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Post Register Publisher Roger Plothow fired Executive Editor Dean Miller on Wednesday, citing a desire "to change the direction of the paper a little bit."

A veteran of three decades in Idaho journalism, Miller began his career at the Twin Falls Times-News. He moved to the Spokesman-Review of Spokane, Wash., where he manned the newspaper's Sandpoint bureau and later its full-time office in Boise.

In 1995, he was named city editor of the Post Register and was promoted to executive editor a year and a half later. In August 2007, Miller began a nine-month fellowship at Harvard University in Boston, returning to the Post Register last summer.

Miller's removal comes at a time when many newspapers are reducing staff sizes and cutting budgets.

Miller said Wednesday his dismissal came as a surprise, but that any editor with more than a decade on the job is living "on borrowed time."

"And I made it 14," he said.

Miller's career at the Post Register was marked by aggressive reporting projects. He oversaw and even authored part of the paper's series on how local Boy Scout leaders failed to protect children from pedophiles.

"Dean is without a doubt one of the most brilliant human beings I've ever been around," Plothow said. "His work at the newspaper speaks for itself."

Miller directed coverage of disgraced prosecutor Kimball Mason's arrest and eventual imprisonment.

Twice, in 2002 and 2006, he guided reporters and editors as they faced the unenviable task of covering former Post Register publisher Jerry Brady's run for governor as a Democrat in one of the nation's reddest states.

When word leaked that local judge Jim Archibald had inappropriately touched two women during a judicial conference in Florida, Miller directed reporters to aggressively pursue the story, even as the Idaho Judicial Council and local Magistrates Commission met behind closed doors to decide Archibald's fate.

Miller served as president of the Idaho Press Club and was instrumental in founding the nonprofit Idahoans for Openness in Government, which not only advocated for transparency in government but also held seminars to show how that might be accomplished.

Working with Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden and members of his staff, Miller toured the state to make sure officials understand that public documents are public property.

"At the core of Miller's career is an absolute passion for getting the people's business out in public," said the Post Register's editorial page editor, Marty Trillhaase, a longtime friend and colleague.

Miller's Post Register ride was sometimes bumpy. He was criticized in some circles for the Boy Scout coverage. Last week, the paper rankled many readers with a story about a local woman who holds parties where "women can openly touch, smell and taste products designed to promote healthy sexual relationships."

Plothow said the placement of that story on the front page played "a small factor" in Miller's dismissal, and that these things have a "cumulative effect."

Plothow said he will take a more active role in editing the newspaper. He served as the Post Register's executive editor from 1990 to '93. Two employees, Rob Thornberry and Monte LaOrange, will serve as assistant managing editors "for the foreseeable future," Plothow said.

Miller said he doesn't know what his future holds.

"I'm looking for a job as interesting and fun as it is to run a small newsroom," he said.