



# Nebraska

Spring 2017

NEWS PAPER

Published twice a year by  
Nebraska Press Association

## Geneva publisher, John Edgecombe, Jr., named 2017 Master Editor-Publisher



*Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts presents the 2017 Master Editor-Publisher plaque to John Edgecombe, Jr.*

John Edgecombe, Jr. has served his community, state and the newspaper industry:

- His family has been in the newspaper business for more than 100 years - over five generations.
- John began working at the newspaper as a youngster, and when his military service ended, he returned home to the family business.
- His newspaper is among those featured in a virtual exhibit of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.
- He has been deeply involved in his community's Chamber of Commerce and the city's Main Street program.
- A former Chamber of Commerce director said John "has long exemplified a level of commitment to his newspaper and his community that can serve as a model for others."

*John addresses more than 130 Nebraska journalists and guests as he accepts the Master Editor-Publisher Award, with his wife, Jo.*



John Edgecombe, Jr., publisher of the Geneva Nebraska Signal, was awarded the Nebraska Press Association's highest honor when he was named Master Editor-Publisher on April 21, 2017, during the 143rd Annual NPA Convention Awards Banquet, at the Country Inn & Suites-North in Lincoln, NE.

He is the 46th person to receive this award since the Nebraska Press Association began giving the award in 1972. NPA is the state's oldest trade association, comprised of 165 daily and weekly Nebraska newspapers.

Edgecombe has served as president of both the Nebraska Press Association and the Nebraska Press Advertising Service; he served on the Nebraska Press Association Foundation; and he followed in his great-grandfather's footsteps, serving as president of the National Newspaper Association.

Following the Friday night banquet, a reception was held for John, hosted by the Edgecombe family for NPA members, guests and friends.



*John Edgecombe, Jr. greets family and friends after they surprised him by entering the ballroom as he was named 2017 Master Editor-Publisher, Friday evening, April 21, at the NPA Convention Awards Banquet.*

## OUTSTANDING YOUNG NEBRASKA JOURNALIST AWARD

The Outstanding Young Nebraska Journalist Award was created and funded by Zean and Marilyn Carney in 2001. The Carneys are former publishers of the Wahoo Newspaper, Waverly News, Ashland Gazette and David City Banner-Press. Nominees are judged on their professionalism, creativity, comments or statements on goals, impact of their work on print journalism and the community of journalistic excellence. The awards were presented Saturday, April 22, during the NPA Annual Convention in Lincoln, NE. Presenting the awards was Jeff Carney, corporate director/digital content development, for BH Media Group.



**FIRST - WEEKLY:  
MICHAEL WUNDER, WAVERLY NEWS**

Michael has worked at The News since October 2014, as news, features and sports writer, photographer and news editor. Judge's comment: "Michael's hard news stories showed a willingness to do the hard work necessary to get all of the facts, as well as a commitment to fairness and telling all sides of a controversial story. His feature writing showed great strength, with a keen eye for detail and an ear for a great quote."



**SECOND - WEEKLY:  
SAMANTHA CLEVELAND, ORCHARD NEWS**

Samantha is a full-time graphic designer at The News, creating print and digital advertising content. Judge's comment: "This graphic designer clearly is making valuable contributions to her newspaper, both in advertising and news coverage. Her designs are original and appealing. On the news side, her designs help readers digest complicated information in an easy to understand way."



**FIRST - DAILY:  
RYAN EDWARD, KEARNEY HUB**

As a sports reporter/writer at The Hub, Ryan brings informative and interesting stories to their readers. Judge's comments: "Whether it's baseball, basketball, football or the politics of conference membership, Ryan's sports reporting and writing handles it all with aplomb. He clearly has solid knowledge of his subject and his enthusiasm for sports shines through."



**SECOND - DAILY:  
KAMIE STEPHEN, NORTH PLATTE TELEGRAPH**

At The Telegraph, Kamie balances duties as news reporter and digital media editor. Judge's comment: "Kamie is a developing talent who's come a long way in a short while. Her writing is sensitive, and she has the ability to handle difficult subjects with perception."

## NPA/NPAS officers begin new terms for 2017-18



Outgoing NPA President, Jason Frederick, hands off the mega gavel to incoming NPA President, Peggy Year.

Peggy Year, co-publisher of the Hartington Cedar Co. News, has been elected president of the Nebraska Press Association for the 2017-18 term. Year, who succeeds Jason Frederick, was elected at the NPA annual meeting, held April 21, during the annual press convention in Lincoln.

Other officers elected were, Kevin Zadina, publisher of the Seward Co. Independent, as vice president and Tom

Shaal, publisher of the Alliance Times-Herald, as treasurer. Jason Frederick, publisher of the Trenton Hitchcock Co. News, will serve as immediate past president.

Continuing their terms as board of directors of NPA are: Lori Pankonin, co-publisher of the Imperial Republican; Terrie Baker, publisher of the North Platte Telegraph; Amy Johnson, publisher of the Springview Herald; Kevin Peterson, publisher of the Wayne Herald; and Willis Mahannah, editor of the West Point News.

