

OPINION

Richard Harris
 Publisher
 & Editor



Thanks for the first 20 years!

It's hard to believe, but this week's issue marks the start of my 21st year publishing *The Journal* (originally named "The Tri-County Journal").

That means that the newspaper (or looking at on your computer screen) is the 1,041st newspaper I've put together since my wife, Michelle Harris, and myself got the crazy notion in Georgia in 1996 to leave Northeast and move to my hometown of Buena Vista to start a brand new newspaper.

We were young enough to be brave enough to take the leap ... and young enough to be dumb enough to think it would be easy.

We bought ONE computer prior to printing our first issue. After having to take turns on it, we broke down and invested in another one pretty quickly. We were trying to keep our expenses down, but didn't worry about it too much because we had researched the market, crunched the numbers, and figured out our "worst case" and "best case" scenarios with the business. We weren't expecting to become millionaires, but 20 years later we're still waiting to hit that "worst case" prediction. LOL.

I should have expected as much. After all, my former boss, the great newspaper man Johnny Solesbee of Community Newspapers, Inc., told me that smart with an abundance of retail businesses in areas with large populations comprised of residents with above average incomes and above average education levels.

However, instead of trying to dissuade me, he smiled and said "Good luck. You might make it." It was never about making a boatload of money (although it would have been nice). It was about embarking on a great adventure and doing something we could be proud of. Somehow, call it dedication, luck, or pure stubbornness; we've kept the business alive in a so-called dying industry in rural Georgia for two decades.

While Michelle is enjoying her 11th year as a teacher and isn't day-to-day with the business, she still handles a lot of the "important stuff" like paying the bills, payroll, and taxes to keep me out of trouble and she is still my partner.

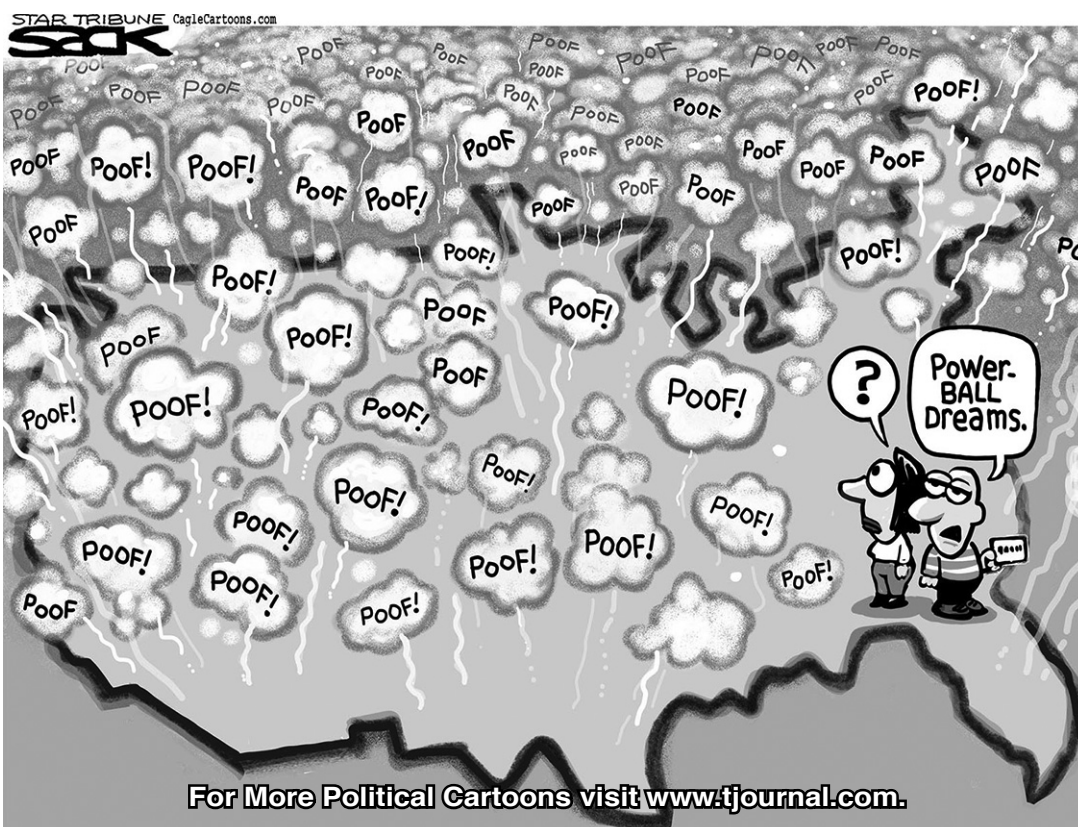
It has been and continues to be a challenge, but it has also been very rewarding.

