 913.461.3721  
 Email: [wendy@afcp.org](mailto:wendy@afcp.org)

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 Bring news and resources to the attention of the free paper industry by publishing a responsible quality magazine.

**DEADLINES:** The deadline for classified ads, display ads and editorial is the 4th of every month.

Free Paper INK is dedicated to keeping the industry informed on key issues, topics and industry news. If you have any items of interest that should be shared with people throughout the Free Paper Industry, simply email them to [loren@afcp.org](mailto:loren@afcp.org). We welcome your input, appreciate your readership and look forward to your contributions to our content.

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Cover Photo:  
 Loren Colburn



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**Greg Booras, National Sales Manager,  
The Newspaper Manager - Mirabel Technologies**

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#### PRESIDENT



**John Draper**  
*The Free Star*  
P.O. Box 277  
Pipestone, MN 56164  
jdraper@pipestonestar.com  
507-825-3333

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT



**Charlie Delatorre**  
*Tower Publications*  
4400 NW 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32606  
charlie@towerpublications.com  
352-372-5468

#### AT-LARGE DIRECTORS



**Greg Bruns**  
*Arcadia News*  
3850 E. Indian School Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85018  
greg@arcadianews.com  
602-840-6379

#### FIRST VICE PRESIDENT



**Lee Borkowski**  
*Richland Center Shopping News*  
272 North Main Street  
Richland Center, WI 53581  
lborkowski@wcinet.com  
608-647-2911

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Loren Colburn**  
*AFCP / NANI*  
135 Old Cove Road, Suite 210  
Liverpool, NY 13090  
loren@afcp.org  
877-203-2327



**Lisa Miller**  
*New Century Press*  
P.O. Box 28  
Rock Rapids, IA 51246  
lmiller@ncpub.com  
712-472-2525

#### SECOND VICE PRESIDENT



**John Hemperly**  
*Engle Printing & Publishing*  
P.O. Box 500  
Mount Joy, PA 17552  
jhemperly@engleonline.com  
717-492-2514

#### ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Cassey Recore**  
*AFCP / NANI*  
135 Old Cove Road, Suite 210  
Liverpool, NY 13090  
cassey@afcp.org  
877-203-2327



**Randy Miller**  
*The Merchandiser*  
P.O. Box 840  
Lebanon, PA 17042  
randym@themerchandiser.com  
717-270-2742

#### THIRD VICE PRESIDENT



**Farris Robinson**  
*Hometown News*  
2400 S. Ridgewood Avenue #22  
South Daytona, FL 32119  
frobinson@hometownnewsmedia-group.com  
386-322-5900

#### NANI BOARD MEMBER



**Michael Van Stry**  
*Coastal View News*  
4856 Carpinteria Avenue  
Carpinteria, CA 93013  
new@coastalview.com  
805-684-4428



**Barb Perry**  
*Reminder Publishing, LLC*  
280 North Main Street  
East Longmeadow, MA 01028  
bperry@reminderpublications.com  
413-525-6661

#### SECRETARY / TREASURER



**Greg Birkett**  
*Dubuque Advertiser*  
2966 JFK Road  
Dubuque, IA 52002  
gbirkett@dubuqueadvertiser.com  
563-588-0162

#### RIISING STAR REPRESENTATIVE



**Ericka Winterrowd**  
*Tower Publications*  
4400 NW 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32606  
ericka@towerpublications.com  
352-372-5468

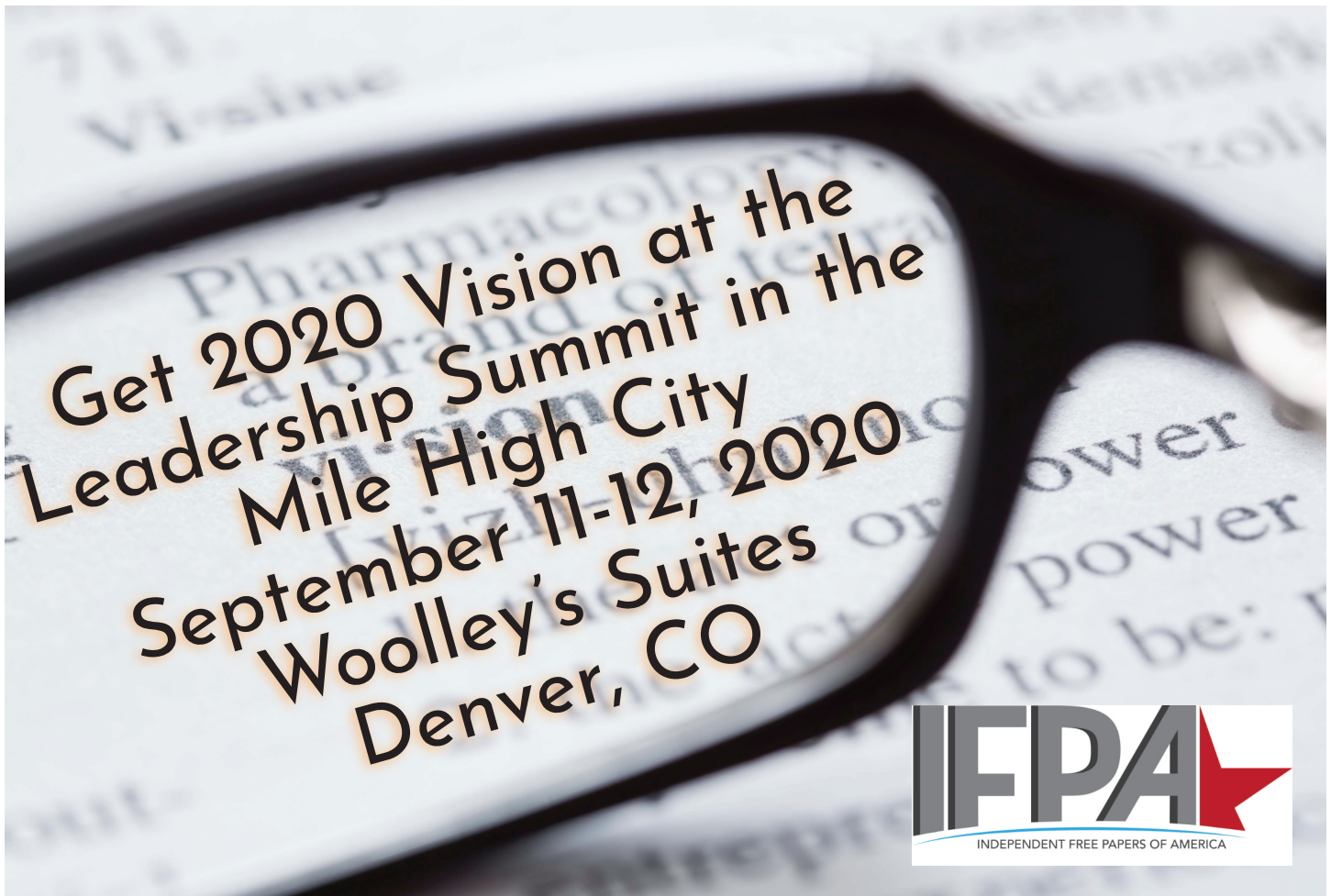


**Will Thomas**  
*Exchange Media Group*  
P.O. Box 490  
Fayetteville, TN 37334  
will@exchange-inc.com  
931-433-9737



**Carol Toomey**  
*Action Unlimited*  
100-1 Domino Drive  
Concord, MA 01742  
carolaction@aol.com  
978-371-2442

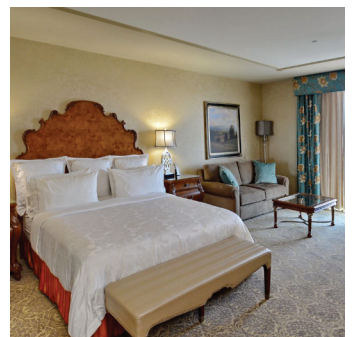
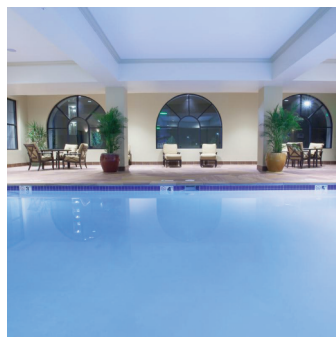




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LOREN COLBURN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# The Key to our longevity is in the History

**THE TIME SPAN BRIDGING 70 YEARS** is a concept that is very difficult for me to get my head around. Since that is far more years than I have had the opportunity to experience (wink, wink), I am going to say that I am just way too young to be able to understand the full impact of 70 years. But I still felt it was important to better understand the significance of an association existing long enough to celebrate 70 years.

As any good researcher in modern times would do, I relied on Google to help me go back in time to get a deeper understanding of the 1950's. The results of my research left me with more questions than answers. Why was AFCP able to persevere for 70 years when soda fountains, poodle skirts, sideburns, coonskin caps, the milkman, Jell-O molds and pogo sticks could not? Since the clicks in Google couldn't provide a clear answer, I started flipping through the printed pages in the INK archives for my answers.

It was in those historical articles, columns and stories that the key to the longevity of AFCP became abundantly clear. Issue after issue, year after year and decade after decade they all described the people that continually kept AFCP moving forward through a constantly changing marketplace. From the very beginning in the early 50s right up through today, it has always been about the sharing and caring exhibited by so many of the industry participants. They gave of their time, their energy and their precious resources to make sure that every publication had equal opportunities for success.

The true sense of "family" that has enveloped the industry since its beginning is so unique in the business world, and the fact that it is alive and strong after 70 years of industry evolution

is amazing. From the idea exchanges to the networking opportunities over the years – it always seems to center around making sure we all move forward together. It is this esprit de corps that has kept so many of us highly engaged with AFCP through the years.

Being able to connect with our peers has provided an invaluable resource to help publications navigate the many changes that 70 years have presented. It also has provided a much needed safe haven where we can openly seek advice, help and direction without the fear of embarrassment or rejection. For me personally, it's been my source of mentors, advisors, role models and most importantly... friends. It just doesn't get any better than this.

So while the National Independent Broadcasters, National Women's Press Association and Community Broadcasters Association have all fallen by the wayside in the last 70 years, the Association of Free Community Publications is still performing its mission – To help its members enhance their profitability and lead in strengthening the free publication industry.

To all the volunteers and members who have participated and supported this organization over those 70 years, we offer a very sincere thank you. It is our hope that you have gained as much from the association as you have given and we look forward to the next 70 years with great anticipation.

We understand that much will continue to change in the coming years, but as long as the sense of community we share stays strong, AFCP will be just fine. You see, it's more than an association – it's a family.

So until the next issue, tell all those media buyers out there... "If it's Free – Buy it!" **INK**





# KAPP ADVERTISING SERVICES is also turning 70 in 2020!

IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT AS AFCP CELEBRATES its 70th anniversary, this month's member feature focuses on another 70-year-old: Kapp Advertising Services.



Robert Kapp

Robert Kapp was just 24 years old when he discovered his twin passions: sales and service. He sold appliances for a short time before purchasing a small local publication, the 2,300-circulation Myerstown Advertiser

in 1950. Additional publications and circulation were added through the years, bringing The Merchandiser's current distribution of 11 editions to over 288,000 homes in Central Pennsylvania and Northern Maryland. A two-edition monthly magazine, Go Local, and a variety of seasonal niche pieces round out the present-day print side of the business.

In addition to its flagship publications, the company has been offering pre-print distribution services to local merchants and national advertisers since 1970. Commercial printing, website design and hosting, specialty products, email blasts and email marketing services have been added along the way.

"Robert Kapp had a vision and he worked hard to succeed, providing jobs for the surrounding communities," said CFO

Judy Fetterolf. "His vision grew a company of over 70 years, starting with one edition and increasing to eleven editions. There has been longevity in our company, showing that Rob was doing something right. The management that was at the helm succeeded in keeping his dream going."

In addition to Robert Kapp, who passed away in 2019, the management team at the helm for many years also included CEO Val Stokes and General Sales Manager Randy Miller, both of whom had retired in recent years, along with Jim Snyder and Jane Means. But the company recently suffered a deep loss with the passing of COO Doug Fabian in April, bringing both Stokes and Miller back to their old jobs on a temporary part-time basis during this time of transition.