Elected by the Nebraska Press Advertising Service (NPAS) were: President, Tory Duncan, managing editor of the Sutton Clay Co. News; and Chris Rhoades, general manager, Enterprise Publishing (Blair), as vice president. Gerri Peterson, publisher of the Mullen Hooker Co. Tribune, will serve as immediate past president.

New to the board for a three-year term is Vickie Hrabanek, advertising manager for the Norfolk Daily News. Continuing their terms on the board of directors of NPAS are: Nathan Arneal, publisher of the North Bend Eagle; and Randy Sadd, publisher of the Doniphan Herald.

Allen J. Beermann is executive director of both organizations. The Nebraska Press Association membership includes 165 weekly and daily newspapers with a total paid circulation in excess of 450,000. The NPA was founded in 1873. NPAS includes all of the NPA membership and was founded in 1951.



## Shelby Coffey with Freedom Forum, Newseum - Friday banquet keynote speaker

Shelby Coffey, senior fellow of the Freedom Forum and vice chair at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., spoke on *"The Trump Era Begins: The Man, The Press, The World."*

Coffey was president of CNN Business News and CNNfn; prior to CNN, he was executive vice president of ABC News, and from 1989 to 1997, he was editor and executive vice president of the Los Angeles Times. Prior to the Times, Coffey held editorial positions at the Dallas Times Herald, U.S. News & World Report, and The Washington Post.

## Father's legacy burns bright on memorable night, times 2

More than 15 years since my father passed away I felt his presence on an emotional night last week in Denver, and vicariously, 500 miles away in Lincoln at the same exact moment. The timing, I'm certain, was not coincidental.

I've written many times before in this space about the impact my father had on my life and many others. Loral Johnson was a man who lifted people up through the pages of his hometown newspaper, The Imperial Republican, showing by example how you can touch people's lives with positive words. Three of his children followed in the footsteps of he and my mother, Elna, who worked side by side in building Johnson Publications, Inc.

High on his list of No. 1 fans is my oldest sister, Brenda, whom many of you know here in Aurora. Brenda (Johnson) Brandt spent two years in Aurora back in 1977-79, teaching math and journalism at Aurora High School fresh out of Kearney State College.

She loved it here in Hamilton County and told me many times she might very well have stayed had she not had newspaper ink running so purely through her veins. I distinctly remember her giving our family a tour of the "new" school addition while it was still under construction, having no idea how many games and special events I would later attend in that complex, including our two daughters' graduations.

When my parents purchased the weekly newspaper in Holyoke, Colorado, Brenda headed to the front range, where she has spent the last 38 years as editor, and eventually as publisher of the Holyoke Enterprise. Her passion in that capacity was recognized at the Colorado Press Association convention where Brenda was honored as Newspaper Person of the Year, in essence a lifetime achievement honor.

I was one proud little brother hearing her described by colleagues as a quintessential country editor who has served her community and state well for nearly four decades. Coincidentally, or not, the former president of the National Newspaper Association recalled during Brenda's introduction how my parents were the first to make him feel welcome at an NNA event. Newspaper folk were their extended family.

My wife Paula, mother Elna, both siblings and two brothers-in-law flew or drove to Denver to surprise Brenda for the occasion and had a wonderful reunion in her honor.

Ironically, at the exact moment Brenda was being called up on stage in Denver, my niece Brooke (the next generation drawn into the newspaper fold as managing editor in Grant) was on the podium in Lincoln at the Nebraska Press Association convention, introducing this year's winner of the Loral Johnson Sweepstakes.

The award for the top weekly in the state, based on a better newspaper contest point system, is named in my father's honor, a source of pride for his family and a lasting legacy to his impact on the industry.

As you know by now, the Aurora News-Register was announced as this year's winner, a tribute to a terrific staff, which covers a vibrant community.

Only one member of our family was able to be in both places at once, and I know he was smiling from ear to ear.

*This column originally appeared in the May 3, 2017, issue of the Aurora News-Register.*



**By Kurt Johnson,**  
co-publisher  
Aurora  
News-Register

### Collegiate Writing and Photo Contest Winners



The collegiate writing and photojournalism competitions were held April 21 and winners were announced at Saturday's Awards Luncheon. The Butch and Nancy Furse Foundation Collegiate Writing Competition winners: 1st Place, UNL student, Ellis Clopton (left), who received a \$300 cash prize. 2nd Place, UNL student, Bailey Schulz (center), received a \$200 cash prize. Presenting the writing awards were NPA Executive Director, Allen Beermann, and NPAS Vice President, Tory Duncan. The Omaha World-Herald Photojournalism Competition winners were: 1st Place, UNL journalism student, Amber Baesler (right), who received a \$300.00 cash award and plaque, and 2nd Place, UNL student, Jack Crandall (not pictured), who received a \$200 cash award. Presenting the award was Jeff Carney, corporate director/digital content development, for BH Media Group and NPAS Vice President, Tory Duncan.