Every now and then something I've written or published will touch someone in a special way, inspire somebody, or help someone in some way. I cherish those moments - usually not expecting them - and they seem to come just when I'm stressed about the grind of the job, have made a mistake, or feel like I haven't handled something exactly right, and need a boost.

I also tend to think that communities that are better informed are better communities. As Thomas Jefferson once said about the importance of newspapers, "Were it left for me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

So, even though I don't enjoy printing the "bad stuff", I think even bad news can help lead communities in the right direction, even if it hurts at first. Thankfully, our area still has much more of the "good stuff" to report any way.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us the first 20 years. Here's to another couple of decades ... or more?



Letters to the Editor

Thanks to all who helped with No Tears for Christmas

Dear Editor,

I know this is late, but I want to thank everyone who helped with the No Tears for Christmas in Marion County this year. We gave out 300 Thanksgiving food bags with everything needed for a great dinner. For Christmas, 250 kids received gifts and 250 seniors received food bags and a bag with cleaning supplies, hygiene items, socks, candy, and paper products. This was after we lost a lot of toys due to water damage and had to replace them.

We had an awesome time at Auction 41. They were all so nice and welcomed me with arms wide open. Thanks so much to Jim and Connie Rush and Auction 41 and auctioneer Billy Ball, as well as the customers at Auction 41. What you did was special. Marion Buchanan built a table and donated it. Tommy McCann bought

Dear Editor,

The members of American Legion Morton-Richardson Post 128, Richland, would like to invite you and all the public to our annual High School Oratorical Contest, Saturday, January 23. This is a Constitutional speech contest, in which each contestant will speak on our Constitution, and its meaning to today's citizens.

The best orators (1st through 3rd Place), will receive cash scholarship awards to further their education. In addition, the overall winner will be advanced to the District Three competition with an opportunity to win even greater college financial assistance. Judging will be done by a cross-section of distinguished professionals, including a member of Congressman Bishop's staff, a university Constitutional Law professor, and a representative from Ft Benning's Staff Judge Advocate Office (JAG).

Thanks for helping me help others

Dear Editor,

Area newspapers and other media have been wonderful to print and share my progress in the collection of pop tops to help Ronald McDonald House of Columbus. To date, I have delivered 630,000 tops to Columbus' Ronald McDonald House. We already have over 28,000 for our next delivery.

I was told that we helped pay the total utility bill for the year at their site on 1959 Hamilton Road in Columbus. Each time I visit with Mr. McMichael, my



Some of the many people who helped

a TV and box of toys from his auction house. Hank Berlew donated toys from his store. Marie Berlanga really helped Mr. and Mrs. Rush push the benefit auction and made it successful.

Thanks to the donations from the Calvary Riders #555 from Columbus I was able to buy a lot of brand new toys. So many people donated new toys it was amazing. Thank you Dave Barton, Gil Gilkey, Harold, Nick, Jack and all the Christian Riders

for all you did and for the donations of awesome toys, food for our seniors, and the money to buy more new toys.