"Doug was with THEN (1950) Kapp for 15 months," said Stokes. "He

came in as a total outsider, but he was so loved and well regarded. He inspired the staff. The Facebook tributes from employees [after his death] said that he encouraged them to be more than they thought they could be. He was a wonderful leader and a wonderful man. I'm happy he was part of our team."

The Coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc with a lot of businesses, including Kapp Advertising, which recently had to cut staff hours by 50%. "We're doing what

Continued on page 8



... and NOW (2020)



*Continued from page 7*


we have to do to continue to do business,” said Stokes. “Hopefully we can gear back up and be in good shape going forward.”

Fetterolf’s vision for the company’s future remains bright despite the recent challenges. “In the upcoming years, we will continue to focus on our print publications by improving our customer and community relationships, developing and providing products and services that meet their needs,” she said. “With the changing world, we will also concentrate on opportunities that bring the print and digital market together. Our advertisers and readers need to realize that we are not here to report the news. We are here to provide a service, helping them grow their businesses and getting their message out to the community.”

When Robert Kapp purchased the Myerstown Advertiser in 1950, he realized that if there was a group of like-minded, service-oriented publishers, they could help one another. He wasn’t able to find such a group, so he set about working to create one. He was instrumental in the formation of

the National Association of Advertising Publishers (NAAP), which begat both AFCP and IFPA, as well as the Pennsylvania Association of Advertising Publishers (PAAP), which later became the Mid-Atlantic Community Papers Association (MACPA).

“Mr. Kapp named his company Kapp Advertising Services, and drilled into everyone that service is the most important word in the name,” said Stokes, commenting on Kapp’s service-oriented nature. “His commitment to service and industry education were very important to him and he shared many ideas that he brought back from AFCP, IFPA and MACPA meetings.”

Fetterolf agreed that the company’s success, both past and future, can be attributed to its customer service. She said, “We always go the extra mile for our advertisers and readers. We provide a service to our local communities which has worked in the past and will continue to do so in the future.” 

*Note: At this writing, Pennsylvania is working through the stages of re-opening and Kapp Advertising has just called back staffers to their full-time hours.*

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**CIRCULATION  
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COUNCIL**

**OUR DATA SPEAKS VOLUMES**



# Steel City Corp. is AFCP's Longest-Running Advertiser

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT WE FEATURE AFCP's longest-running advertiser in our 70th anniversary issue.

Steel City Corp. has been meeting the needs of print media for over 80 years, and continuously advertising in Free Paper INK magazine for a little more than half that time. From its first ad in INK magazine in 1977 to now, Steel City Corp. has been a familiar and trusted provider of circulation and distribution supplies.

In addition to poly bags, rubber bands, motor route tubes, carrier bags and other distribution accessories, Steel City offers an assortment of single copy vending machines, both coin-operated and free, in both steel and plastic versions. There are also a wide variety of indoor wire racks, carts, stackables and point of purchase displays from which to choose, as well as a corrugated display rack that is perfect for county fairs or special events with its one-piece, fold-and-go construction. And should one of their racks ever need repair, parts can be ordered by phone and installation instructions are available on the website for instant download.

Steel City is not content to rest on its past accomplishments though. Rather, it is constantly reviewing and seeking to improve its products and processes.

"Technology and social media have created new opportunities for us to continue to build our relationships with our customers and provide new offerings to them as well," said National Sales Manager Jim Smith. "A variety of platforms have allowed us to expand our reach and become a better resource to a greater number of publishers. An example of a specific product growth area has been in the digital displays category. That project has provided increased revenue opportunities for publishers and enhanced their placement in retail locations."

Smith attributes Steel City's success to not only knowing how their own business operates, but also

knowing how their customers' businesses operate. "We spend a great deal of time reviewing industry-related news and announcements, and attending conferences with our employees," he said. "When we attend industry functions, we make it a point to attend the sessions and learn the challenges and opportunities of our customers."



National Sales Manager Jim Smith stands ready to serve, as evidenced by the award given to him by his employees on his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Steel City.



It is this all-in approach that has made Steel City a leading supplier of not only supplies, but also informational resources to help customers in their day-to-day operations. Knowledgeable staff is just a phone call away and ready to help find solutions to maintain and increase circulation, and regular newsletters offer promotional and display tips, audience development tricks, and proven strategies for circulation management and operations.

"I am proud of our willingness to explore new ideas and options for improving our business and the business of our customers," said Smith. "Being invited to be a presenter at industry conferences confirms our effort to be that resource, and that is one of the reasons we have been around for over 80 years."

The past few months of economic turmoil has obviously impacted the print industry, but

Smith firmly believes that print media will not only survive but thrive.

"Publishers are rethinking all areas of their businesses and there are, and will continue to be, great changes in the distribution of printed products," he said. "The industry continues to struggle with the print vs. digital future. The past three months may have expedited some long-range plans, but they may not be the long-term solution for publishers. We still believe in the value of a print product and understand it is a major source of revenue. Obviously, the outcome of that struggle will also have an effect on Steel City Corp." **INK**



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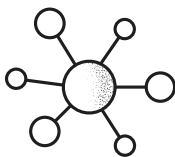
Find relevant candidates by reaching your local community through trusted and well-established print campaigns.



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### Advertise Online

Reach more quality candidates and increase traffic to your job posts when you advertise on [your website].com, now powered by JobBoard.io. A newer, better job board solution, JobBoard.io combines the power of a white-label job board solution with the candidate traffic of ZipRecruiter.



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For more information about ZipBoost and other AFCP Member Benefits, contact the AFCP Office at: 877-203-2327



# 2020 Best of the Best Awards

by Cassey Recore, AFCP Associate Executive Director

**THE 2020 BEST OF THE BEST AWARDS** presentation certainly differed from the traditional way we do things. Normally, the awards presentation is shown at the annual conference to a packed meeting room of our peers somewhere in a city far from where most of us live. This year we had to adjust to this fast-changing world and take the presentation online where at least for now, most of us spend our days communicating with others.

Even though we couldn't be together in person this year, we felt that the awards are such an important AFCP member benefit that we knew we would have to figure out a way to make it work. To publicly honor all of the hard work and dedication that went into each and every piece our members submitted. So that's exactly what we did on June 25, 2020. The awards were presented live via Zoom while our members looked on from afar.

Nearly 1500 entries were submitted this year in over 100 different publishing categories.

As always, the competition was tough but Tower Publications of Gainesville, Florida took the Best of Show award for the second year in a row! Appen Media Group of Alpharetta, Georgia followed just behind, along with The Camrose Booster of Camrose, Alberta and Arcadia News of Phoenix, Arizona.

In the Special Advertising Design Contest to promote "Buy Local", David Brown of Appen Media Group took home the prize! And in the Andrew E. Shapiro Cancer Awareness Promotion category, Tampa Bay Newspapers

of Seminole, Florida took first place.

In the "Most Improved" categories, first place awards were given to Ocean Media Solutions of Stuart, Florida, All Island Media of Edgewood, New York and The Action of Concord, Massachusetts.

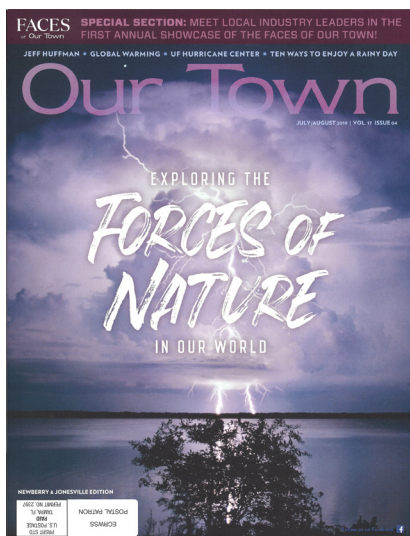
As for the "General Excellence" (less than monthly) categories, the publications who were awarded first place are Tower Publications of Gainesville, Florida, Valley Publications of Santa Clarita, California, Exchange Publishing of Spokane, Washington and The Action of Concord, Massachusetts.

The first place awards given in the "General Excellence" (monthly) categories went to Appen Media Group of Alpharetta, Georgia, Trader's Publishing of Cheyenne, Wyoming, All Island Media of Edgewood, New York, Community News Service of Lawrenceville, New Jersey and Arcadia News of Phoenix, Arizona.

And in the "General Excellence" (weekly) categories, Ocean Media Solutions of Stuart, Florida, Exchange Publishing of Spokane, Washington, The Florida Mariner of North Port, Florida, Genesee Valley Penny Saver of Avon, New York and Tampa Bay Newspapers of Seminole, Florida all took home first place awards.

If you weren't able to join us for the live presentation, you can find the presentation posted at [afcp.org](http://afcp.org).

We would like to extend a BIG CONGRATULATIONS to all of our impressive 2020 Best of the Best award winners! We look forward to once again seeing all of your great work in 2021! **INK**







# 1966 Awards

Reprinted from the Shopper Publisher, July-August 1966

“As a new medium fighting for national quality that will make them acceptable.”

At five o'clock on opening day of the Chicago convention, four judges, all national authorities from the fields of journalism, advertising, marketing and publishing, rolled up their sleeves and began the exacting job of studying the 195 entries - a new record high - in the awards competition.

Four seven hours, they were closeted in the awards room, checking through what amounted to thousands of pages from free circulation papers the country over.

Shortly before midnight, their long and difficult job was finished. Thirty-three papers had emerged as winners of the 1966 Awards Competition, chosen because they represented the cream of the crop in areas ranging from general excellence to use of color.

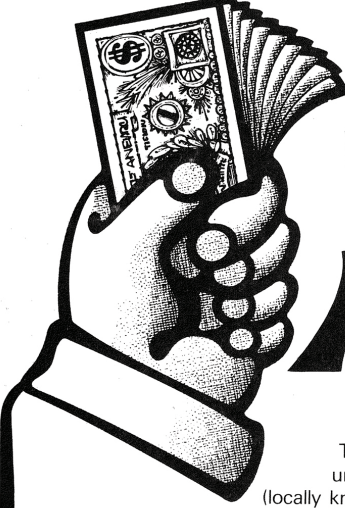
National publicity released by NAAP brought these “tops in shoppers” to the attention of national advertisers and agencies. Special released designed for TV, radio and press in winner’s home areas were prepared on request. In each issue of S/P beginning with September/October, a pair or more of award winners will be featured along with their winning entries.

## Is It Worth It?

While this year’s competition surpassed all previous years in total






*What's the ultimate end  
of every ad campaign?*

# Results!

There's one advertising medium that has shown an amazing, unflagging ability to produce results. Free Community Papers (locally known as shoppers, reminders, pennysavers, free newspapers) have a track record that is a little short of phenomenal.

## Free Community Papers

The National Association of Advertising Publishers (NAAP) represents nearly 500 free community papers in the United States and Canada, reaching more than eight million homes weekly. You can buy any or all of these publications with a single insertion order, a single check, with all details handled by our national office. For information and details about this medium that will work for you, contact NAAP.



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
ADVERTISING PUBLISHERS**  
221 North La Salle Street Chicago, Illinois 60601

NAAP ran the above ad on a 15-time insertion basis in the "magazine of advertising agencies." Publishers who wished to do so could obtain a "repro print" to run the ad in their own publications.

entries and total papers, there were still only 51 papers in the competition out of a possible 360. If the full benefits are to be utilized, participation must be increased. The competition is an industry effort to build national acceptance for shoppers. It is effective only to the degree that its members are part of it.

The awards competition is a heavy work load. This year's chairman Victor Jose and his committee, as well as the NAAP staff, rolled up a tremendous number of man hours before, during and after the convention. The judges contributed what constituted a full day's work from their pressured sched-

ules. Publishers spent time, effort and money preparing entries and shipping them in from all over the U.S.

Is it worth it? It is for those who enter the competition.

Publishers receive three direct benefits - a real opportunity to compare their papers with others, and to be compared; judgment (and critiques if requested) by outside authorities; national and local exposure and publicity.