## 2017 GOLDEN PICA POLE RECIPIENTS

The Golden Pica Pole Award is given for 50 or more years of service to Nebraska newspapers. 2017 Golden Pica Pole recipients: Irene Barfknecht, Steve Jordon and Jack Schrieber. Each recipient received a certificate and their own pica pole. Presenting the awards was NPAS Vice President, Tory Duncan.



Irene Barfknecht began as a proofreader at the Superior Express, and has seen a lot of changes in the newspaper industry while working there for over 50 years. Though more than 20 years past the normal age of retirement, Irene continues to work at The Express.



Steve Jordon began his career at the Omaha World-Herald as an intern in 1967. He's covered county government, the courts, youth education and business, and in 2008 began a weekly column called "Warren Watch," about Warren Buffett and Berkshire Hathaway.



Jack Schrieber began his career in high school at the Coleridge Blade and then the Wayne Herald. He went to work for the Omaha World-Herald in 1970 as a typesetter and transitioned to electronic maintenance, archiving and production pre-press systems, and continues to work for The World-Herald today.

## 2017 NPA Foundation Scholarship Recipients

Four Nebraska students were selected to each receive a \$2,000 scholarship from the Nebraska Press Association Foundation for the 2017 school year. The Foundation board members selected the scholarship winners from over 30 submitted applications. Scholarships are awarded to Nebraska high school and college students that plan to pursue a career in print journalism. This year's recipients are: Grace Fitzgibbon, Lincoln, NE; Cassandra Kostal, Gretna, NE; Cadrien Livingston, Orchard, NE; William Stone, North Platte, NE. Recipients were honored at the Saturday, April 22, awards luncheon. (*Grace Fitzgibbon was unable to attend the luncheon*). Presenting their certificates was NPA Foundation President, Mark Rhoades and NPAS Vice President, Tory Duncan.



Cassandra Kostal



Cadrien Livingston



William Stone

## OMAHA WORLD-HERALD COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SERVICE TO AGRICULTURE AWARDS

Presenting the awards at the Friday night banquet were Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts and NPA President, Jason Frederick.

### Community Service Awards

*Daily - Norfolk Daily News*  
*Weekly Class D - Washington Co. Pilot-Tribune*  
*Weekly Class B - Gretna Guide*  
*Weekly Class A - Wauneta Breeze*  
*No Weekly Class C award was issued by judges*

### Service to Agriculture Awards

*Daily - Kearney Hub*  
*Weekly Class D - Washington Co. Pilot-Tribune*  
*Weekly Class C - Aurora News-Register*  
*Weekly Class B - Chadron Record*  
*Weekly Class A - Wauneta Breeze*

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## 2017 BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

The Weekly Class Awards are sponsored by the Ken Rhoades family. The Community Newspaper Award is sponsored by Elna and the late Loral Johnson. Presenting the awards: Ken Rhoades, Enterprise Publishing Co., Tory Duncan and Mike Konz, contest committee co-chairs.



### News Photo of the Year

*Never Forgotten*

**Barrett Stinson, photographer**  
Grand Island Independent

### Community Newspaper Sweepstakes - 1st Place

*Aurora News-Register*

### DAILY - Sweepstakes 1st Place

*Norfolk Daily News*

### Class A Sweepstakes - 1st Place

*Gering Courier*

### Class B Sweepstakes - 1st Place

*Chadron Record*

### Class C Sweepstakes - 1st Place

*Aurora News-Register*

### Class D Sweepstakes - 1st Place

*Hickman Voice News*



### Editorial of the Year

*The Vine - Community Support*

**Darren Ivy, editor/co-publisher**  
Hickman Voice News



### Feature Photo of the Year

*Pucker Up*

**Leeanna Ellis, assistant editor**  
Arlington Citizen

### Sports Photo of the Year

*USA Triathlon*

**Joe Burns, photographer**  
Blair Washington Co. Pilot-Tribune

### Advertisement of the Year

*Celebrate New Years*

**Brenda Clark, graphic designer**  
Milford Times

## Reminded what's important at Nebraska Press Association

This past weekend, as I'm sure you read last week in Tory's column, we traveled to Lincoln for the 143rd Nebraska Press Association Convention. During this two-day convention, there are several sessions based around anything you could think of when it comes to a newspaper.

There's also banquets where people are recognized; there are speakers and awards are given out for various things.

The sessions are one of my favorite parts about the convention because of what you are able to learn. This year was no different. I learned a ton of information that I'm planning on spreading around the office and making sure we continue to move forward in being the best news source for our faithful readers.

Besides the sessions, the people are also my favorite part of the convention. There are so many personalities to get caught up with — one person is never anywhere the same as the next. And you learn from them too, not just from the sessions. Ideas are tossed around, stories of previous times are brought up, and good times are had.

Saturday evening is when the big awards happen, when they announce who won in what category. Watching the video cycle through each category, in each class, it came to be that the Clay County News earned three awards — two for advertising and one for a computer graphic design. I'll be honest, I was a little bummed we didn't do better with awards. Only three? That's not a lot. On the other hand, we're in an incredibly tough class, competing against some fantastic newspapers.

