



FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

BY KELSEY MAJESKE

Let the chaos grow



It has been a wild summer. I regularly find myself wondering how it is already halfway through the year. I swear it was just March, and I was saying, "How is it already March?" Yet, here we are months later, and I am still spinning. Deep down, I keep trying to slow the chaos, and somehow, on the surface, I am screaming, "Bring on the chaos!"

Because if we are being honest, there is a unique kind of beautiful chaos that exists in a community newspaper. On any given week, we sacrifice sleep to sift through late-night city council meetings and organize coverage of community events, we spend our time tracking down missing photo captions, and ensuring the sports you all love make it into our editions. It is fast-paced, demanding, and deeply rewarding.

But a few months back, I got a disheartening phone call. I was let know that one of the newspapers that we print and assist each week was looking at closing.

My initial response was simple: I am tapped out. We are barely keeping our heads above water over here, and there is no way I can do this and no way I can ask staff to take this on. That was on a Thursday.

By Friday, my newspaper guilt felt heavy. Years ago, we closed a newspaper. It was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made, it had next to no support and had become a drain on our other publications, it was sacrificing one for the good of the many. At the time, I felt I had no choice. The silver lining was that it was not the sole newspaper in that county, and someone else was there to pick up what we were struggling to do and while he might still hold a grudge he picked it up and is thriving. Still, I walked away from a newspaper, and every single week I ask myself if that was the right decision. The struggle from that choice

has never truly gone away.

Now, we were faced with a closure that was not my decision, but for a newspaper that was the sole county newspaper in an under covered area and it was within my control.

Across North Dakota and the country, community newspapers are disappearing at an scary rate. When a community loses its newspaper, it loses its voice, its transparency, and the shared record of its history.

So, I started working on the numbers. I started having the conversations, and I started to believe that this was a place where we could do some good and we could grow.

Effective this week, our newspaper family has officially taken on publishing the McClusky Gazette, preventing it from becoming another statistic in the decline of rural journalism.

The Gazette has long served as the essential thread holding Sheridan County together, celebrating weddings, announcing births, and keeping local government transparent. By bringing it into our group, we aren't just expanding a business footprint; we are strengthening the foundation of local journalism across our entire region. Our newspapers lean on each other, share resources, and form a network dedicated to keeping community print journalism viable and vibrant for the long haul.

To our loyal readers and advertisers across all of our publications: thank you. The future of local journalism has always depended entirely on local support. Every subscription you renew, every ad you place, and every story tip you send our way directly fuels this mission.

We are thrilled to welcome McClusky to our family. Together, we will keep leaning into the beautiful chaos, making sure the stories of our communities continue to be told.

BACK IN THE DAY

Underwood

COMPILED BY SHELLY WALLACE

from the Files of the Central McLean News Journal

20 years ago, July 2006

Residents have cleaned out their closets, attics and garages and there are lots of bargains to be found in Underwood at the annual citywide rummage sale the weekend of the McLean County Fair.

The summer recreation program is underway for local youth.

Spotty rains over the weekend benefited some crops in McLean County and more widespread showers could still help boost yields. Reports ranged from a few sprinkles to over two inches.

The Underwood Public Recreation has approved proceeding with the Westridge Golf Course Addition.

Tamara Heidelberger and Teri Heidelberger, both of Underwood, participated in the District Communication Arts contest on Monday, May 30.

The school board met July 13 and offered contracts to two individuals to fill the vacancies in the Special Education field. Resignations were received from Cortney Johnson and Joyce Ellwein. The resignations of Dean Knell and Joni Britton have yet to be filled.

Jason Erhardt, Riverdale, has been named to the dean's list at Dickinson State University for the spring 2006 semester.

Brittany Hendrickson and Eric Trautman, both Riverdale, have been awarded the 2006-07 Pacesetter Scholarship at UND in Grand Forks.

Darrel Wilke, 76, formerly of Underwood, died June 23, in a Fargo hospital.

Strong wind gusts leveled the wooden framework of a 15-unit storage facility near Coleharbor in March. Two such buildings are expected to be completed by the end of July.

30 years ago, July 1996

Like a gigantic snail inching its way across the prairie, one of the Falkirk Mining Company's 215-foot-tall draglines will begin a new mining site next week. Traveling just 1/10 mph, the Prairie Rose dragline will be on the move for just over a week before reaching its destination southwest of Underwood, at the Riverdale Mine Field. Soon after its arrival at this new mine site, the dragline will go to work digging through layers of earth to unveil rich lignite coal.

Clayton Ruff joined the Whopper Club with an 8-1/2-pound rainbow trout caught in the Missouri River June 18. A brown trout he caught June 28 was just one ounce shy of the mark at 4 lbs. 15 oz. Clayton figures it would have made the club if he had taken it to be weighed right away.

40 years ago, July 1986

The Underwood board of education was presented with a preliminary budget down from \$1.84 million last year to a proposed \$1.55 million. The proposed

budget shows a decline in elementary education salaries due to new teachers coming in at starting pay.

Farmers aren't being ignored in Congress, Sen. Mark Andrews informed his audience during a campaign stop in Underwood. He updated the group of legislation and committee work being done on farm concerns.

Adolf and Viola Hoff brought in a 20-lb. northern pike caught on the east end of Lake Audubon. Adolf says he was using just a minnow for bait with a 10-lbs. test line. Thanks to a strong landing net, he was able to get the 40-inch fish into his boat where it really put up a struggle.

Leaders of the Kountry Kids 4-H Club posed in the fair booth for a picture were Denise Berg, Greta Holkup, Nancy Heger and Deb Mills.

A basketball camp was held at the Underwood School for 51 athletes under the direction of Kim Kightlinger with the assistance of Chuck Finneman, Wade Faul, Jeff Gemmill, Dan Biel and Bill Sawinsky.

50 years ago, July 1976

The city of Underwood is expected to open bids for sewer and water improvements to the Park West Addition July 6. Park West is being developed by Interstate Development of Bismarck, owned in part by William Clairmont of Central Contracting.

About 65 people came to the city hall to participate in the establishment of priorities for coal development in North Dakota. The meeting is being held in a seven-county area of North Dakota to solicit ideas and for participation about what an environmental impact statement should look at.

The Underwood Bicentennial Committee is finalizing plans for the big parade and celebration in town July 2. Sections of Lincoln Avenue from Meiny's Bar to the clinic building will be roped off for the parade.

Carl Seamon was one of 421 seniors in the Class of 1976 who received the baccalaureate degree from the Gustavus College in Minnesota. He is the son of Delores and Martin Seamon, formerly of Underwood.

The Great Plains Bible Camp celebrated 25 years of camping at the campsite 1/2 mile east of Underwood June 29.

The wedding for Cary June Bowen to James Alfred Klinger, is set for July 10 at the Riverdale Church.

St. Paul Lutheran Church was the scene of the June 12 wedding of Sharon Fast of Garrison, formerly of Underwood, and Larry Iverson, Emmet.

60 years ago, July 1966

Melvin Berg is a patient in the Bismarck Hospital suffering with burns

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Published every Thursday by Nordak North Publishing., P.O. Box 309, 59 North Main, Garrison, ND 58540-0309. Periodical postage paid at Garrison, ND. For more information or for a subscription, write Central McLean News-Journal, P.O. Box 573, Underwood, ND 58576.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Central McLean News-Journal, P.O. Box 573, Underwood, ND 58576.

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