Beyond this there is a major underlying benefit for the entire industry.

### The Inside Problem

The short history of the free circulation industry has been one of fantastic growth. Papers have sprung up by the hundreds in every part of the country, but their concepts of good and bad publishing and advertising are frequently "hit or miss", based on personal judgment of the characteristics and needs of their immediate area.

As a result, there are today more kinds, sizes and varieties of shoppers than any ad agency could classify with a computer. But the *important* variance is not in mechanics. It's in *quality*. **INK**



# Past NAAP – AFCP Presidents

#	Start	End	President	Publication	City & State
1	1950	- 1951	John S. Morgan	Alma Reminder	Alma , MI
2	1951	- 1952	S.T. Barkman	Berlin Shopping News	Berlin , WI
3	1952	- 1953	Floyd A. House	Pennysaver	Angola , NY
4	1953	- 1954	H.E. Von Haden	Fort Reminder	Fort Atkinson , WI
5	1954	- 1955	W.J. Van Allen	The Reminder	Plymouth , WI
6	1955	- 1956	Lynn Leet	Buyers Guide	Mount Pleasant , MI
7	1956	- 1957	Mack Bennett	Shoppers Guide	Otsego , MI
8	1957	- 1958	A.K. Fox	Westside Shopper	Des Moines , IA
9	1958	- 1959	L.U. Tollefson	Luverne Announcer	Luverne , MN
10	1959	- 1960	Delbert Kistler	Fort Reminder	Fort Atkinson , WI
11	1960	- 1961	Victor Green	The Banner Gazette	Pekin , IN
12	1961	- 1962	Robert S. Kapp	Merchandiser	Myerstown , PA
13	1962	- 1963	Elmer H. Verneer	Sioux Center Shopper	Sioux Center , IA
14	1963	- 1964	Gordon Davis	Pennysaver	Skaneateles , NY
15	1964	- 1965	Thomas S. Wallace	Scotsman Press	Syracuse , NY
16	1965	- 1966	Joseph M. Sklenar	Sklenar Publishing Co.	Ames , IA
17	1966	- 1967	Max L. Colgrove	Pennysaver	Mansfield , PA
18	1967	- 1968	James McLaughlin	Flashes	Eaton Rapids , MI
19	1968	- 1969	Victor Jose	The Graphic	Richmond , IN
20	1969	- 1970	Rudy Van Drie	Ames Advertiser	Ames , IA
21	1970	- 1971	Dwaine C. Lighter	The Algona Reminder	Algona , IA
22	1971	- 1972	Gilbert M. Selznick	Reporter	Toms River , NJ
23	1972	- 1973	William E. Mitten	The Windsor Press	Hamburg , PA
24	1973	- 1974	Richard Luzadder	Osceola Shopper	Kissimmee , FL
25	1974	- 1975	J.R. Carson	Tip-Off Shopping Guide	Jonesville , MI
26	1975	- 1976	James Start	Fox Valley Shopping News	Yorkville , IL
27	1976	- 1977	John Holmes	Holmes Publishing Co.	Whiting , IA
28	1977	- 1978	Victor G. Ianno	Scotsman Press	Syracuse , NY
29	1978	- 1979	James O'Day	Shopper and Foto News	Merrill , WI
30	1979	- 1980	Roger Miller	Town Crier	Brattleboro , VT
31	1980	- 1981	Shirley Colgrove	Advertiser Advocate	Alief , TX
32	1981	- 1982	James Crosby	The Valley Shopper	West Des Moines , IA
33	1982	- 1983	Gladys Van Drie	Ames Advertiser	Ames , IA
34	1983	- 1984	Thomas Karavakis	Towne & Country Shopper	Waupaca , WI
35	1984	- 1985	Stan Henry	Chanry Communications Ltd.	Levittown , NY
36	1985	- 1986	Terry Burge	Burge Publishing Corp.	Houston , TX
37	1986	- 1988	Edward B. Marks	Marks-Roiland Communications	Jericho , NY
38	1988	- 1990	Craig Trongaard	Woodward Communications	Dubuque , IA
39	1990	- 1991	Bruce Gotts	Access Communications	Adrian , MI
40	1991	- 1992	J.J. Blonien	Enterprise Newspapers	West Allis , WI
41	1992	- 1994	Lee Borkowski	Trade Lines	Eau Claire , MI
42	1994	- 1996	Dick Mandt	The Flyer	Tampa , FL
43	1996	- 1998	Robert Barrington	Antigo Shoppers Guide	Antigo , WI
44	1998	- 2000	Gordon Lowry	Add Inc.	Columbus , OH
45	2000	- 2002	Dan Holmes	The Berkshire Pennysaver	Lee , MA
46	2002	- 2004	Loren Colburn	Scotsman Press	Syracuse , NY
47	2004	- 2006	Bill Welsh	Maverick Media	Syracuse , NE
48	2006	- 2008	Jim Kendall	The Flyer	Tampa , FL
49	2008	- 2010	Orestes Baez	Maryland Pennysaver	Baltimore , MD
50	2010	- 2012	Scott Patterson	Carolina Moneysaver	Charlotte , NC
51	2012	- 2014	Carol Toomey	Action Unlimited	Concord , MA
52	2014	- 2016	Greg Birkett	Dubuque Advertiser	Dubuque , IA
53	2016	- 2018	Shane Goodman	Big Green Umbrella Media	Des Moines , IA
54	2018	- 2020	Charlie Delatorre	Tower Publications	Gainesville , FL
55	2020	- 2022	John Draper	Pipestone Publishing	Pipestone , MN





# AFCP FAMILY Connections

by John Draper

**I'VE BEEN FORTUNATE** as a publisher to have been part of the AFCP family since 2008. This is 12 of the 70 years that AFCP has been

servicing the free paper industry. When I first came to the board that summer of '08, I was welcomed by men and women who showed a deep love for AFCP. The culture was one of getting things done not to build themselves, but rather to build up the members and put their success at the forefront of all.

From day one my AFCP experience brought me in contact with publishers from all across the country. These individuals were just that, individuals. I connected with men and women from varied geographies representing the industry's largest and smallest operations. Regardless of their backgrounds or mine, we had something in common. We all wanted and needed a strong association to help us maintain strong publications within our communities.

Over the past 12 years my connections increased in number and my AFCP family grew. Some of these have retired or moved on, but they're still there if called upon. A few have passed yet their impact remains. My cell phone is full of resources quick to offer assistance or just commiserate about the business of publishing. Time and time again the AFCP family is there for me

when needed – just like it has been for every other member for 70 years.

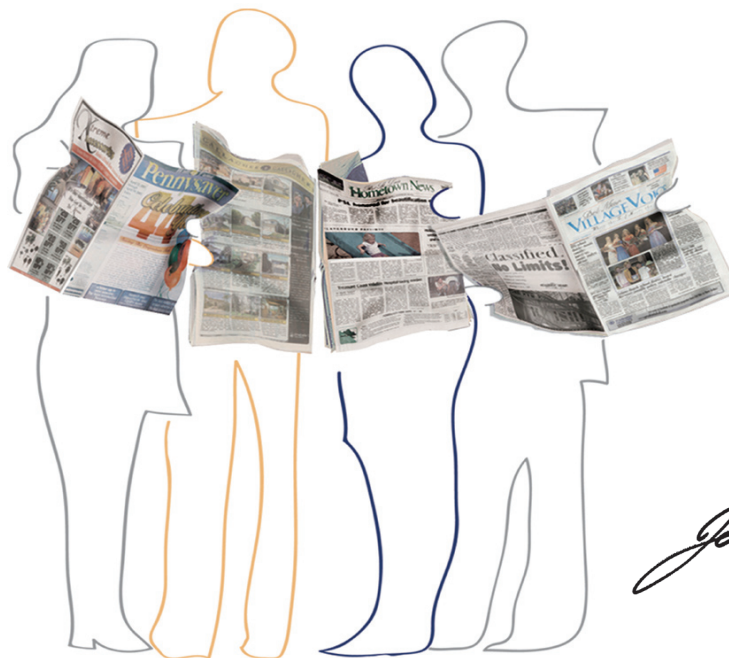
I certainly cannot speak to all 70 years of AFCP tradition or lore, but I can speak to the fact that this member-first mantra was deeply seeded before my arrival and it remains so today. I think it is a key component to building the familial culture in which we all look out for one another.

The challenges we face in 2020 are like none other. This can be agreed to by all generations of publishers. The challenge of competing for ad budgets is not new, but it is certainly more wide spread than in the past. The challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic are strong, real, and new. These have created budget challenges that affect staffing, distribution, re-investment, profitability and pretty much every aspect of how we operate.

Looking back can teach us much about facing the challenges ahead. The vast majority of us cannot go it alone. We need resources. We need training. We

need inspiration. We need a family. History has shown that when we collaborate and inspire one another, we can face and defeat the challenge of the day.

I'm proud to be a part of an association that has strived to inspire for the past 70 years and has kept the industry family at the fore of all they do. **INK**



A handwritten signature of John Draper in black ink.

JOHN DRAPER  
**AFCP PRESIDENT**  
THE FREE STAR



# Reminiscing with Dave Neuharth



Dave Neuharth

What stands out is the success of The Leadership Institute (TLI), which is considered the top training program in the print industry.

THOUSANDS OF HOURS OF VOLUNTEER service, leadership, training, camaraderie, conferences all across the country, and working to help the financial statements of members are some of the benefits provided by the Association of Free Community Publications (AFCP).

In 2020 the association is celebrating its 70th year of being the top free paper association in the country.

The volunteers who have contributed thousands of hours to AFCP over the years are numerous. Many of the past officers and board members of the association are to be commended for this service.

In 1950 John S. Morgan, the publisher of the Alma Reminder, in Alma, Michigan, convinced publishers in the free paper industry to form a free paper association. They named it the National Association of Advertising Publishers (NAAP).



John S. Morgan

Several years later, in an effort to raise revenue, NAAP published a rate book offering display ads. The book noted that its 78 members had a circulation of 317,692. The cost of a one-column-inch ad in all publications was \$52.90. The cost of a full page ad in all publications was \$2,274.89.

In 1957 the board hired an executive director, S. T. Barkman, a retired shopper publisher, to lead the association.

For the next 20 years NAAP was not flush with funds and survived on volunteer help.

The association was made up of shoppers and in 1980, the board opted to open membership to companies who also owned subscription newspapers in addition to shoppers.

Vic Jose, a longtime supporter of NAAP, did not agree with the board's

decision. The NAAP board member and former association president, and publisher of The Graphic in Richmond, Indiana, abruptly resigned from the board.

With the support of others, he led a split of NAAP members and they formed a new association, the Independent Free Papers of America (IFPA).

After that change, the NAAP board officially changed the name of the association to the Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP).

In the early years the control of AFCP was handed over to Smith & Bucklin, a management firm in Chicago, that managed the finances and scheduled conferences for a period of 18 years.

In 1999 the AFCP board moved in another direction and named Craig McMullin as its executive director. The contract with Smith & Bucklin ended and the association set up an office and staff for McMullin in Colorado.

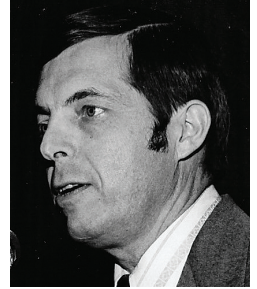


Craig McMullin

McMullin was a long-time member of AFCP and served as the association's treasurer. He was the former chief financial officer of the Denver Post Corporation and Midwest Newspapers.

Under his direction, with huge increased amounts in classified revenue, the association set up many member benefit programs and invested funds. The association was on a roll. Membership circulation soared from over 10 million to over 30 million. Revenue grew from \$660,000 to near \$4 million.

On August 6 of 2009 the free paper



Vic Jose





industry was stunned when McMullin was killed in a motorcycle accident. He was returning to his home in Idaho Springs, Colorado, from a West Coast trip when he blew a tire on the Interstate in southern Utah. He was only 52 years old at the time.



