

## Farewell, be well

April 25, 2020



My brief but “spectacular” career as a small-town newspaper writer came to an abrupt end last week due to the present uncontrollable circumstances.

I am writing today to thank everyone for reading my stories, sending me tips and telling me your stories for the pages of this paper. This has been one of the most enjoyable jobs I’ve held in my lifetime. I described it to friends as being like the paper for which the protagonist Norman Maclean writes in the book and film “A River Runs Through It.”

Put my last name in the search bar at [currypilot.com](http://currypilot.com) and you will see why I loved this work because my work has been about our community and you. I found my stride with painting people portraits with words when I wrote the story about Trinity Sylvester, the port sampler. I became fascinated by the cranberry farming industry in “Cranberry Fields Forever” because they are a staple in my cooking. I was ecstatic to cover fishing stories, like “Seining the Rivers” because fishing is the reason I moved here. I especially love covering stories where the community comes together to solve big problems, like the “Handy Heroes” in last week’s edition.

I started at the paper last summer, within the first month after this already fragile news enterprise was rescued from a lengthy bankruptcy by the current owners. Everything that could go wrong did — the real estate didn’t come with the business, so we had to move the Pilot and Triplicate offices, and then more recently the actual printing of the newspaper. The phone company wouldn’t allow us to keep the old phone numbers because the previous owners hadn’t paid the bill, which was then discharged in bankruptcy. The web domain couldn’t be sorted out from the other company’s holdings, so the email addresses from before didn’t work and the web archive disappeared. It’s a wonder anyone was able to find us. Then new laws in California made it impossible to continue distributing the paper through carriers, and the post office, with its struggles, has had a difficult time fulfilling that role. It’s been hard.

It's a miracle the paper has survived to this point at all! Community newspapers are very special to small towns because they cover the news that you won't find in "USA Today," "The New York Times," or even "The World" in Coos Bay. The new owners are doing everything they can, but it's going to be up to you whether a community newspaper remains in your town.

Just like the restaurants that are having to survive off selling take-out only, this business is being starved under the current circumstances because businesses don't advertise when their customers have been asked to stay at home. Events have been canceled everywhere, so there's no ad revenue with those either. Classified advertising has already been on the decline in the face of stiff competition from online ad sites.

Every newspaper business is very succinctly controlled by advertising percentages and revenue versus the size of the news hole. And that is why my position as a staff writer needed to be eliminated. This paper is trying its best to keep bringing this community the joy of having a paper that's all about here instead of far-off places.

Please support them where and when you can — subscribe, renew, buy an ad. I'll still be writing somewhere because that's what I do, and who knows, maybe I'll be back here someday. Stay safe, stay well, and be kind.