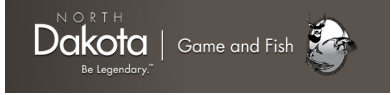


OUTDOORS/CUSTER

Staying Safe On The Water This Summer



by Doug Leier

You wouldn't wait until after the opening weekend of pheasant season to brush up on firearm safety. You take hunter education before you hunt. You check your firearm, review the rules and head into the field prepared. The same mindset belongs on the water.

Because here's the truth: if your day on the lake or river isn't safe, nothing else really matters. Not the sunshine, not the peaceful quiet, not even the fish in the livewell. A successful day outdoors always starts with making sure everyone gets home safely.

I grew up in a time when safety wasn't front and center. No bike helmets. Seat belts weren't always the first thing people reached for. Life jackets were more likely to be used as a cushion than something you actually wore. For all the wrong reasons, we treated that like a badge of honor.

Times change. Or at least they should.

Most people today would agree safety isn't an after-thought anymore. It's part of the routine. Buckle your seat belt. Put on your bike helmet. Wear hearing protection at the shooting range. Those habits become second nature because they help prevent tragedies before they happen. Wearing a life jacket should be no different.

One thing that still surprises many people is that North Dakota law doesn't require most adults to wear a life jacket while boating. When you think about how we view seat belts, that seems a little backwards. In both cases, putting one on after something goes wrong

doesn't do much good.

Yes, wearing one is ultimately a personal choice. I understand that. But your family and friends would probably agree they'd rather have you home safely at the end of the day than hear someone say, "If only."

A life jacket only works if you're wearing it before you need it.

The good news is today's life jackets aren't what they used to be. They're lighter, more comfortable and designed for nearly every activity, whether you're fishing, paddling, kayaking, skiing or simply enjoying a ride around the lake. Some inflatable models are so comfortable you'll hardly notice you're wearing one. The old excuses don't hold much water anymore. Pardon the pun.

And if cost gives you pause, it's worth asking one simple question: What's a life worth?

North Dakota law requires children age 10 and younger to wear a properly fitted life jacket aboard boats shorter than 27 feet. A properly fitting life jacket also must be available for every person on board.

Anyone operating or riding a personal watercraft, or anyone being towed on water skis or an inflatable tube must wear one.

Beyond the legal requirements are practical choices. Skiers and tubers should choose jackets with secure straps. Anglers and paddlers are better off with lightweight

models comfortable enough to wear all day. The best life jacket is the one you'll actually wear.

Safety starts before the emergency begins. Prepare before leaving the dock and return home safely with family, friends and memories that last years.

You can't "Delete" a newspaper.

Websites can crash and social media posts can be edited, but a public notice in print is a permanent, verifiable record of history. It is the third-party "receipt" for local government actions that can be referenced for decades to come.

McIntosh County Star & Tribune

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Tribune reporting broke ground 150 years ago

July 5 marked the 150th anniversary of a feat of epic news reporting using a relatively new technology – the telegraph. It's a time to both reflect on the ways that reporting set new precedents and how responsible use of today's technology can aide modern news gathering.

When word of Gen. George Armstrong Custer's death and defeat reached Bismarck, "Col. Clement A. Lounsberry, the founder of the Bismarck Tribune, in a feat of newspaper enterprise that overcame many obstacles," set in motion one of the longest, most grueling and expensive telegraph dispatches ever keyed.

When the steamboat Far West docked in Bismarck shortly before midnight on July 5, 1876, Lounsberry combined the notes of reporter Mark Kellogg, a full casualty list, and interviews from survivors into an admittedly preliminary – and therefore prone to error – first draft of what happened at the Battle of the Little Bighorn 10 days earlier.

It would take Bismarck telegraph operator John Carnahan 22 hours of near continuous work to tap out the 15,000 word story across the transcontinental grid – along with Bible verses Lounsberry commanded

him to insert to hold the line open during periods when the publisher was busy sourcing additional information.

Contrasting an event like the Battle of the Little Bighorn with latter day events such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor or 9/11, it's no wonder Lounsberry was determined to hold the telegraph line open and pay the estimated \$3,000 bill – roughly \$70,000 in today's currency.