Loren Colburn

In February of 2010 the AFCEP board of directors named Loren Colburn as its executive director. He was the longtime publisher of the Scotsman Press in Syracuse, New York.

Colburn had served on the AFCEP board since 1997 and was the past president and treasurer of the association. He received numerous awards and honors from AFCEP and

the Free Community Papers of New York (FCPNY) for his service.

Under his leadership AFCEP has continued its mission to provide the best in benefits for its members. One of the key benefits are the many conferences which have provided excellent training and entertainment at many great places in America. (*See the sidebar at right.*)

Every conference we attended had great training programs and awards ceremonies. On the other side of the coin, are memories of the many attractions in the areas we visited. AFCEP took advantage of these, and several stand out in my memory.

In 2002 AFCEP combined with the Community Papers of Florida (CPF) and the Southeastern Advertising Publishers Association (SAPA) for a joint conference in Daytona Beach, Florida. It was the first joint conference of the free paper industry and a record of over 400 persons attended.



Gordon Lowry

For the Friday evening reception, the attendees were brought by bus to the Daytona International Speedway where race cars were part of the program. Everyone had the opportunity to slide through the window into a NASCAR race car and ride shotgun for three laps around the world's most famous NASCAR track. The speed was limited to 175 miles per hour, but

this was fast enough to put a large smile on the faces of those who took advantage of the opportunity.

In the 2005 and 2016 conferences in San Francisco and San Diego, we were privileged to visit two World

*Continued on page 18*

## Oh, the Places we've been!

- 1999 – Ritz Carlton Pentagon City  
Washington D.C.
- 2000 – Drake Hotel  
Chicago, Illinois
- 2001 – Ritz Carlton  
Phoenix, Arizona
- 2002 – Adams Mark Resort  
Daytona Beach, Florida
- 2003 – Flamingo Hilton Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada
- 2004 – Sheridan Hotel  
Savannah, Georgia
- 2005 – Hyatt Regency  
San Francisco, California
- 2006 – Doral Country Club  
Miami, Florida
- 2007 – Marriott Hotel  
New Orleans, Louisiana
- 2008 – West Mission Hills Resort  
Palm Springs, California
- 2009 – Sheraton Hotel  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
- 2010 – The Westin La Paloma  
Tucson, Arizona
- 2011 – Tradewinds Island Grand Resort  
St. Pete Beach, Florida
- 2012 – Downtown Sheraton Hotel  
Atlanta, Georgia
- 2013 – Marriott City Center  
Denver, Colorado
- 2014 – Disney's Coronado Springs Resort  
Orlando, Florida
- 2015 – Savannah Marriott Riverfront  
Savannah, Georgia
- 2016 – Sheraton Hotel & Marina  
San Diego, California
- 2017 – Galt House Hotel  
Louisville, Kentucky
- 2018 – Inner Harbor Hyatt Regency  
Baltimore, Maryland
- 2019 – Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada



*Continued from page 17*

War II decommissioned aircraft carriers for our receptions.

In San Francisco we traveled by boat across the bay to Alameda to visit the USS Hornet. In San Diego our hotel was close to the famed USS Midway. We were escorted through the carriers, on deck and below deck, and treated to entertainment for our receptions.

In 2006 AFCEP again joined with CPF and a record attendance was set with the conference at the Doral Country Club in Miami.

With both associations flush with revenue from their classified networks, the attendees were treated to food, drinks, entertainment and training that included one of the top names in the industry, Tom Hopkins.

The Friday evening reception was held on the water in Miami at the famous Vizcaya Museum. First class entertainment was provided and AFCEP and CPF picked up the cost — over \$125,000.

On Saturday afternoon the reception, with an open bar and food, was on the Doral golf course. A putting tournament was held with the first long putt hitting the hole providing a prize of \$1 million. No one won the million. Over 800 members took advantage of the noon reception. The cost was \$85,000.

With the decrease in classified revenue in the industry, associations now have to control expenses; but AFCEP continues to provide great benefits for its members.

Included in these member benefits are the annual conference, the “Best of the Best” awards competition, online forums, conference speakers and trainers, members resource contacts, the largest trade show in the community publishing industry, The Leadership Institute (TLI) professional certification training, the AFCEP digital toolbox, industry surveys, supporting PaperChain, The Rising Stars program, keeping members informed on changes with the USPS, and publishing the industry’s main source of news – Free Paper INK.



USS Midway



Tom Hopkins



Hoping for \$1 Million!

What stands out is the success of The Leadership Institute (TLI), which is considered the top training program in the print industry.

AFCEP director Carlos Guzman made the proposal for TLI, and it was accepted by the board of directors and kicked off at the 2006 conference in Miami.

Rob Zarrilli was named the Dean of The Leadership Institute. Through the years he has directed the successful program sponsored by AFCEP.

The original goal of TLI was to develop a core of great leaders by establishing a Sales Management College. At the 2006 conference, eight 50-minute TLI classes were provided with Tom Hopkins and Elaine Buckley as the instructors.

The plan was for TLI to be ongoing. Certificates of Achievement would be awarded, and testing and degrees would be part of the program.

Today the upgraded requirements for attendees are to complete 15 unduplicated TLI class credits, pass the comprehensive AAE Exam, and to have at least two years of on-the-job experience in the advertising industry.

If successful, participants will be awarded a certified Associate Advertising Executive degree and the member will be invited to participate at the graduation ceremony conducted at the next annual conference.

To date, 2,265 persons have attended the classes at the AFCEP, state and regional conferences, earning over 13,841 class credits in 87 different course cur-



Carlos Guzman



Rob Zarrilli



The inaugural staff of The Leadership Institute (TLI) included (L-R) Charlie Delatorre, Jim Busch, Jon Cantrell, Bill Bowman, Chris Dayton, Tim Rychel, Rob Zarrilli, Susan Kremers, Bill Osborne and David Tomasini.



riculums. A total of 124 people have completed all the requirements and been certified as Associate Advertising Executives by the AFCP Board of Directors.

One might think that it was sales reps who led the way in earning degrees, but they'd be wrong. The degrees were also earned by some of the top management members in AFCP member publications, including those listed in the sidebar at right.

Along the way, we've lost some keys members of the association.



Bill Welsh

In November of 2014, Will "Bill" Welsh died in his winter home in Arizona. He was 68 and had recently retired.

Welsh served on the AFCP board of directors for many years, including as its 47th president from 2004 – 2006. He was the recipient of numerous awards and credited with the growth of the association. He served as publisher of several newspaper groups in Nebraska City, Nebraska.

In his honor the AFCP board established the Bill Welsh Foundation to honor the impact he had on the industry. The foundation has been supported by the association's members and vendors.

In his honor the AFCP board established the Bill Welsh Foundation to honor the impact he had on the industry. The foundation has been supported by the association's members and vendors.



Brian Gay

In May of 2016, Brian Gay died following an illness. Gay served the free paper industry in many activities. He was the owner and publisher of a shopper in Iowa. He was 70 years old.

After he sold the publication, he worked for Pitney Bowes for a while before being named the executive director of the Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP).


He wrote a monthly column for INK for many years. The articles centered around sales and sales management.

Victor "Vic" Jose died in December of 2014 in his hometown of Richmond, Indiana. He was 92.

Before his retirement he was the owner of a weekly shopper in Richmond. His publications won many awards with NAAP and IFPA.

After he retired, he authored a book titled, "The Free Paper in America: Struggle and Survival," about the free paper industry.

Members can thank AFCP for being the largest and best association in the industry. The benefits and memories it has provided will long be remembered.

Now we will look ahead to the next 70 years. 

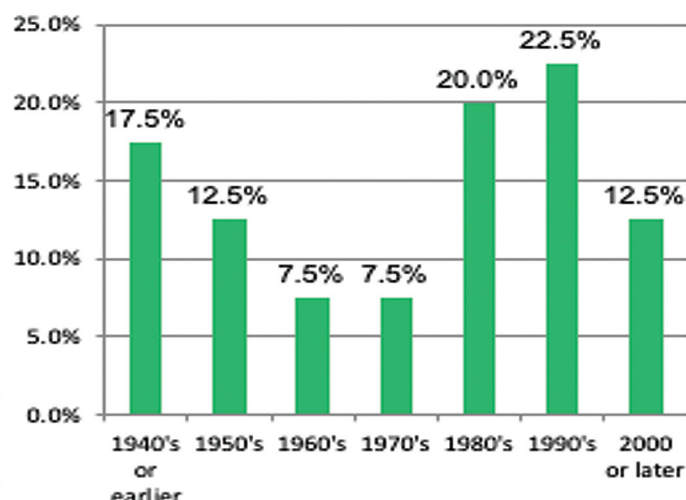
## Notable TLI Graduates in Top Management Positions

- Loren Colburn  
Executive Director of AFCP
- Terri Drake  
Giant Nickel in Washington
- Randy Miller  
Kapp Advertising in Pennsylvania
- Shane & Jolene Goodman  
Big Green Umbrella Media in Iowa
- Mitchel Shakour  
Monadnock Shopper News in New Hampshire
- John Draper  
Current AFCP President
- Glen Fetzner  
Ocean Media in Florida
- Dan Alexander  
Sun Community News in New York
- Patricia Abraham  
Carolina Panorama in South Carolina
- Doug & Jean Sutton  
Santa Clarita Gazette in California
- Lee Borkowski  
Woodward Communications in Wisconsin
- Carol & Joe Toomey  
The Action in Massachusetts
- Steve Harrison  
Genesee Valley Media in New York
- Barb Powers  
Exchange Publishing in Washington
- Rich Paulsen  
Creston Publishing in Iowa
- Farris Robinson  
Hometown News in Florida
- Hans Appen  
Appen Media Group in Georgia
- Bridgette Stewart  
HiLites in New York
- Tony Onellion  
North Shore Plus in Louisiana
- Julie Thompson  
Southern Minnesota Shoppers in Minnesota
- Michael Van Stry  
Coastal View News in California
- Deb Weigel  
Oelwein Publishing in Iowa
- Gladys Van Drie  
Retired former publisher in Iowa

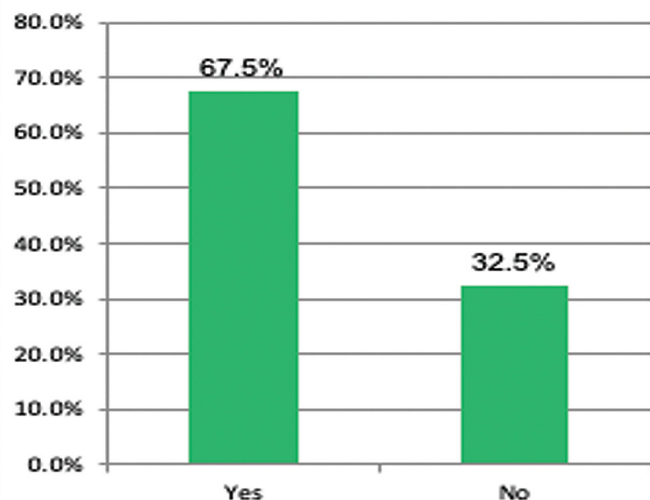


# The Survey Says...

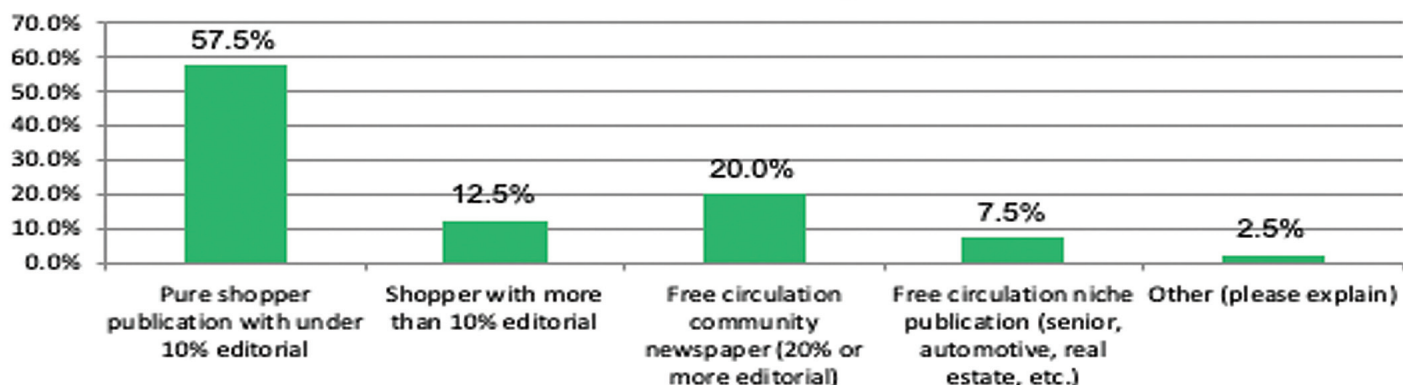
**What decade was your community publication started?**



