

Huckleberries: Life of a newspaper reporter isn't all that bad

Again, the annual Jobs Rated report of CareerCast.com low-balls my profession. For the third year in a row, the report lists “newspaper reporter” as the worst of 200 jobs. One spot below “logger.” I have worked in almost every facet of newspapers, from a cub reporter writing obituaries and re-writing news releases to a managing editor of the Daily Inter Lake in Kalispell. I’ve enjoyed reporting, editing, columnizing, editorializing and, now, blogging. I began in 1970 at a newspaper (Chico, California’s Enterprise-Record) that used linotype machines and hot metal. Now, this old dinosaur is on the cutting edge of 21st century newspapering – blogging, tweeting and Facebooking. The pay and benefits were good until the Internet knocked things sideways. I haven’t enjoyed watching colleagues exit over the last 12 years or so, as a result of layoffs, forced retirements, buyouts, public relations jobs and greener pastures. Forty-six years. I’ve pursued my passion for writing. I’ve met interesting people. I’ve covered stories that meant something. Journalism is a calling. Now more than ever. But it’s not for the faint of heart. No. 200? C’mon.

Oops

It had to happen some day, and former Coeur d’Alene Councilman Mike Kennedy had to see it. On Thursday morning, Mike emailed to say that the Huckleberries blog headline for an item about U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, had cracked him up: “Crap may chair Senate Banking in ’17.” Mike says the headline, written before I was properly caffeinated, reminds him of a sign he once saw on a Texas La Quinta Inn: “Enjoy Use of Our Pubic Meeting Room.” He adds: “Too bad it was before cellphone cameras.” Alas, this is the day of the screen shot.

Huckleberries

Poet’s corner: Chartreuse and yellow,/soft pink and bright white – /like Somebody flipped/a switch overnight” – The Bard of Sherman Avenue (“Spring’s Sudden Color Show”) ... Do yourself a favor and check out the city of Coeur d’Alene webcam links for the three nesting platforms 70 feet above McEuen Park. A Canada goose couple and an osprey were claiming squatter rights on two of them last week ... Before Deputy Jason Hunt was a K-9 handler for the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office, he was a K-9 handler for the Post Falls Police Department. And before he was a K-9 handler for the PFPD, he was a fine photographer for the Coeur d’Alene Press. Jason and his German shepherd partner, Gunnar, tracked down dangerous escapee Anthony Garver on Mount Spokane on April 8. You see, there is life after journalism ... Quotable Quote: “One middle-aged white guy introducing two other middle-aged white guys. Guess that’s why they call this the Cracker Building” – Jess Walter (“Beautiful Ruins”) introducing fellow authors Shawn Vestal (“Godforsaken Idaho” and now “Daredevils”) and Sam Ligon (“Among the Dead and Dreaming”), inside the Washington Cracker Co. building in Spokane ... Dave Keyes, of Sandpoint, did a double take when he spotted an informational sticker on a vehicle parked in Livingston, Montana. It listed a phone number. And: “All Your Hanging Needs.” Are there still vigilantes in Montana?

Parting shot

Gary Ingram, a former legislator and winner of the 2009 Max Dalton Open Government Award, is facing a primary challenge for his Precinct 48 committeeman seat on the Kootenai County GOP Central Committee. Gary was surprised to learn why he's opposed: "I was told I'm not conservative enough. Can you imagine that? How could so many conservatives over the years have been so wrong about who I am?" Gary was writing conservative law for North Idaho long before some of his detractors cut their political teeth on constitutionalist, libertarian and John Birch politics.

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