My initial thought after awards is that our readers would look at those three awards and think we're not that great of a newspaper. But after a long drive home and some thinking, here's what I hope our readers think of our three awards:

Even though we only earned three awards, it doesn't make us an awful paper. If you were to look at the papers in our class, you'd understand our "competition."

They are good at what they do and it shows. Not saying that we're not good at what we do, but I appreciate good work when I see it. And when I put competition in quotations, I recognize them as a newspaper that we're, in a sense, competing against to get the best news stories recognized and the best sports stories and best photos, etc.

But at the same time, I call many of them my friends and acquaintances. When we're all at convention, yeah, we are all from different newspapers spread all across Nebraska, but we understand the woes and hoorays of the newspaper business. We share a love for the fun stories and the unfortunate luck of having to cover tragedies. We throw ideas around and discuss them with each other, not thinking once "oh no, we can't tell them that because they could do better than us," or "we don't want to share our ideas with THAT newspaper."

No, it's nothing like that.

So, yes, awards are super awesome to earn and I give major props to those newspapers and friends who gave it their all and were truly recognized for it. We all know what it takes to run a newspaper, to get that information on the story we'd rather not write, to take that group photo of some high school kids who just won't cooperate — journalists know all of that.

With our newly-learned information, we will continue to move forward to be the best newspaper for our readers, with the best possible stories we can write, accompanied with the best photos we can take, as I'm sure all of Nebraska's newspapers are sure to do also.

*This article originally appeared in the April 26, 2017 issue of the Sutton Clay County News.*



**By Ashley Swanson,**  
news editor  
Sutton  
Clay Co. News

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## Former publisher receives Harpst Leadership Award

by Connie Jo Discoe, McCook Gazette

Former Gazette and Benkelman Post publisher Gene O. Morris has been awarded a prestigious statewide newspaper award for community leadership.

Morris was presented the Leadership Nebraska award by Don Harpst of McCook, who established and funded the award in memory of his parents, long-time newspaper people in Nebraska and Texas.

The award was created to recognize a newspaper publisher or executive who best illustrates efforts to promote leadership within their community such as news articles about youth groups that foster leadership, community leadership organizations and their participants, or information about alumni of leadership groups and success stories as these individuals go on to actual community leadership posts.

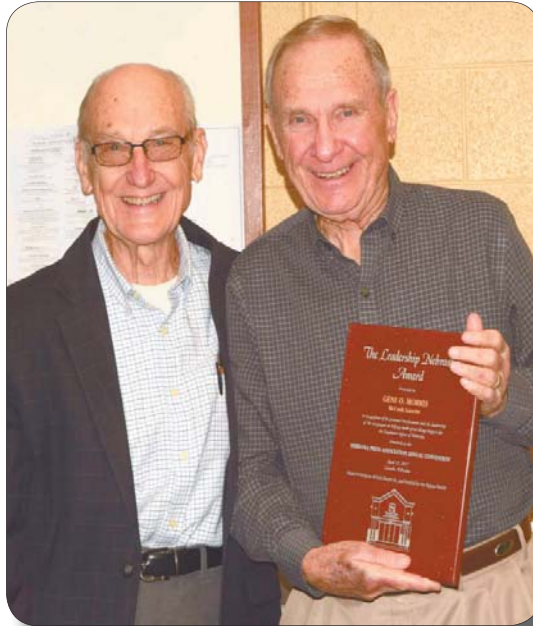
According to the nominating letter, Morris' newspaper career has spanned almost six decades, including a start in 1961 as a city beat and sports reporter for the McCook Gazette. His professional career has also included service as managing editor of the Winfield, Kansas Daily Courier, manager of the McCook Chamber of Commerce, and director of metropolitan events for the Topeka, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce. Gene and his wife, Barbara, purchased the Benkelman Post and News-Chronicle in 1981, which they operated until 1990, when Gene accepted the position of Publisher of the McCook Gazette.

During his time as Publisher of the Gazette, Morris also served as president of the Nebraska Press Advertising Service and the Nebraska Press Association. He was the first winner of the Francis L. Partsch Award for Editorial Leadership. He was inducted into the Nebraska Journalism Hall of Fame in 2009, and received the Master Editor-Publisher Award in 2014.

Gene has written three books about the history of McCook.

Gene retired as Publisher from the Gazette in 2007, but remains on staff as a part-time feature writer and marketing consultant. He has been an active leader in the community, serving on various boards throughout his career, including McCook Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee, Marketing Hometown America facilitator, Fox Theatre, Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival, McCook Economic Development Corporation, Western Nebraska Field Director of Nebraska Heritage, and the George Norris Foundation.

Upon receiving the Master Editor-Publisher Award in 2014, Morris said, "In my opinion, community newspaper work is the most noble of crafts. Think about what we do as newspaper people. We have the responsibility and the privilege of uplifting our communities by gathering information, providing entertainment and offering inspiration to those we serve. At our best, we are difference-makers, and it is a thrill to behold what we can, and have accomplished."