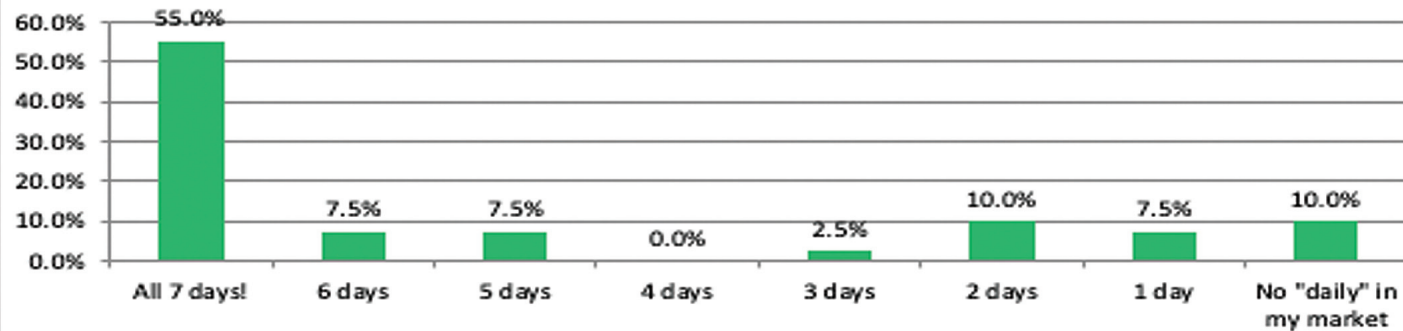
**Are the current operators the original owners or family?**



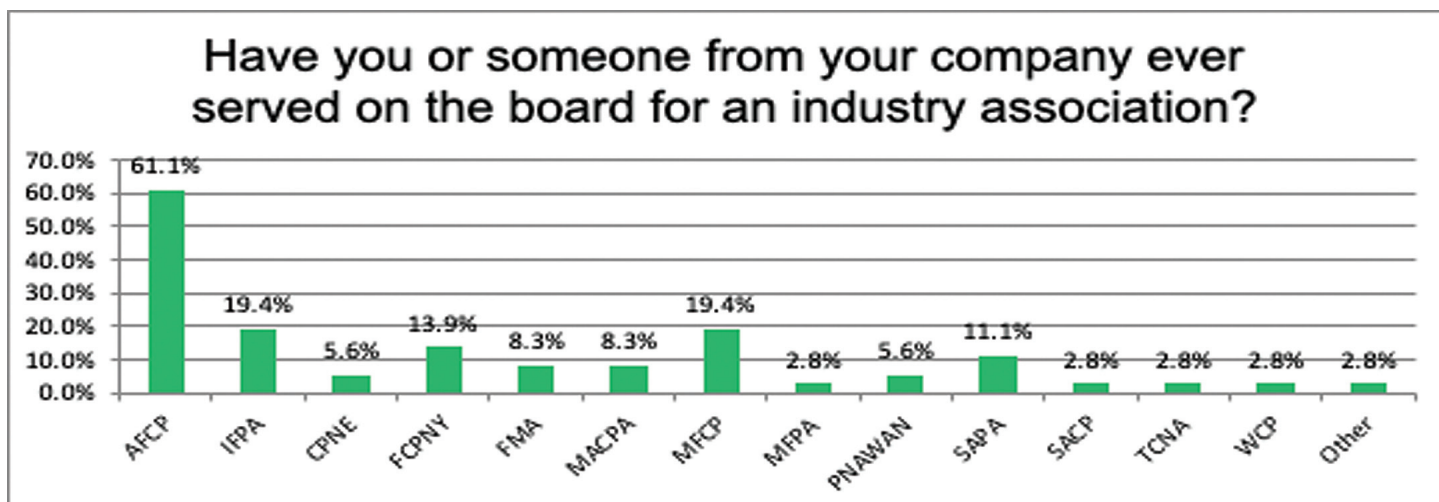
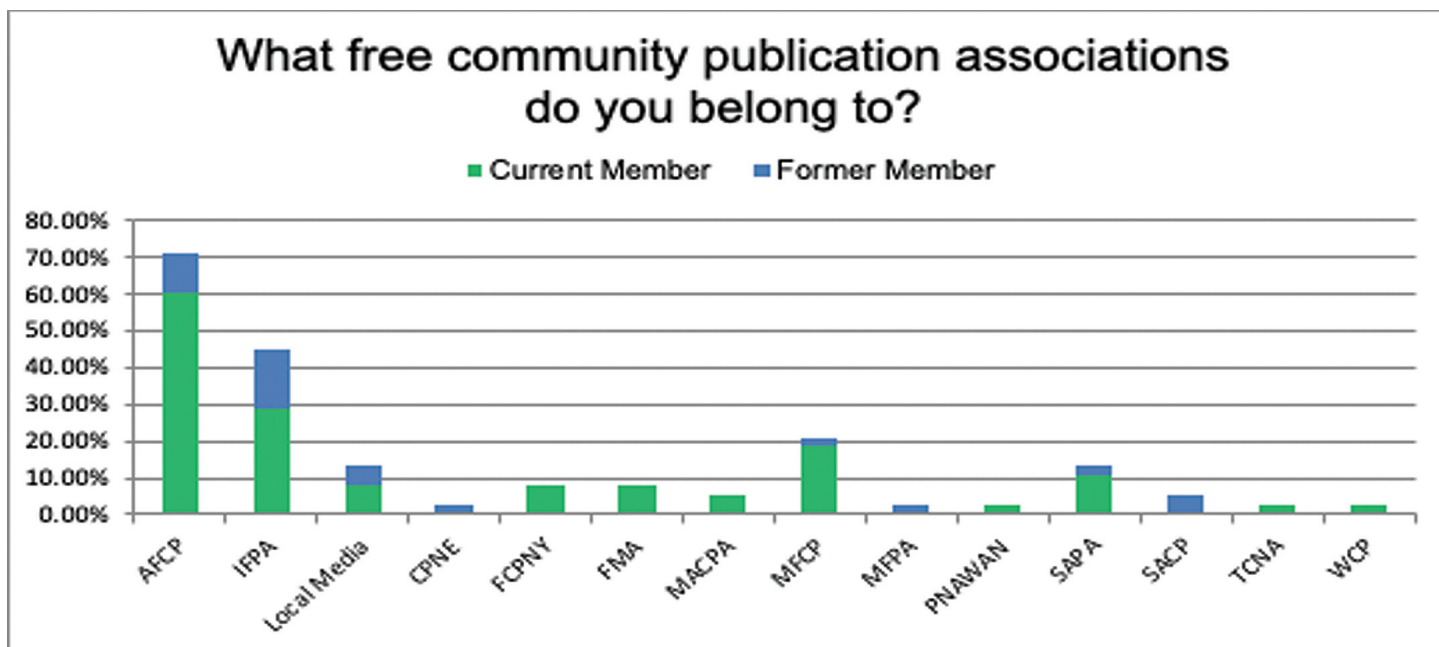
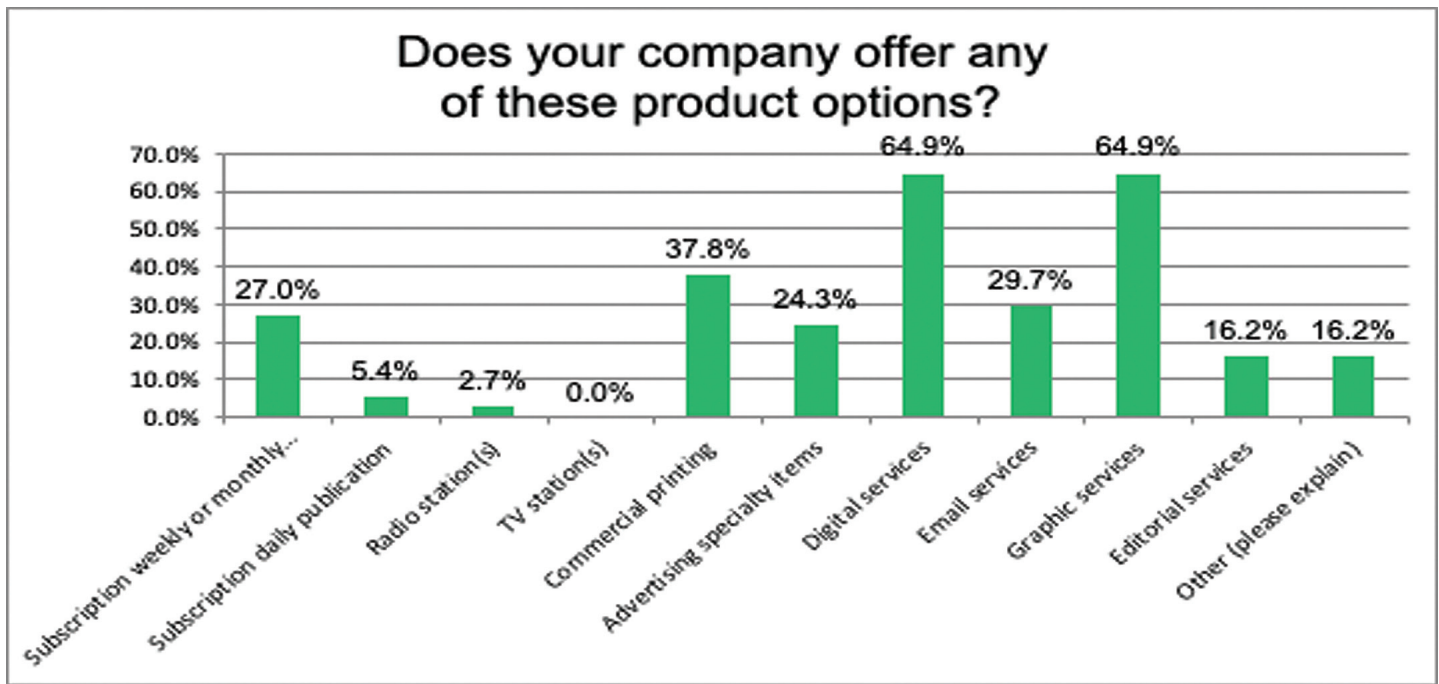
**Was your original free distribution publication any of the following?**



**How many days does the "daily newspaper" in your market publish their print publication?**







# When the Industry was in its Infancy

by Lee Borkowski



Lee Borkowski

**IT'S BEEN 70 YEARS** since the founding of our association – and, basically our industry. Though I'm not quite that old, I can say that "I remember it well."

You see 1949 is the year that my grandparents, Mel and Reva Murphy, founded their publication. My grandfather was a tool and die maker, my grandmother a stay-at-home mom. They wanted to find a business that they could run together. Several out-of-town relatives were talking up a local publication that they received every week for free. It was called the Hi-Lites.

My grandparents were intrigued and wanted to know more about the publication that was delivered free to every home and filled with nothing but advertisements. They reached out to the publishers of the Hi-Lites, Ben and Cora Jenson. And, in perfect alignment with the culture of our industry, the Jensons were welcoming and happy to share their story and knowledge in spite of the fact – and aware that – my grandparents would be starting a publication a mere 14.5 miles away.

Armed with a little information and a mindset to make it happen, my family's business was launched in August of 1949. The business was run from the dining room table of the multi-generational family home. That table is where ads were built, pages were pasted up and bundles were assembled for the post office. Long hours, uncertain futures. Everybody from great grandma on down to the youngest child was involved. The shopper was definitely a family business. And once ink gets in your blood, it's hard to get it out.

