

# Bye Bye RG

THE DEATH OF AN INDEPENDENT PAPER

**T**he death of a locally owned community newspaper isn't a pretty sight, and unfortunately we're watching it happen all across America, including right here in Lane County.

Based on stomach-wrenching day-one gutting of *Register-Guard* employees by its new general manager, GateHouse Media, it's probably safe to say that the full story of the media juggernaut that's scored a direct hit on our own community won't be page one *Register-Guard* news. So it seems only fitting that *Eugene Weekly* should report on "Who's Going or Gone at *The Register-Guard*" (3/1). Thank you, *Eugene Weekly*.

The departures listed in the *Weekly* were headed by the *RG*'s fairly new publisher, Logan Molen; Baker family managing editor, Dave Baker; and longtime editorial page editor, Jackman Wilson, who unflinchingly wrote editorials with unadorned and straight-to-the-point words that provided readers with the clarity needed to understand complex issues.

The 17 others listed were also key players in the award-winning running of the business, including long-time investigative reporter Sherri Buri McDonald, who fully educated readers about every important issue she covered. Because *EW* reported that reporters and photographers have so far been retained, it's probably safe to say that reporter Buri McDonald's departure was voluntary, perhaps based on principle or another job, or both. It's rumored the jobs of the nine copy editors listed were shipped to a central location in Texas. This jaw-dropping piece of work is vintage GateHouse management.

Japanese multinational corporation SoftBank Group Corp. in mid-February 2017 acquired Fortress Investment Group, the parent company of GateHouse, which is owned by New Media Investment Group, which is in turn managed by an affiliate of Fortress, giving SoftBank the entire portfolio of New Media's community print publications, which at the time of acquisition totaled 564.

New Media's website states that its strategy is "to acquire and operate traditional local media businesses and transform them from print-centric operations to dynamic multi-media operations, through our existing online advertising and digital marketing businesses."

That explains the hiring of Shanna Cannon as the *RG*'s new publisher. According to records available to the general public, her newspaper experience centers on advertising. She started as an "ad-visor" while a student and continued on to positions that included national and major accounts manager, advertising director, and vice-president of advertising and general manager. In 2006 she was hired to replace the president and publisher of an E.W. Scripps Co. newspaper who'd been named Scripps' advertising director. Scripps tagged Cannon as "an experienced newspaper publisher with a solid background in advertising sales and general management." Scripps is on the same media-buy-up track as GateHouse/SoftBank.

The \$3.3 billion SoftBank Group cash deal closed in December 2017. Also of particular note, SoftBank's CEO met in December 2016 with newly elected president Donald Trump, pledging \$50 billion and 50,000 new jobs in the United States. It's unknown if the two events are related ("Japanese firm to buy GateHouse Media's parent company for \$3.3 billion," *Boston Business Journal*, 2/17/2017).

Will the last Baker-family-hired employee who leaves please turn out the lights?

*Nancy A. Olson has worked in the publishing industry for 30 years, 17 of them at The Register-Guard.*

**LETTERS**

**BARBER SHOWS UP**

I cannot cast my vote for East Lane County Commissioner based on gender, as Tony Corcoran recommends (Viewpoint, 2/22). I do have a "pro women" bias in general, but we desperately need a county commissioner who is committed to restoring democracy to Lane County! We need a leader who understands that "We, The People" need to be in charge of how we live in our communities in order to protect our health and safety.

James Barber is the best candidate to do this. James has dedicated time and endless effort to grassroots organizing, and the man "shows up" — at racial justice events, at climate justice events, community marches and town halls.

Wherever community is rising to further "the good," there is James Barber. I have seen him speak "truth to power" at numerous city and county public meetings.

James is a local businessman, community leader and a dedicated husband with young children. James grew up in a working class family that, at times, benefitted from the social support programs provided to vulnerable community members by a civil society. This has shaped his ethic of "kindness."

We need bold progressive change in county leadership. We need a person who cannot be bought out by "special interests." Let's take back our community and build a safer, more just and inclusive Lane County.

Talk to James Barber, then decide for yourself!

*Debra McGee  
Eugene*

**RADIO RADIO**

For many years, my quest for the human voice and spirit has regularly led my radio dial to KLCC. The DJs are among the best I've heard — charming, witty, knowledgeable and music-centered.

But something is amiss — in recent weeks I have tuned in to KLCC programs usually hosted by Kyle Christopher and Cina Kraft only to be greeted by Muzak. What gives? Has management decided that listeners can't tell the difference between live and canned shows? Like other canned things, are volunteers considered disposable? Will KLCC soon become a victim of auto-play?

Do other listeners even care?

*Daniel Henry  
Eugene*

**MOROSE ABOUT THE MEDIA**

I'd like to cast my vote against the new *EW* website, which is much less user friendly. Comments on articles were abolished. The letters to the editor are no longer linked from the main menu; they are nested in the sub-menus. Only a single letter is readable at a time, making it easy to overlook some. The calendar has more advanced search features, but is more difficult to simply scroll through all the listings.

Comments for articles are a difficult topic. Many forums are infested with insults instead of wise discussion. However, moving the conversation to Facebook does not prevent that problem.

KLCC radio used to have a call-in show where community concerns could be discussed. Now that program, and its daily local news show, are merely memories.

Posting comments at the *Register-Guard* website is also more cumbersome than it used to be. I doubt the new owners will undo this.

Claims of democracy are not only based on voting for one flavor of politician versus another, even if one brand pretends to care about ecology (while supporting clearcuts). Without robust public spaces to interact, discuss, argue, agree and have reciprocal learning, authentic democracy will remain an illusion.

*Mark Robinowitz  
Eugene*

**BALLOT RESULTS**

Interesting idea to change the way we vote and save money in the process ("Changing the Ballot," 3/1). There are many ways to improve the democratic processes in our country, but one of the most important is for people to actually vote. After voting, using our voices to guide what happens in Congress is also important.

Witness the power of those too young to vote speaking out after the shootings in Florida. Also, let those who represent you know when Congress does good things, like both parties working together to end the preventable deaths of millions of women and children in our world every year.

The Reach Every Mother and Child Act is cosponsored by 118 members of the House from both parties, including representatives DeFazio, Bonamici, Schrader and Blumenauer from Oregon. So far in the Senate, there are 20 cosponsors from both

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