The nation was stunned. The New York Herald story supposedly even scooped the Army because its own dispatch landed on the desk of a general who was in Philadelphia celebrating the nation's Centennial.

Using modern technology to quickly glean whether these events had an impact on reporting by American journalists going forward, I did an AI-assisted search on Google, which notated original sources for what seemed, at first glance, logical conclusions, based on my query: 1. That by bypassing government channels, Lounsberry's reporting proved an independent press could outpace and outperform the government itself; 2. proved to the media industry spending massive capital for an exclusive was highly profitable; 3. that embedded reporter Mark Kellogg's death

elevated the cultural status of reporters to define the archetype of the war correspondent; 4. institutionalized the "Stop the Presses" standard of prioritizing breaking news over rigid printing schedules; and 5. showed media companies that controlling the physical transmission line is just as important as getting the story out.

The articles cited, all of which I reviewed, do not draw any of these conclusions. They merely report the facts that might lead someone to make them – or for AI to make them for you.

The telegraph had been invented nearly four decades before the Battle of the Little Bighorn, but it wasn't until 1861 that development of the railroad helped to establish transcontinental service. In 1862, West Coast newspapers were reporting on the Battle of Antietam in Maryland within 24 hours, thanks to the expansion of the technology.

At the time Lounsberry's breaking news came, people on the East Coast were skeptical enough of its veracity they delayed printing it until July 8, allowing the local Bismarck Tribune to scoop them.

Lounsberry doubtless faced several dilemmas in the 22

hours Carnahan sat tap-tap-tapping at the telegraph. Should he wait for official confirmation or comment from the Army? Should he withhold the names of the known dead?

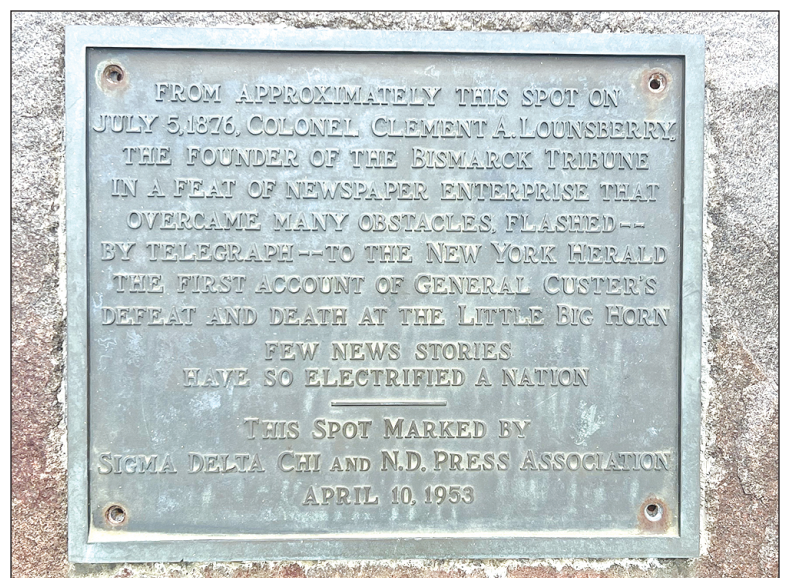
Today, not 30 yards from NDNA's office at 5th and Main Street in Bismarck, you'll find a stone with a bronze plaque on it, marking nearly the exact spot from which Carnahan labored.

According to NDNA's own archives, the monument was dedicated by the then North Dakota Press Association on a cold day in April 1953 because

"Few news stories have so electrified a nation." That's what we in the news business call a firsthand reference. First hand sourcing remains the standard for journalism today.

Even using first hand sources like Kellogg's journal and accounts from survivors, Lounsberry wrote at nearly the top of his historic dispatch: "I take advantage of the opportunity to send a hasty and necessarily imperfect account of the battle."

One-hundred-and-fifty years later, we do well to remember everyone is human – except AI.



A monument dedicated in 1953 marks the approximate spot of the telegraph office from which the first news report of the Battle of the Little Bighorn was transmitted, in 1876. The monument sits along the east side fence of what was once the Bismarck train depot.