This phenomenon became apparent as small businesses sprouted up all over the nation. There was competition – but it was with the daily newspapers – and it was fierce. The founders of these small businesses relied heavily on each other and our state and national organizations to help them find their way and battle the giants.

Imagine the challenge of building a business then compared to today. What did we need to learn first? How did we find out about each other? How did the national associations keep everyone informed?

I called Gladys Van Drie to ask those very ques-

tions. Her husband Rudy had launched a shopper in Ames, Iowa. Kay Fox of Des Moines made a trip to see Rudy and urged him to join and attend AFCP.

The first conference Rudy attended was in Des Moines. The conference was a success and Rudy learned a lot. He was determined that they both attend the next annual meeting in Kansas – close enough to drive to, but too far to make it back for a night's sleep. Funds were very tight in the early years, so Gladys and Rudy spent the night sitting in the lobby of the hotel. She said it was worth every sleepless second, and something she looks back on with fond memories.

The following year Rudy had T-shirts printed prior to conference that said, "My Daddy publishes a Shopper". He sold out, and the profit from those shirts paid for their hotel room and trip costs.

Gladys also told me of the sharing and caring that happened in the early days as it still does today. She mentioned many folks from days past, most of whom are gone now: Tom Karavakis, John Morgan, Mel Jacobs, Kay Fox, Ron Clare, and Joe Sklenar to name a few. As she stated, there is no other industry with the dynamics of the Free Paper Industry. Ink was in their blood.

The innovation and drive of those who paved the way to where we are today is a marvel to me.

I think every publication has a memorable backstory and The Paper, located in Milford, Indiana has a good one! The Paper is owned and still operated by



Mevin Murphy







the Baumgartner family. Years ago I traveled to their site for a visit.

They have a lovely facility. One of the highlights for me was seeing their 10x15 hand-fed, old-style Gordon platen press. It's a beauty! Also, on display with the press is a refinished California type case, numerous locking coins, make-up rules, pica measuring rules and burnishing rollers.

On my first visit, someone said that the press was "the goose that laid the golden egg". I've always remembered that. A year or so ago I reached out to Ron Baumgartner to ask about the press. He didn't recall ever hearing the press referred to as the "golden egg" but he did recall a rather funny story.

Ron's parents started the family business in a rather small shop. The press was an integral part of all that they produced – business cards, small handbills and flyers. And it was in this shop where Ron grew up that ink began coursing through his veins.

Technology at The Papers moved forward toward offset printing in the 60s and 70s for both the newspapers and the commercial print shop. The Gordon press fell into disuse and became a space burden in the tight quarters of their shop. Ron and his wife Gloria lived just a few city blocks from the shop in a house that had a garage in the basement. Ron used a lift truck to move the press down the sloping drive and into the basement, where it sat undisturbed for years. At some point Ron removed the garage door and bricked up the basement.

A few years later, a major expansion of their print facility was to take place. Ron's mother thought



California type case.

that creating an old letterpress equipment display in their new and expanded front office would be a great idea. The only problem was that the press was trapped in Ron's basement. It took a lot of men and some really big wrenches to dismantle the press and carry

it up the one-flight wooden stairway. It was then sandblasted, painted and reassembled. The California type case was refinished as well. If ink is in your blood and you ever get to Indiana, a stop in Milford is a must!

I have to admit that I miss the old days – the smell of melted wax, the Comp 4 typesetting machine, X-acto knives and burnishing sticks – and the camaraderie of the team, some of whom you became closer to than your own brothers and sisters, and who actually became family.

Greg Birkett became family at his company in Dubuque, Iowa at the tender age of 10. He lived across the street from the Dubuque Advertiser, and he liked to hang out there. His first job was picking up string off the floor of the inserting area. It paid a whopping 25 cents and a bottle of pop. It really wasn't pay – more just a kindness from the owners, Jack and Marge Aird, towards a young boy. What that kindness did was instill a shot of ink in his blood that's still there today.

Greg wasn't the only young man the Airds mentored. They also mentored Tim Steines. His family owned a farm just down the road. He started hanging around a bit and was put to work in the print shop where he helped with the printing of football programs and more. Years later he's still there, and he still has ink in his blood. Both Greg and Tim now have an ownership stake in the company. Their "family" business.

The free paper industry is a family, too, and that has been so evident these past few months as we pull together to help one another navigate the uncharted waters of the pandemic. Just like in days of old, families are working from home.

And AFCEP is working to find them where they are, to help them compete against a common enemy. **INK**



Gordon platen press.



# NAAP's First President, John S. Morgan Celebrates 30 Year Anniversary

*Reprinted from NAAP News, March-April 1979*

When President Jim O'Day raps his gavel, bringing NAAP members to attention at this year's 30th annual convention, NAAP's first president, John S. Morgan, will celebrate 30 years of active and constructive participation in NAAP and also mark his 30th year of perfect attendance at NAAP conventions.

John, and his lovely wife Ferne, were among the original pioneers that met in January, 1950, with a handful of other "shopper" publishers from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan at Chicago's Palmer House Hotel to initiate the formation of NAAP.

"We all got together, about 20 of us, in Chicago, to figure out a way we could get national advertising for our papers. We were businessmen, who we felt needed each other and we had one common cause - we were all looking for new business. Nothing has change it seems," Morgan said.

## "Have Come a Long Way"

"After the meeting, we decided that we would go home, think about how we could solve our common problems and meet again next year. When we met again in 1951, the secretary/treasurer had run off with our money. Seemed like a lot of money. It was about \$200. That didn't bother us, though, we just picked up and kept on going. In 1953, we met in Detroit at the Statler Hilton. We were growing then and we have come a long way since."

For 30 years, as a past president, a key committee member and as a mentor to new and young free-circulation publishers, John Morgan has faithfully and effectively served NAAP.

## Solid Performer

"John is a rock. He is solid, his business is

solid and his devotion to NAAP is something we can all count on and be proud of. He is always cheerful, eager to offer his sage advice, and willing to lend a helping hand whenever needed. We are fortunate to have John Morgan among our number," says Jim O'Day.

In 1935, John Morgan graduated from Michigan State University with an undergraduate degree in metallurgical engineering. Almost immediately after graduation, he took a position with the Pontiac Motor Co. in Pontiac, Michigan.

"I realized very quickly that I was not cut out to be inside all the time. I had a friend, Cecil Hay, who lived in Charlotte (Michigan), who owned a shopper. He talked me into going into business with him. We chose Alma (Michigan) as the best location for our new paper. So, with \$24 and a Model-T Ford, I went to Alma to start the ALMA REMINDER," said Morgan.

The first edition of the REMINDER, a mimeographed, four page shopper, was published on Jan. 18, 1938. A year later, with \$100 he borrowed from the bank, Morgan bought Hay out and sought his own fortune.

## Early Struggle

The early years were years of supreme sacrifice and struggle for the Morgan family. For the first 10 years, the Alma Reminder was published strictly by mimeograph. In the late 1940's, Morgan began lithographing a portion of the paper. In the early 1950's he purchased a used offset printing machine. He took it apart, rebuilt it, and by 1953, all of his printing was done by offset.

"This is the way it was

**ALMA REMINDER**  
 Mon. Jan. 25 Published at 1194 E. Superior St. Phone 37

Our coverage: Alma, St. Louis, Elwell and their rural routes.  
 Take advantage of the inexpensive means offered by the Reminder of reaching every home in your trading area.  
 DISPLAY ADS, CLASSIFIED ADS, or we will attach your bills to the REMINDER for delivery.  
 FOR DETAILS, phone 37, or call at 1194 E. Superior Street.

Dr. J. V. KADDOFF  
 Optometrist  
 Even examined and  
 Glasses fitted.....  
 220 E. Superior St.  
 Opp. Grand Theatre,  
 Alma Mich.

**GOOD COFFEE IS OUR SPECIALTY**  
 MEALS, LUNCHEES, SHORT ORDERS, Genuine Coney Island Red Hotel

**CONEY ISLAND CAFE**

**JANUARY FURNITURE BARGAINS**

WE HAVE A LIMITED AMOUNT OF STOCK WHICH MUST BE SOLD BY THE END OF THIS MONTH. WE HAVE CUT THE PRICES TO THE BONE IN ORDER TO DO SO. IF YOU ARE A THRIFTY BUYER DO NOT HESITATE TO GRASP THIS OPPORTUNITY.

Living room suites covered all over with heavy silk jacquard velour. Built for years of comfort and service. **\$59.50**  
 No guarantee you'll receive of from 220 to 330 on any Walnut and up

Dining room Sultans, very latest style in five ply walnut veneer. Real Beauties, only \$69.50 to \$275.00.....

BEDROOM SUITE (just one left) 3 beautiful pieces in five ply walnut veneer..... **\$59.50**

BREAKFAST SETS, five piece solid oak, real quality, only \$24.95

MATTRESSES, Cotton, 50.50 Inner Spring from \$14.75 to \$24.50

CONSOLE TABLES (9x12 size) 75.95. YARD GOODS, per sq. yd. 45¢

MANY OTHER BIG BARGAINS. BUY WITH CONFIDENCE FOR LESS.

**MITCHELL FURNITURE COMPANY**  
 ALMA 324 N. State St. Next to Gaffneys  
 ST. LOUIS Next door to OSW THEATRE.  
 FREE DELIVERY

The Alma Reminder, Circa 1939





John Morgan

in those days for a one man paper. You had to have a lot of patience and realize that it was going to take time before you were going to be successful. There were many, many days that I worked at least 14 hours," Morgan says.

The ALMA REMINDER became a permanent fixture in the community and began to produce the financial returns Morgan

sought by the mid' 1950's, nearly 20 years after he began his business.

#### Second Generation


In 1969, John Morgan Jr. graduated from his father's alma mater, Michigan State University, and joined the family business.

"Our son John had been working in the business off-and-on for 10 years when he graduated from college, so he had some background. Right away he bought the EDMORE ADVERTISER, began the CARSON CITY REMINDER about the same time and about two years ago, he began publishing the MIDLAND ADVERTISER," says Ferne Morgan, proudly.

John Morgan Jr. now runs the family business. His parents spend their winter months in McAllen, Tex., and summer months spoiling their grandchildren back in Alma, they say.

John gets in as much golf as the weather permits, some fishing here and there and Ferne swims, plays bridge once a week and goes dancing, both ballroom and disco, as often as possible.

It has been and continues to be a good life for the Morgans and NAAP has been lucky to have been a part of that life.

At 66 years of age, with more than 40 years in the publishing business, John Morgan's words of wisdom to new publishers seem appropriate: "When you get up in the morning to go to work, expect to put in a 12 hour day. Don't expect to sell a lot of advertising right away. Success is still 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration." 



Ferne Morgan

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*\*According to Carol Toomey*



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“

**Value is not determined by those who set the price. Value is determined by those who choose to pay it.**

”

**Simon Sinek**

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OUR DATA SPEAKS VOLUMES



# What's the most significant change?

**NO ONE CAN DISPUTE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN** numerous changes, both large and small, in the Free Paper Industry throughout the last 70 years. We asked several past AFCP presidents and industry leaders to tell us, in their own words, what the most significant change was that they've seen in the industry and how that change affected either them personally or their publications. Some ideas were similar; others were quite unique. Here's what they had to say.

## CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLICATIONS

Maybe the most significant change in the free paper industry has been the consolidation of publications through acquisitions by the newspaper chains. Many of the family-owned operations sold out to corporations, and that certainly changed our industry and our free paper associations, including AFCP.

While some in our industry may see that as a negative, I see opportunities. Many of the large chains have squeezed the life out of the local free papers and focused their efforts on digital, creating a crack in the door for independent publishers to enter (or re-enter) the market. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed things down immensely, but this will be temporary. The future is bright. And many of those free papers that have been marginalized by the chains may soon be purchased back by local owners, if there is anything left to buy.