*Don Harpst presents to Gene O. Morris the Leadership Nebraska Award, established to recognize community leadership. Harpst is a former Hillcrest Nursing Home administrator very active in community theater and other civic activities.*

The first thing Don Harpst Sr. did when he bought "The Indianola Reporter" in 1940, was to organize the Rotary Club. From there leadership developed among its members. Since then and subsequent years community leadership was visible in other newspapers that he purchased in Cambridge, Wilsonville, Eustis and Curtis. Harpst lost his father at the age of 10 and his mother moved the family from Ohio to Southern Texas where she bought a weekly newspaper in LaFeria.

Don learned the trade and bought his first newspaper on a "note and a prayer"! He became active in the Nebraska Press Association in 1957 and served as President in 1965. Don Harpst Sr. died in 1984 and is buried in Cambridge.

*This article originally appeared in the May 31, 2017, issue of the McCook Gazette.*

## Grateful to work in such a great business

Amy Johnson, publisher and editor, Springview Herald

Multiple industries have regional, state, even national conventions where they meet others in their same business. I'm sure they discuss the upcoming trends and share the successes and struggles they face. The newspaper industry does this too, and our staff just returned and came back more informed and more enthusiastic.

Daily and weekly newspapers across Nebraska converged in Lincoln over the weekend to do just that, share and learn at the Nebraska Press Association annual conference.

Kelsi and I attended workshops, heard guest speakers, and networked with others in community newspapers. It's reassuring to know that the struggles we face are common in other periodicals. One particular fact that we all shared was the great satisfaction we feel in working in our communities and covering the issues that matter.

Sure, we get our share of, 'You need to do this different' or 'The newspaper would be better if you'. But for every one of those, we are fortunate to receive accolades like, 'We enjoy reading the paper every week' and 'Keep up the good work'. After a weekend of learning and

networking we know there is always room to improve in each aspect of the paper, and now we know there is a network of great people we can count on to help us get through any hurdle we may be facing.



I've said this before, but I don't know many industries that gather together and share their top money making ideas with everyone, or provide other newspapers with ways they have increased their circulation and brought in more readers.

The newspaper business is unlike any other that I've been fortunate to work in. Even with no vested interest in the bottom line or receiving anything in return except friendship, other editors, publishers, reporters, and photographers are willing to lend a hand and share trade secrets to help us succeed.

Where else do you find this? You can in the newspaper business, and I for one know that I'm grateful for the opportunity to work in such a great business.

*This column originally appeared in the April 26, 2017, issue of the Springview Herald.*

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# Learning from your peers, friends

Each April, the masses that associate themselves as newspaper folks gather for a two-day convention, which ultimately is used as a learning tool for us all.

Each year also brings to the front of my mind how many things one can learn, whether it be in seminars or classes, or just sitting down at a table and talking to others that I may not see often, outside of a state tournament or a state association board meeting.

This year was no different from my perspective. As I stepped in as acting president for the Nebraska Press Advertising Service, while serving the association as its vice-president this past year, I've learned what quality work this state puts on the streets, week in and week out.

Our friends to the north, the Aurora News-Register, pretty much dominated the class we compete in, Class C. Not only did the News-Register staff win the Better Newspaper Contest for the association, but they were awarded with the coveted Loral Johnson Sweepstakes Award. A class act paper that knows what they are doing and then some.

Kurt and I go way back to the days of the kids running around the convention halls, as our parents did what we do now, publish and lead newspaper staffs.

A long talk with current publisher of the Geneva Nebraska Signal, John Edgecombe Jr., also topped another great moment for myself. John is another of those newspaper folks that I've known for many, many years. John joins a list of 46 newspaper leaders over the years that have received the most honorable award a newspaper person in Nebraska can receive, the Master-Editor Publisher award.

On a very, very personal note, Mr. Edgecombe joins a long, long list of well respected newspaper men and women, who have received this award.

At the top of that list is my father, Doug Duncan, who, in his final months of his life, was honored as the Master Editor-Publisher in 1994, just two and a half months before his passing.

Additionally, Ted Gill, our current publisher, was

awarded the honor in 2013. Ted led me back into the newspaper business nearly eight full years ago by getting me started here, with the Clay County News.



**By  
Tory  
Duncan,  
Managing  
Editor,  
Sutton Clay  
Co. News**

Former Clay County News publisher Don Russell was honored with this award in 2012.

One of my favorite bosses/teachers of all time, Theodore "Ted" Huettmann of the Wisner News Chronicle, was honored in 2007. Kurt Johnson's parents, Loral Johnson and Elna Johnson, were co-publishers of the Imperial Republican in their working days. Loral was bestowed the honor in 2001, while Elna was presented the honor in 2015.

Honors and awards are truly wonderful to receive. Some years it goes very well and others, not so much. In the end, in my heart and mind, those awards, while certainly wonderful to receive, the biggest honor in my world is to be rewarded by the people that should matter the most in this business, our readers, the people that we work for first and foremost.

