

Newspapers are one of the few places to find truth

Written by George Browning
Wednesday, 23 August 2017 09:10 -

Talks of the demise of newspapers have been greatly exaggerated! No, seriously, it's true. A lot of people ask me, "how is it to work in a dying industry?"

If newspapers die, in a big way, so will our society.

People think partisan cable news channels are the answer, or partisan web sites, but at the end of the day, people will want to search for the truth and the newspaper has always been and always will be a place to find the truth.

Oh there are opinions shared in the newspaper, but they are usually dedicated to a page like this. If you disagree with my opinion, skip this page. But if there is a story on a news page, it's our mission to make sure that story contains nothing but factual information provided to us by sources we've come to trust.

Separating my opinion as a reporter and my opinion as a citizen is difficult, but they should never cross in my job as a reporter.

I'll give you an example. I was covering a county commissioner meeting when the Washington County Prosecutor Dustin Houchin and Washington County Auditor Randall Bills were obviously less than pleased with one another.

They had words, and as a tax-paying citizen in Washington County, I had an opinion as to who I thought was right.

It's tempting to slant the story I wrote about the meeting on the side of the person I agreed with, but I didn't do it. My goal was to report – this is what happened and let the reader decide whose

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side they were on.

As a reporter when both sides tell me it was fair, that's when I feel I've done the best job – or even if both sides accuse me of being partial to the other person.

My goal is not to partner with the prosecutor or to partner with the auditor, my goal is to present the facts, as they were presented in the meeting.

Politicians want the public to distrust the media! Why do you think that is? Because if we the people distrust the media, when they do things that the public would disagree with, there is no one there to call them on it.

It's happening today in Washington, blast the media, cause distrust and then no one really knows what the truth is.

Don't get me wrong, it's not only the side in power today.

When President Obama was working to pass legislation for universal health care, I remember then Congressman Baron Hill, who was a democrat, holding a town hall meeting in Salem.

I was covering it for the paper, I asked one of the congressman's media reps if we would be able to ask questions when the meeting was over.

He said, "the congressman is not taking questions at this time."

When a politician doesn't want to speak to the press – that means something is rotten in Denmark.

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Free press is a politician's dream.

Congressman Hill's decline of an interview told me there were things in the healthcare proposal the Democrats didn't want out.

We see the same thing happening in Washington today.

I love reporting, I consider it a challenge to write a fair story, especially when I am opposed to a decision that was made.

If you read one of my stories and are able to tell which side I am on, I've failed in reporting that story.

Josh Suiter covers the New Albany-Floyd County School Board meetings for us here at Green Banner.

His wife is a teacher! You think he doesn't have opinions about decisions the school board makes? Of course he does, but I've never been able to pick up on that in his reporting and that is the true definition of fair and balanced.

My social media walls are filled with news stories based on things the reader "WANTS" to read. They are coming from both sides of the political aisle.

There are media sites and organizations the American public better learn to stay away from. Sure, those slanted sites are comforting, because they tell us what we want to hear.

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But they do not tell us the truth.

Some times that's the way to go, but more times than not, I encourage you to scroll past the link and find a newspaper that makes it a goal to leave the opinions on the opinions page and tell the truth on the other pages.

Let me know what you think at gbrowning@gbpnews.com