Chuck Offenburger, a now-retired but well-known columnist for the daily newspaper in the Des Moines market, told me that the newspaper he worked for would have never allowed us to do what we have done (launching numerous community magazines, events and other offerings). He may be right, but I would also like to think that we earned everything we have accomplished by engaging with our readers and advertisers, getting involved in our communities, investing in our content and continually improving our distribution systems.

Very few people in our communities could name the editor or publisher of the daily newspaper today. I am not sure I can either, as the names seem to change by the month. People know who we are because we are highly visible and actively involved, and we truly care about the people and the businesses in the communities we serve. They are our lifeblood — not some corporate shareholders in another state. This approach isn't rocket science,

but it seems to me to be a model that has worked in the past, and I am confident it will continue to do so in the future.

*Shane Goodman, President and Publisher  
Big Green Umbrella Media  
Johnston, Iowa  
AFCP's 53rd President (2016 – 2018)*

## CORPORATE OWNERSHIP

The most significant change I've seen is the many sales that resulted in a switch from independent to corporate ownership.

My grandmother sold to Dickson Media in 1994. Gary Greene, the president of the company, was very committed to having the papers he owned continue to operate independently, with a focus on being community-centric. He encouraged us to always do what was right for the customer and the employees. Under his leadership, I would say I learned the most and had the most personal growth of any time in my career.

In 1999, the paper was sold again – this time to a newspaper chain. That's when things really changed. There was a laser focus on the bottom line and return for shareholders. Decisions were no longer based on what was good for the community or the employees. Many decisions showed preference to the daily newspaper we previously had always competed against.

Since I served as the AFCP president in the early 90s, I've seen editorial departments decimated, ads designed in India, inquiries routed to customer service call centers and much more. I've also seen members excel at transitioning their 100% shoppers to quality editorial products, at creating niche publications, and at driving digital revenues.

Fortunately, there has been one constant over the years. That is the sharing, caring and collaboration that takes place at the state, regional and national association levels. This is an industry that moves, grows and evolves together. May it always be so.

*Lee Borkowski, Regional Manager  
Richland Center Shopping News  
Richland Center, Wisconsin  
AFCP's 41st President (1992 – 1994)*

## TECHNOLOGY

Having been born the same year as AFCP (NAAP) and spent virtually my entire career with ink on





my fingers, I have a lengthy (though not particularly learned) perspective on our history.

The biggest change in our industry can be encompassed by one word: technology.

While in grade school, my first job in the business, aside from delivering papers, was India inking the text on hand-lettered grocery ads with a speedball pen. T-squares, x-acto knives, and Varitypers were the tools of the day, and it's amusing to look back at how crude our early publications were, especially in comparison to the colorful, computerized high-tech pages of today. It's truly an astonishing transformation.

And yet every veteran publisher I know would readily acknowledge that by far the most profound technological development has been digital communications. Quickly and relentlessly, the Internet became an existential threat, creating seemingly infinite new competitors and stealing our most profitable asset, classified advertising.

In a few short years, I went from a helluva bright guy with all the answers to just another struggling businessman with all the questions, a humbling but valuable experience that many of you shared. In the process we reinvented ourselves, learning to do more with less, mining every niche for new revenue streams and recognizing that our real product was information, not merely printed words. Our business model evolved.

On this 70th anniversary I think it is important to note that the energy and ideas I gained from AFCEP were always vital to my success, especially during challenging times. I treasure my relationships with these incredibly bright, collegial (and often outrageous) fellow publishers.

I would add that, under younger, imaginative ownership, my former publication recently celebrated its 65th anniversary and is proving that there can certainly be a healthy future for community media!

*Terry Burge, Retired  
AFCEP's 36th President (1985 - 1986)*

## COMPUTERS & INTERNET

The most significant change I've seen is computers and the Internet. I remember writing up ads at a car dealer's location, taking dictation on the used cars, and afterwards he would ask me to give him a copy. I would have to copy the car descriptions by hand before I finally figured out that I needed to bring carbon paper (if

*Continued on page 28*

## Grocery Prices in the 1950s

Apples, 39 cents/two pounds  
 Box of chocolates, \$1.86/pound  
 Bread, 12 cents/loaf  
 Cabbage, 6 cents/pound  
 Campbell's Tomato Soup, 10 cents/can  
 Cheese, 45 cents/pound  
 Chicken, 42 cents/pound  
 Chuck Roast, 59 cents/pound  
 Coffee, 37 cents/pound  
 Eggs, 49 cents/dozen  
 Grapefruit, 25 cents/six fruit  
 Green Beans, frozen, 24 cents/half pound  
 Hamburger, 89 cents/three pounds  
 Kraft Cheese Slices 29 cents/pack  
 Lamb Chops, 49 cents/pound  
 Lettuce, 25 cents/two heads  
 Margarine, 19 cents/pound  
 Mushrooms, 49 cents/pound  
 Onions, 15 cents/five pounds  
 Oranges, 69 cents/two dozen  
 Palmolive, 21 cents/three containers  
 Peanut Butter, 29 cents/jar  
 Pineapple, 25 cents/each  
 Pork and Beans, 25 cents/three cans  
 Pork Roast, 39 cents/pound  
 Porterhouse Steak, 95 cents/pound  
 Potatoes, 35 cents/five pounds  
 Rib Roast, 29 cents/pound  
 Ritz Crackers, 32 cents/box  
 Sirloin Steak, 55 cents/pound  
 Sliced Bacon, 35 cents/pound  
 Sugar, 43 cents/five pounds  
 T-Bone Steak, 59 cents/pound  
 Tide Powder, 67 cents/giant pack  
 Toilet Paper, 5 cents  
 Toothpaste, 29 cents  
 Turkeys, 49 cents/pound



*Continued from page 27*

you know what that is). When copy machines were invented, I would leave, go buy a copy, and bring it back. Now, I visit a customer and he emails the copy to me. So much easier!!!

Truly, each of us can now take care of more customers with more accuracy. There's no last-minute running to customers at deadline time. Less stress. Life is easier and the quality of the ads has greatly improved.

*Carol Toomey, President  
Action Unlimited  
Concord, Massachusetts  
AFCP's 51st President (2012 - 2014)*

## INTERNET

The biggest change to our industry is without a doubt, the Internet. It has helped us be more efficient and brought down costs significantly. It has also hurt us in significant ways, for instance, the demise of classified ads.

I can remember having to drive back to the office, pick up a proof, and then drive it out for customer approval. Later, how excited we were to get a fax machine that allowed us to fax a proof (if the customer had a fax machine). However, getting email where we could send and receive information instantly was a game changer. We could support our customers 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world! All of this led to digital clip art, instead of cutting art out of the monthly books, and more efficiency in the art and editorial departments.

On the downside, the first thing the Internet did was to render our classified ads irrelevant. I remember when I moved to Austin to work at the Austin Shopping Guide. The daily American Statesman had four huge sections of classifieds every Sunday. All we needed was to take a small percentage and we were golden! Today, even the dailies have a hard time mustering a few pages of classifieds. And now almost all of our products are available online – instant access for all our readers! It sounds great, and yet it has somehow made it harder for us to generate a profit.

You asked how this impacted me personally, and my business, and again there has been good and bad. On the plus side, during my career we were able to take advantage of the changes to build new profit centers, and take significant costs out of our businesses over the years. On the downside, this is what ultimately forced me out of the business and into a new industry where I didn't feel the Inter-

net would have a continued impact on our ability to make a profit.

*Scott Patterson, Retired  
AFCP's 50th President (2010 - 2012)*

## INTERNET

The most significant change was the rapid adoption of the Internet, and more specifically the Search function.

The effects of the Internet were far reaching. News, business advertising and classified advertising changed dramatically, forever. Many papers were not able to survive these changes. Hyperlocal papers, strong niche papers and papers with a strong Internet presence did the best.

Wishing all publishers the very best!

*Jim Kendall, Retired  
AFCP's 48th President (2006 - 2008)*

## AGGREGATING CLASSIFIED ADS

I believe the most significant change that I saw in the industry was the result of a strategic planning session held, if I remember correctly, in Vail, Colorado.

AFCP had built up significant debt with our management firm, Smith Bucklin. We had gathered to discuss our options and Craig Trongaard came up with the suggestion of aggregating classified ads to be run by all member publishers in their local publications. Out of this suggestion, NANI was born; and because of this suggestion, AFCP enjoyed many years of abundant revenue. All other national, state and regional associations created their own classified advertising programs and collectively we realized a period of growth that is unsurpassed in Free Paper history.

Because of the revenue realized through the classified program, AFCP was able to hire a full time executive director and provide a formal physical location with staff. Ultimately we were able to provide robust educational opportunities that helped grow our annual meeting attendance from 75 in Chicago during the mid-80s to more than 800, I believe, in Phoenix by the late 90s. Nothing changed the face of AFCP and the Free Paper Industry as much as the growth and added purpose provided by this one simple suggestion. It brought papers and publishers together for a common cause and it highlighted the extreme effectiveness of our local papers on a national scale.

This affected me personally by providing the motivation and interest to become involved at a leadership level in AFCP. The success of the NANI program





provided the purpose and value of AFCP that encouraged me to work my way through the ranks to the position of AFCP President. The exposure and networking opportunities provided me with more insight, information and business strategy than I could have ever realized otherwise. Ultimately I sold my publication to Add, Inc due to the relationships I forged in AFCP with Tom Karavakis, Steve Huhta and, more than any other, Gordon Lowry.

Beyond the exit opportunity AFCP provided me as an owner, I also spent ten years as the Executive Director of FCPNY based on the relationships that I made through AFCP, a position that lasted until my retirement in 2018.

I owe a debt of gratitude to AFCP for a career that was enhanced by my participation and association with the members of this fine organization, and to Craig Trongaard for a simple suggestion that fed the revenue to accomplish everything that so many people contributed to, and benefited from, through AFCP.

*Dan Holmes, Retired  
AFCP's 45th President (2000 - 2002)*

## TRANSITION FROM COLD TYPE TO OFFSET PRINTING

My main memory from my working career was the transition from cold type to offset printing. This was in the early 60s and it was quite a change from linotypes to scissors and paper.

Mary and I owned a shopper in western Iowa, in and around Onawa, and we used a strip printer for our advertising type setting. It was a long piece of something similar to 35 mm negative film that you pulled through a light box to expose one letter at a time. Positive film was in the box and had to be taken out and developed in the dark. We used large jars to hold the developer. It was quite a labor-intensive job, especially if the positive film did not advance to the next letter and you over-printed one letter on top of the other. Our 12 pt. type was done on our typewriter. For us to sell, set and print about eight pages a week was about all we could do.

For a while we printed the shopper on a sheet fed printer. Our shop was all in our basement; but when a web printer started up about 60 miles away, we started going there and what a difference in print quality! Inserting, if any, was all done by hand and back then the USPS made us label those zips that had foot delivery.

We sold that shopper to John Holmes when I was activated back into the Air Force in 1968.

We agreed on a price and terms on the phone and

*Continued on page 30*

## 1950s

Average Income – \$3,210

House – \$8,450

New Car – \$1,510

Gallon of Gas – 18 cents

## Inventions

Atomic Clock – 1955 England

Breeder Reactor – 1951 USA

Computer Modem – 1958 USA

Credit Card – 1950 USA

Hovercraft – 1955 England

Hydrogen Bomb – 1952 USA

Lunar Probe – 1959 Russia

Microchip – 1958 USA

Nuclear Power – 1956 England

Robot – 1954 USA

Satellite – 1957 Russia

Solar Cell – 1954 USA

Transistor Radio – 1953 USA

Video Recorder – 1956 USA

Video Tape – 1956 USA

## TV Shows

77 Sunset Strip, 1958 – 1964

Adventures of Rin Tin Tin, 1954 – 1959

Bonanza, 1959 – 1973

Gunsmoke, 1955 – 1975

Lassie, 1954 – 1973

Perry Mason, 1957 – 1966

Phil Silvers Show, 1955 – 1959

Rawhide, 1959 – 1966

The Lone Ranger, 1949 – 1954

Twilight Zone, 1959 – 1964



*Continued from page 29*

never had a contract or any paperwork on the deal. John collected our receivables and sent us a check each month until everything was resolved.