It is rare to get that many newspaper folks in one place at the same time, but one of the editors in this state that I have respected ever since meeting him, back in my days in the Wisner paper, Willis Mahannah, who is still the editor of the West Point News, said it best on a flight this past October to Nashville for the National Newspaper Association. Sometimes, we got it, other times, it's just not there, meaning that winning is great, but in the end, if we do what we do right each day, the ultimate award is doing it right for your readers.

I have maintained that since walking in the door for the first day of business as the managing editor of the Clay County News, back on June 1, 2009. We're here to serve our readers, the people that matter most. If we lose our focus, our drive, then what's the point? That sentiment goes for any business!

Yep, I learn greatly from my peers, my friends in the business. But when I do my best learning, I'm observing, and this weekend, my observations are that I am over the top happy with the staff that IS Clay County News!

*This column originally appeared in the April 26, 2017, issue of the Sutton Clay Co. News.*



Two full days of workshops provided ideas, techniques and solutions that attendees could share with co-workers and staff, and implement at their newspapers right away. Topics covered sales, newspaper/ad design, InDesign and Illustrator tips and tricks, headline writing/editing, legal Q&A, social media and more.

Kelly Wirges (left), with ProMax Consulting, was one of the convention workshop presenters. Kelly led three Saturday sessions on advertising sales.

## Rob James honored for 23 years of service to NPAS

Rob James retired March 31 as sales manager of the Nebraska Press Advertising Service, after serving the association for 23 years.

He was honored at Saturday night's awards banquet with some parting gifts from the NPA/NPAS board of directors.

NPA Executive Director Allen Beermann thanked Rob for his work and accomplishments for NPAS on behalf of our member newspapers.

Rob began his newspaper career in advertising sales at the Topeka (KS) Capital-Journal in 1977, worked his way through the ranks with Stauffer Communications, serving as publisher of the Brookings (SD) Register, and became retail advertising manager at the Lincoln Journal Star before joining NPAS as sales manager.

In his remarks, Rob said he takes pride in the fact that he is leaving the association on very solid ground financially. He attributed the success of NPA and NPAS to outstanding co-workers, supportive executive directors and strong support from board members over the years.

Allen Beermann (above) presents Rob James (far right), and his wife Carla, with his parting retirement gifts from the NPA/NPAS board of directors. Assisting with the presentation is NPAS Vice President, Tory Duncan (center).



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## “Nebraska Project” films documentary in Clearwater

By LuAnn Schindler, *Clearwater-Ewing Record-News*, June 15, 2017

Photojournalist Bill Frakes stands in the corner of a room at a family farm near Clearwater, his Nikon camera in hand, studying the natural bend of light and contrast of shadows.

Both blend together, silhouetting the subject of Frake’s latest photography and video project, 91-year-old Lucille Kester.

Next to her, in a handmade baby cradle where four generations of Kester family members have been rocked, lays Kinley Claire Roemmich, Kester’s 100th great-grandchild.

Frakes frames the shot, a sweet scene featuring Lucille gently rocking the cradle while Kinley naps.

It’s one scene from a week-long photo session that, when completed, will tell the story of Kester, her family and life along the Elkhorn River Valley and Clearwater.

The final packaged product will be housed on The Nebraska Project, a website filled with films and still photography shot by Frakes and his business partner, Laura Heald.

Together, they operate Straw Hat Visuals, a Jacksonville, Fla., multimedia production company that produces short documentary pieces, portraits and advertising visuals.

The Nebraska Project launched in 2014, after Frakes discovered a story his mother, Agnes, had written during the war years for *Collier’s Magazine*.

Heald thought the story could be used to create a visual element.

The resulting project: a video entitled “A Teacher Remembered,” honoring Agnes, who began teaching at age 17 in the one-room Farmer’s Valley School.

Frakes said when work began on the project, fellow photographers encouraged the business partners to put all the work in one place, “so everyone can take a look.”

For the most part, the work features outstate Nebraska.

“That’s the pretty part,” Frakes said. “Nebraska is Clearwater, Neligh, O’Neill and Sutton, Harvard and Clay Center, Ainsworth, Valentine, Chadron and especially, Scottsbluff.”

Powerful praise coming from an individual who has visited each of the 50 U.S. states and traveled to 138 countries.

Frakes is a fifth-generation Nebraskan, who grew up near Scottsbluff, earned a degree in economics from Arizona State University, completed a degree in journalism from the University of Kansas and attended law school at the University of Mississippi.

Why photography?

He credits his mother, who taught or served as principal for nearly 40 years, for fine-tuning his keen eye for detail.

“If you saw my penmanship or ability to draw, you’d understand why it was necessary for me to communicate visually with a camera,” he said.

In 1979, Frakes went to work as a photographer for the *Miami Herald*. He was part of the staff that won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, for the newspaper’s coverage of Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Eventually, Frakes landed as a staff photographer at *Sports Illustrated*, where he covered events ranging from NFL championships to the Kentucky Derby to the Olympics and has conducted photo shoots for ESPN.

