
Moving on...

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EDITOR

For the past few days, I've been cleaning out my office of nearly 17 years. It's amazing what you can accumulate in that span of time, even in a very small physical space.

Growing up in this community, the Foto News was my local newspaper. Its pages reported my birth, my baseball teams' scores and my high school graduation, among other activities of my youth.

Like many Merrill High School graduates, I went off to college vowing never to return to my hometown. Like many of those same MHS grads, I eventually found my way back home.

In 2002, after graduating from college and starting my newspaper career, I was excited to take on the role of editor for my own hometown newspaper.

Since then, I've put roughly 850 issues of the Foto News to bed. I've reported the births, sports scores and high school graduations of a whole new generation of Merrill residents.

Over my 25-year career in the newspaper industry, I've learned a lot of things. Some of the technical stuff, such as developing film in a dark room or formatting a floppy disk, has since become obsolete. But, at its core, local journalism has always been about telling the stories of the people and places in your community. It doesn't matter whether those stories appear on newsprint or some digital format.

I must say, it's been an honor to record even a small piece of Merrill's history.

But, as they say, all good things must eventually come to an end. As of Friday afternoon, my tenure with the Foto News - and most likely also my career as a journalist - will be over. On Monday, I will begin a new adventure in the world of marketing with Church Mutual Insurance Company.

The Foto News will carry on without me, no doubt. In fact, I look forward to reading what the future holds, both for the newspaper and for Merrill.

Multi Media Channels, the current owner of the Foto News, has a solid grasp on what a small town weekly newspaper should be, and what it means to the community it serves. I'm confident that the Foto News will be here for us to enjoy for years to come.

The first time I met him, MMC publisher Pat Wood used the term "stewards of the community" in describing what he expected from his newly-acquired group of newspapers. At the time, I was not yet sure what to think of Pat, or MMC, but that one phrase struck me as a worthy guiding principle.

So, along with a desk drawer full of paper clips and pennies, my successor will inherit that responsibility to be a good steward of this community.

As I exit, long-time reporter Jeremy Ratliff will be holding the editorial reins of the Foto News for the time being. He can be contacted at 715-536-7121 or jratliff@mmclocal.com.