*Craig Trongaard, Retired  
AFCP's 38th President (1988 – 1990)*

**FREE**

We have been championing FREE for a long time with our FREE distribution model, so it should come as no surprise that our customers like and value FREE advertising on these platforms.

What keeps me getting out of bed in the morning is that our publication still delivers incredible value and results to the businesses using us. We need to continue to spread the word about the results we deliver for other businesses and get more businesses to understand that now more than ever, a good media mix is important. We also need to keep good content so our readership stays strong. That is going to be important going forward.

*Greg Birkett, General Manager & Owner  
Dubuque Advertiser  
Dubuque, Iowa  
AFCP's 52nd President (2014 – 2016)*

**FROM THROW-AWAY TO VALUABLE ASSET**

In the early years of publishing our paper, all free papers were often referred to as “throw-aways” by our competitors, the paid press. Convincing our customers to advertise in our papers was a difficult sell. Because we delivered to every home, instead of only subscribers, our customers soon felt the impact the minute our paper hit the streets. Those were productive years.

The paid press began to notice that we were valuable assets and tough competition and began purchasing free papers to eliminate the competition or supplement their papers.

In one of the AFCP conferences I attended, the speaker told us one of three things would occur in the next phase of our business:

1. We would buy more papers and expand our territories;
2. We would sell; or
3. We would go broke or discontinue publishing.

In the following years I saw many of my peers sell, and some of them did expand and buy more papers. Since I was not the financial risk taker that my husband Rudy was, purchasing more papers was not an option. I sold my paper in 1990.

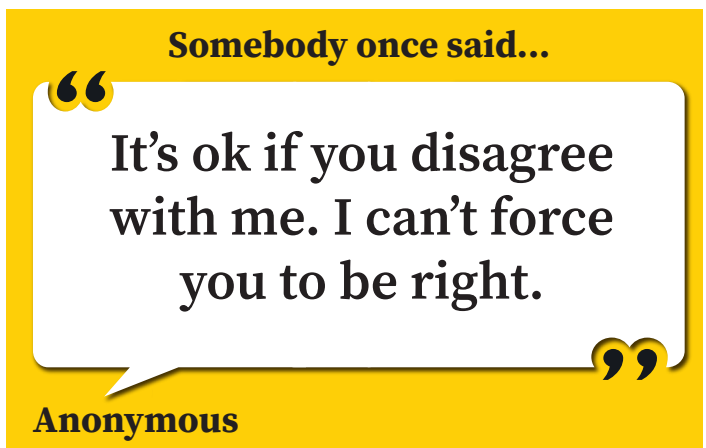
*Gladys Van Drie, Retired  
AFCP's 33rd President (1982 – 1983)*

**DECLINE OF THE INDUSTRY**

The most significant change I saw was the tough, but predictable, decline in our industry. The big surprise for me was how fast it happened. Sadly, we let the “Angie’s Lists” of the world capture our natural customer base. So many small businesses thrived and grew using our media, but that demand has become fragmented. Less response for our ads, less readership ... death spiral. Those small advertisers allowed us to move up the food chain to medium size and larger advertisers. Now that’s gone.

I was fortunate enough to leave the industry as it declined. Many bad decisions by clueless investors hastened the downturn. At the end I was caught surprised by the speed of the decline in print, including newspapers, which “fell off the cliff”.

*Harry Buckel, Retired*





# The LEADERSHIP Institute

by Jim Busch

The Leadership Institute is a structured sales and sales management training program sponsored by the Association of Free Community Publications.



To date, 2,265 free paper professionals have attended classes at the AFCP, state and regional conferences, earning over 13,841 class credits in 87 different course curriculums. A total of 124 people have completed all the requirements and been certified as Associate Advertising Executives (AAE) by the AFCP Board!

***"I make the most of all that comes and the least of all that goes."***

**– Sara Teasdale**

**I STARTED MY ADVERTISING CAREER SELLING YELLOW** page advertising. The company offered outstanding training, lucrative compensation and great perks. Despite this, we experienced a lot of turnover due to stress. We earned a small salary, but commission made up the biggest part of our pay.

The company used an "Annual Net Commission Plan." The company's goal was to grow revenue in the phone books and this was the driver of our pay plan. We were assigned a certain amount of revenue, the amount our accounts were currently spending. It was assumed that all advertisers would renew their program, so we were only paid commission on any increase over the current billing.

For example, if we had two accounts each billing \$100 per month and we increased them each \$10 per month, we were paid commission on the \$20 increase. If we sold one a \$10 dollar increase and the other canceled their advertising, we not only earned nothing but we also had to replace the \$90 loss before we could earn any commission again.

This was calculated on an annual basis, but paid monthly. So if we had a few good months followed by a few bad ones, we could end up owing the company money. As you can imagine, this was very stressful. I saw people break out in hives, turn to drinking and get severely depressed. We had an inordinate number of ulcer patients on our sales force.

We found that if a person could survive for 18 months, they were likely to become a long-term employee. We had a number of sales people with their 20 and even 30 year service pins.

What was the difference between the "lifers" and the people who couldn't handle the pressure? The difference could be found in where they placed their focus.

People who focused on the accounts they lost were consumed by stress and worry. The reps who remained focused on finding new accounts and who celebrated their gains were not only successful, but remained happy and healthy.

During this time of economic stress, it is easy to focus on what we've lost. But as the poet Sara Teasdale tells us, the secret to surviving this challenging time is to make the least of what we've lost and the most of the opportunities which lie before us. **INK**





# Say “I Do” to the CREATIVE PROCESS

by John Foust



**ADVERTISING IS A** business which is fueled by creativity. Once you get a handle on how to get ideas – ideas that work – you’ll have a big advantage over the competition.

No matter how much you sell, it all comes down to how much your ads will sell. When the ads get results, your advertisers will be happy. And

when they’re happy, they’ll keep running ads.

If you’ve ever recycled old ideas because you couldn’t think of anything better, maybe it’s time for a new approach. One way to generate ideas is to look elsewhere for a spark. For example, my wife and I recently went to a wedding. Along the way, she mentioned the old British rhyme about things that a bride is supposed to wear: “Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.” A saying as simple as that could provide the starting point for a new advertising idea. Let’s take a look:

**Something Old:** Think history. If an advertiser has been in business for a number of years, that can give you plenty of inspiration.

You can use vintage photographs from their files to demonstrate a sense of tradition and stability. You can feature a side-by-side comparison of their first building and their current building. (“Look how we’ve grown! And it’s all because we have a commitment to our customers.”) You can even feature a quote from the company’s founder – with a tie-in to their continuing business philosophy.

**Something New:** Although the words “new and improved” have become an advertising cliché, the general concept has been around for a long time because it is effective. Consumers like newness – as long as it’s relevant.

What is new with your advertisers? Do they have new products? Have new features been added to old products? Do they have new services? New locations? New hours of operation? Is there new management?

If you use this technique, be sure to show how the new things are better than the old ones. Emphasize benefits.

**Something Borrowed:** Why not find someone else to speak for your advertiser? A testimonial from a real-life customer can be a powerful advertising message.

A testimonial adds a couple of important elements to an ad campaign. First, by featuring someone who represents the advertiser’s target audience, a testimonial can help consumers identify with the company. Second, a customer can say things that wouldn’t be believed if the advertiser said those same things. (“Their widgets are great” has more weight than “Our widgets are great.”)

**Something Blue:** Consumers get the blues. They have problems that need solving. Can your advertiser reduce energy bills? Or help improve students’ grades? Or take the hassle out of building a custom home? Show people how your advertiser can solve a specific problem, and they will pay attention to the message.

This approach to creativity can be seen as a two-step process. First, get inside information about your advertisers, their products, their services and their customers. Then look for idea sparks from outside sources. **INK**

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# Developing **Sales Power** in Your MARKET BATTLEFIELD

by Bob Berting



**WHAT CAN BE DONE** to develop greater sales and image power in your market battlefield? Although there are many activities that can be worked to achieve greater recognition in the marketplace, there are certain guidelines that will give an immediate plan. These guidelines will help your salespeople

be accepted as advertising consultants, help publishers give direction to their sales management, and serve as a yardstick for recruiting quality people.

## SIX BUILDING BLOCK GUIDELINES

1. Have all salespeople work with customers as a trusted friend and advisor. In this time of crisis, it is important to ask "How can I to help you?" and "What can I do for you?"

2. Don't keep bombarding customers with dozens of ways to advertise. They should be sold on the publication as the major player in their media mix and on an ongoing program that requires consistent advertising on a set basis. Many well-meaning publishers will constantly start new promotions and put pressure on their salespeople to sell them. The end result is that the customer sees the salesperson as a peddler and order taker who wants to constantly add more costs and changes to a set program, not a trusted advisor.

3. It is absolutely vital that salespeople know and understand their media competition to effectively compete against them.

4. All advertising plans submitted to prospects must feature programs with consistent, repetitive advertising. Salespeople should always present plans, packages, campaigns, and programs, even when the customer is not sure how much they want to invest during these stressful times. The key is to show advertisers how to be innovators and be pre-

pared for a sustained period of advertising that will keep their top-of-mind awareness going through a critical time frame.

5. If possible, think about a revival of a cross functional team involving salespeople, graphic artists, telemarketers and marketing support people. Publications with these teams will achieve a greater relationship with their customers and will see greater response to their creative efforts.

6. Have a recruiting and interviewing policy that requires new salespeople to have the following traits:

- **Excellent Communication Skills** – Can they paint word pictures verbally?
- **Good Attitude and Values** – Hire people you can trust, especially if you know they will be a part of a cross-functional team.
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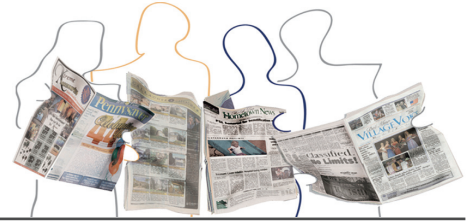
The bottom line is that a publisher can win on the battlefield by constantly working on their branding and top-of-mind awareness.

The harsh reality of most competitive battlefields is that few come in second and do well in today's environment. Consequently every effort must be made to develop a tough sales force that has the right attitude toward the publication and the customer, and the skill of selling advertising programs to develop top-of-mind awareness for their advertisers. **INK**

*Bob is the author of four best-selling e-books for the newspaper industry as well as a professional speaker, advertising sales trainer, publisher marketing consultant, and leading columnist in many national and regional newspaper trade association publications. He is the president of Berting Communications and can be reached at bob@bobberting.com or 317-849-5408.*

sales TALK by BOB





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# july

**JULY 7-10, 2020 : OKOBOJI, IA**  
Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP). 65th Anniversary Celebration, Okoboji, Iowa. For information contact Kelly Coy at 507-388-6584 or email: [director@mfcf.org](mailto:director@mfcf.org).

# sept.

**SEPTEMBER 11-12, 2020 : DENVER, COLORADO**  
Independent Free Papers of America (IFPA). Leadership Summit, Woolley's Suites, Aurora, Colorado. For information contact Douglas Fry at 931-922-4171 or email: [douglas@ifpa.com](mailto:douglas@ifpa.com).

# oct.

**OCTOBER 11-14, 2020: SAN DIEGO, CA**  
North American Mature Publishers Association (NAMPA). National Convention, Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina, Sandiego, California. For information contact Gary Calligas at 877-466-2672 or email: [nampa.gary@gmail.com](mailto:nampa.gary@gmail.com).

# 2021

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Association of Free Community Publications (AFCP) and Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP). Joint Annual Conference and Trade Show, Des Moines, Iowa. For information contact Loren Colburn at 877-203-2327 or email: [loren@afcp.org](mailto:loren@afcp.org); or Kelly Coy at 507-388-6584 or email: [director@mfcf.org](mailto:director@mfcf.org).

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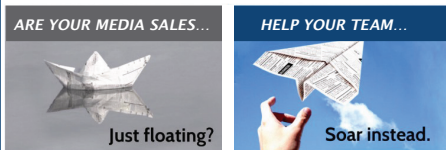
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