How did the award-winning photographer end up in Clearwater?

Katie Morrow, of O’Neill, a friend of Frakes, sent a link to an article about Kester that was printed in both the *Clearwater Record-Ewing News* and *Neligh News and Leader*, “since I knew he loves all things Nebraska and especially the people.”

“The really ironic thing was that her 100th great-grandkid had the same last name as his mom (Agnes) before she married his dad,” Morrow said. “Of course they were distantly related.”

Frakes’ believes his grandfather and Kinley’s great, great-grandfather were siblings.

Frakes said Morrow’s husband, Kevin, sent three new ideas Friday morning. “We get leads from all over,” Frakes said.

“I call it the Nebraska name game. Everywhere we go, within five minutes, Bill can either find out they’re related or they know each other or they know someone who knows someone,” Heald said.

**cont. pg. 14**

**Frakes - cont. from 13**

A few years ago, around Christmas, Frakes received a brown paper-wrapped parcel that contained a handwritten note that said: "I think you'll like this. I think you should read it. If you do and want to meet him, I'll introduce you."

The parcel and post was from fellow Nebraskan, Ted Kooser. "When the poet laureate says 'read this,' what do you do? You sit down and read it," Frakes said.

The book was penned by R.F. McEwen, an Olympic-style weightlifter and poet, from Chadron.

According to Frakes, "Not too long later, we were there, making a film about him."

Sometimes, Frakes and Heald receive messages via social media. Like the time a Navy-based photojournalist viewed some of Frakes' work during a Department of Defense seminar and sent a note expressing how the photos made her homesick for western Nebraska.

Frakes said, "So we're at McEwen's house on a second visit and there's a sign in the window that his daughter's in the Navy."

Frakes asks the daughter's name and McEwen responds.

"She had no idea I'd be interviewing her father 16 months later and I had no idea he was her father because of different last names," Frakes said. "This is Nebraska. This is how we get stories."

Heald added, with a chuckle, "Finding stories in Nebraska is easy. It's picking which ones to actually follow (that's hard)."

Since June 5, Frakes, Heald and their assistant, Chi Kalu, spent nearly a week in the Clearwater area, shooting still images, film and drone video for the Kester package.

Heald said, "What's great about digital media is you can package it in many different ways." She estimated approximately 40 hours of editing will take place before the final cut, which more than likely will include a 10-minute video and a two-minute video.

Photojournalism has changed since Frakes and Heald started working together nearly a decade ago.

Heald said at the time, Frakes was spending between 280 and 300 days a year on the road, working for SI and freelancing other jobs.

"We would get called to get on a plane and go somewhere ... and you shot assignments you were assigned, whatever it was - good, bad, ugly - you'd go shoot it, ship it, somebody else would edit it, take it, put it in the publication. That was the end of it," Frakes said.

Now, 80 percent of the stories the duo tells are things they generate. "It's stories we think are important and want to tell," he said.

The universality of storytelling, whether in a video package or still photography, draws in people.

Morrow said The Nebraska Project is an important living piece of work because it "celebrates the uncelebrated."

"For someone like me who has lived here my whole life, Bill is constantly reminding me of the immeasurable value of being a Nebraskan - the things I take for granted, the things I used to belittle or degrade (even in a sarcastic way), all often have a new light. Bill has a gift for storytelling - both through words and images - and he has more passion for our state than many who live and work here daily," Morrow said.

For Heald, a Florida native, Nebraska represents "the romantic America so few people realize still exists."

"It's Mayberry," she said. "You walk down the street and know everybody in town. Kids can run around and go fishing and go to the neighbor's house and it's safe and clean and full of kind people."

For Frakes, Nebraska is a sacred place. "It's the gold standard. It's better than any place else," Frakes said. "We're proud of the place. We're proud of the people. We love it."

*Editor's Note: This article originally ran in the June 15, 2017 issue of the Clearwater-Ewing Record-News and is reprinted here with permission. Bill Frakes was the keynote speaker at the NPA Convention Awards Luncheon on April 22.*



*Photo by LuAnn Schindler*

*Pulitzer-prize winning photojournalist Bill Frakes, a Nebraska native, spent a week filming the Kester family of Clearwater. Frakes is creating a documentary, which will appear on "The Nebraska Project," a website devoted to telling the stories about the people and places in Nebraska. (above) Frakes checks the lighting before photographing Lucille Kester and her 100th great-grandchild, Kinley, who is in the cradle.*

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Darran Fowler, Hastings Tribune

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Voice-over - Linda Beermann

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Rob Dump, Hartington Cedar Co. News

***Collegiate Writing Competition facilitator:***

Michael (OJ) Nelson

***Collegiate Photojournalism Competition facilitators:***

Jeff Bundy & Matt Miller, Omaha World-Herald

# In Memoriam



The Nebraska Press Association mourns the death of 27 members and associates during the past year.  
(January 2016 - April 2017)

Their loss is shared by their communities and the newspaper profession which they so ably served during their lifetimes. Their civic and professional service and achievements remain as a permanent tribute. Their names are recorded here as an expression of remembrance and respect:

## ***Thelma Hill***

*Columnist, Co-publisher - Taylor Clarion*  
March 31, 2017

## ***Sandy Smith***

*Reporter, Photographer - Wilber Republican*  
March 18, 2017

## ***Helen Evans***

*Co-publisher - Clarkson Colfax Co. Press, Leigh World, Genoa Leader-Times, Meadow Grove News, Pilger Herald*  
March 15, 2017

## ***Judy Horan***

*Promotion & Marketing Director - WOWT-TV; Freelance Writer - Omaha Magazine, Omaha World-Herald*  
March 1, 2017

## ***Al Frisbie***

*General Assignment Reporter, Columnist, Sports Writer, Copy/Makeup Editor, Saturday Edition Editor - Omaha World-Herald*  
February 24, 2017

## ***Steve Buttry***

*Student Media Director - Louisiana State University (Manship School of Mass Communications); Reporter, Newsroom Mentor, Writing Coach - Omaha World-Herald; Reporter, Managing Editor - Shenandoah (IA) Sentinel, Des Moines Register, Kansas City Star & Times, Minot (ND) Daily News*  
February 19, 2017

## ***Dorothy Kunzman***

*Editor - Alliance Times-Herald*  
January 23, 2017

## ***T.C. (Ted) Turpin***

*Reporter, Editor - North Platte Telegraph; Ag Reporter - Wall Street Journal; Business & Financial Editor - Tucson Daily News; Owner/Publisher - Green Valley News (AZ), Homes Illustrated (AZ), Oro Valley Voice (AZ)*  
December 5, 2016

## ***Nancy Jackson***

*Co-owner, Editor - Ravenna News*  
November 17, 2016

## ***Jeanene Wehrbein***

*Managing Editor/Columnist - Plattsmouth Journal*  
November 6, 2016

## ***Evelyn Bass***

*Co-owner, Editor, Writer, Proofreader - Loup City Sherman Co. Times*  
August 23, 2016

## ***Eugene "Pete" Drake***

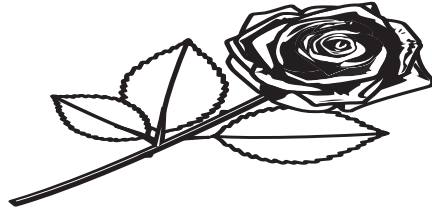
*Planning/Production Manager - Omaha Sun, Bellevue Leader*  
July 28, 2016

## ***Byron Neiman***

*Advertising Director - North Platte Telegraph; Owner/Publisher - Mullen Hooker Co. Tribune*  
July 24, 2016



# In Memoriam



*(Continued - Page 2)*

The Nebraska Press Association mourns the death of 27 members and associates during the past year.  
**(January 2016 - April 2017)**

***Steve Kodad***

*Sports Editor - McCook Gazette  
June 27, 2016*

***Leland "Kim" Johnson***

*Editor & Publisher - Hebron Journal-Register  
June 25, 2016*

***James C. Seacrest***

*Publisher & Philanthropist - Western  
Publishing Co., North Platte Telegraph  
June 2, 2016*

***Lowell Erickson***

*Editor - Ida Grove Pioneer Record, Seward Co.  
Independent, Lincoln Journal Star; Journalism  
Instructor - UNL; Writer - Newslink;  
Sports Information Director - Concordia University  
May 19, 2016*

***Jane White***

*Sports Editor, Reporter - Wilber Republican,  
Seward Co. Independent, Milford Times,  
Beatrice Daily Sun, Fairbury Journal News  
May 5, 2016*

***Delmar "Del" Sutherland***

*Sports & City Editor - Fall City Journal  
April 30, 2016*

***Diana Lambson***

*Regional Correspondent, Writer, Reporter -  
Hastings Tribune  
March 26, 2016*

***Eric "Benny" Benson***

*Longtime Friend of Newspapers,  
Office Equipment Sales - Western Typewriter  
March 14, 2016*

***Richard Holman***

*Reporter, Columnist - Lincoln Journal Star,  
Wall Street Journal  
March 7, 2016*

***Helen Green***

*Women's News Editor, Assc. Editor -  
Fairbury Journal-News  
March 7, 2016*

***James Clemon***

*Reporter, Editor - Omaha World-Herald  
March 7, 2016*

***Jerry Fricke***

*Writer, Sports Writer, Editor, Publisher -  
David City Banner-Press, Madison Star-Mail,  
Norfolk Daily News, Omaha World-Herald  
February 27, 2016*

***Bob Brehm***

*Press Room Mgr. - Lincoln Journal Star  
February 11, 2016*

***LaVonne Clap***

*Proof Reader, Circulation, Advertising  
Sales - McCook Gazette  
January 13, 2016*

## ***Statement of Tribute***

*The officers, directors, and members of the Nebraska Press Association wish to remember the lives of these departed in such a way that their legacy will always be for us a time to remember, refresh, and renew, as we continue our lives in such a manner that brings dignity to all.*