

Journal editor retires today, ends 37-year career with newspaper

Local news.

Its importance has never been lost on Lisa Haefs. Not even as she began her final days as editor of the Antigo Daily Journal this week. As the hours to a well-earned retirement ticked down, Haefs took time to reflect on her time in journalism and the important role local news has played in not only her career, but for the community.

“I think local news is the most important thing you can have,” she

said. “You can get so much on social media, satellite, cable, etc., but the only way to know what’s happening with your city council, school board, when the varsity football team starts practice, what Little Leaguer hit for the cycle is to read your local newspaper. It has to be curated and accurate and we’ve always tried to do that.”

Haefs began her career with the ADJ in October of 1983 as the general

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Journal editor Lisa Haefs at her desk.

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Retirement

assignment reporter and society editor. Along with those jobs, Haefs was assigned to two other important beats, the school board and city council.

A 1980 Elcho High School graduate, she is a product of the UW system, attending UW-River Falls and finishing up at UW-Superior where she has displayed her degree in journalism near her desk in the Journal office.

Haefs took a round-about way to finishing up her degree, as she actually began working at the Journal prior to graduation. The job came about through a connection with a friend, one Fred Berner.

"Everyone knew Fred," Haefs joked. "Being from Elcho and interning while in college at the Daily News in Rhineland our paths crossed a lot. I was active with the school newspaper in Elcho and went to the school board meetings and Fred even wrote me a letter once complimenting me on the school paper. We were always friends."

A Journal subscriber while in college, she read a note with Berner's Bits & Pieces column that the ADJ was looking for a reporter.

With a marriage to her now husband of 36 years, Mike on the way, and jobs in the journalism field not easy to come by, much less in your backyard, Haefs jumped at the opportunity.

"I called up Fred and said you need a reporter and I need a job," she explained. "And that was it."

Haefs later finished up her degree through a program at Superior, but a career in small town local news had begun, one that she wouldn't trade for the New York Times, Washington Post or Chicago Tribune.

"I had thoughts in college of maybe working in a big market," she mused. "Those went away, my family has always been here, I got married, we got land from Mike's parents in Pelican Lake for a wedding present and it's where we live today. The roots went very deep."

"I could have gone somewhere else, I have friends from college in big cities," she continued. "Different people choose to take different paths. Just because you're a small newspaper doesn't mean you don't deserve to have quality people working there."

And many memorable and outstanding journalists have come through

Monday morning, the Wolf River's flow measured at Langlade more than tripled. The Wolf leapt from around 1,000 CFS to a peak of 3,000 CFS. The measurement on Thursday was around 1,700 CFS.

While the high water caused havoc throughout the county, several road closures were either ongoing or had a significant damage impact. These included County Road I between County Road H and Town Forest Road, County Road J between Forrest Road and Ormsby Road, and County Road B between County Road J and Koepenick Road. Polar Road leading to the Lawrence Lake boat landing was almost completely wiped out.

The County Board's resolution will remain in effect as long as the emergency conditions exist, but no longer than 60 days. It concludes:

"While this declaration of emergency is in effect the county agencies having jurisdiction over systems impacted by flooding including but not limited to county roads and bridges, recreation trails, and navigable bodies of water, have the authority to order whatever is necessary and expedient for the health, safety, protection and welfare of persons and property."

the Journal doors in Haefs' time.

"Gene Legro was the probably the best writer I worked with," she recalled. "I had fun doing stories with Debbie Igl, Vern Cahak, we always had a good crew, Fred always managed to put together a good cohesive staff. Vern and Gene who really put me through the ringer, but we were friends."

And of course there are the memories of Fred and learning from one of the best in the business.

"He was a character," she laughed. "When I was hired I promised him I'd stay three years and up until just a couple years ago he still reminded me of that. He was a very good reporter, writer, manager and friend, the lynchpin of this operation."

Over a 37-year career in local news, one wears many hats and Haefs has covered nearly every beat imaginable at some point, with the exception perhaps of sports. Journal legend has it she tried her hand at a golf story, but reversed the scores, declaring the 15 over par golfer the winner.

"I'm a lousy sports reporter," she said with a smile. "I can write horse racing, but that's about it. I've covered court trials, murder trials, county board, general assignment, feature stories, editorials and I loved writing Hidden Places"

Hidden Places was a long-running ADJ Saturday morning feature, in which Haefs, teamed with another staff member most notably Igl, and investigated little-known, but fascinating locations in Langlade County.

"I also loved telling people the history of the area because it's so interesting," she added. "We did that through Hidden Places, it was my favorite to do. I just liked getting out and talking to people."

And while a successful career lends itself to many honors, Haefs appreciates them all, but it's the school-related awards that hold a special place in her heart.

"I really covered school a lot and it's an important beat," she said. "Sometimes it gets short-shifted because a lot of times it's a beginning beat for a reporter, but what's more important than news about how your children are getting educated and the importance of a good education?"

As far as retirement plans, Haefs won't be far away, both at the Pelican Lake homestead and her Lake Superior cabin, with plans to tackle the occasional assignment for the Journal and perhaps some long-form writing.

"It's what I do," she added. "Part of what we've done over the years is to have a great return on investment in our community, I think for a little newspaper that's pretty newspaper. I'm proud of what we've

done."

Haefs also plans to continue to be active in the community, remaining on the Historical Society board among others and of course to spend more time with Mike, her dog Rudy and the horse, donkey, chickens and cats that also share their Pelican Lake property.

In a changing industry, she still feels the Journal remains on a strong path to continue its 115-year run well into the future.

"The changes that are being made are to ensure a local newspaper remains in the community," she noted. "That is the most important thing, it's been hard for our subscribers whom we call family, but to do nothing was to invite failure, which is not acceptable."

"If the community continues to support it and what we do it will certainly be around," she continued. "The digital product is the future, the first thing young people do in the morning is click on their device and go online, but there will always be a need for journalists who are trained and can report the news accurately and in an entertaining manner. There's still a bright future if you want to be a journalist."

As far as the proudest part of her 37-year journey in local news? Haefs didn't hesitate.

"It was the day we lost Fred and we still got the newspaper out, we weren't even late, but it was hard" she said.

Now after a time and career well-spent, a famous line of her late Friday night departures comes to mind.

Off to the shores of Pelican Lake.

Continued

Economy

posing to scale back aid to the unemployed, the pain is likely to continue and potentially worsen in the months ahead.

The plunge in GDP "underscores the unprecedented hit to the economy from the pandemic," said Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics. "We expect it will take years for that damage to be fully recovered."

That's because the virus has taken square aim at the engine of the American economy — consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of activity. That spending collapsed at a 34.6% annual rate last quarter as people holed up in their homes, travel all but froze, and shutdown orders forced many restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and other retail establishments to close.

Tentative hopes for a swift recovery have been diminished by a resurgence of viral cases in the South and the West that has forced many businesses to close again or reduce occupancy. Between June 21 and July 19, for example, the proportion of Texas bars that were closed.

Notice Town of Polar

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the public test of the Hava Compliant Voting Equipment, to be used at the August 11, 2020 Partisan Primary Election will be conducted on Monday, August 3, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. at the Polar Town Hall W6979 Highway 64. This test is open to the general public.

Jane Kolpack, Clerk
WNAXLP

Notice Town of Neva

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the public test of the HAVA Compliant Voting Equipment to be used at the Partisan Primary Election to be held Tuesday, August 11, 2020, will be conducted at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 2, 2020, at N5500 Hwy A (Neva Town Hall), Deerbrook. This public test is open to the general public.

Kristen Rolling, Clerk
WNAXLP