Thanks to Marie Shearer Berlanga for her hard work and for always being there for me and helping me get done what I would like to take a minute and thank a few Santa's Helpers.

I received a truckload of food items for our Seniors Christmas Gift Bags. Thank you Textron Cessna and the whole staff from Columbia McCauley Delivery that was made by Dawne Taylor, Michael Taylor, Chris Cooper, and Brandon Bullard.

Thanks to everyone for all the gifts at the shop for all the kids and our seniors. We gave away so many items and there were so many grateful people and so many tears (but the good kind).

Thank you so much to those who helped with packing, de-

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Public invited to High School Oratorical Contest

All school board members, teachers, city and county government officials, law enforcement, and members of other local fraternal or service organizations are strongly encouraged to attend. By doing so, these young people will be able to see the depth of support they have earned through their hard work in preparing their speeches. This invitation is by no means limited to any single county. Past contestants in this yearly event have come from Stewart, Webster, Marion, Schley, Terrell, and Dougherty counties, and this year may even see an entry from Tift County. Everyone needs to help us show our appreciation for the patriotism and enthusiasm our speakers have, and - perhaps - even learn a little themselves.

The event begins at 11 a.m., 23 January, and will last until approximately 1 p.m. The location is Post 128 Legion Hall, located

on Legion Lane in the Richland City Park (Wall St, opposite NAPA Auto parts). In addition, everyone is welcome to return for the District-level contest, to be held in February 13. The District competition will see Local winners from all Posts holding a Local Contest, as far north as Troupe and Harris Counties and including Columbus.

Mark your calendar and make a real statement of support for our youth by coming to this worthwhile event. You might see some of these outstanding teens running for office in the future, and you would be able to say "I saw his/her first public speech back in 2016, in Richland, Georgia."

Jim Boling
 Oratorical Contest
 Chairman,
 American Legion Post 128

Letters to the Editor must be signed and it is this newspaper's policy to include the name in print with the letter. A day-time telephone number is also requested for possible verification (it will not be published). The newspaper reserves the right to refuse letters, but believes it is important to be as open as possible so the "Opinion Page" can be a forum for the community. **The newspaper does not necessarily agree with the opinions expressed in letters to the editor.**

reception has been great. I look forward to each visit and the reception I receive.

I began my pop top collection about 13 months ago. My goal is to be the top individual pop top collector in the shortest amount of time. I want to collect over 1 million by mid 2016. With your continued good help in Marion, Schley, and Sumter counties, I will meet my goal!

Kaylon Holt,
 peer at Perry Wellness
 Center of Americus

Do you really know what you're saying with Acronyms?

I once did a review of the commonly used acronyms in education. Beginning as a newspaper contributor, my reports have quickly been copied and shared both in the print media and online. Years ago, I learned that readers may not be as aware of educational acronyms and other commonly used acronyms. For that reason, I learned to spell out the acronym the first time it appeared. Now, texting and other social media messaging increases the need to write out the thought and not harm the use of the spoken English language.

Think of the many times each day that you may be using acronyms. Unless you are talking with electronically educated individuals, your message may be lost. In the past years, I have heard and seen the meaning of several acronyms and abbreviations. Can you recall the meaning of: CD, VHS, ID, USB, DVD, ATM, GPS, FM, AM, GOOGLE, YAHOO, OAN, IDK, DVD, VCR, WIC, ATM, GPS, DVS, VSRP, GIC, IM, PS, PM, AM, SMA, SCUBA, IMAX, ZIP (code), GF, and thousands more that we use daily and often fail to recall the meaning of our conversation?

If you want to be dazzled with information, access Wikipedia for thousands of acronyms and abbreviations in several languages.

We are finding a way to rush life. From email, texting, and other social media postings, we are part of a declining social networking of live and personal contact with a telephone call, a text note, or letter, or even a visit except for church or other social gatherings. We can dial customer service to any large company and quickly get frustrated with the menu of "please dial" before we may somehow

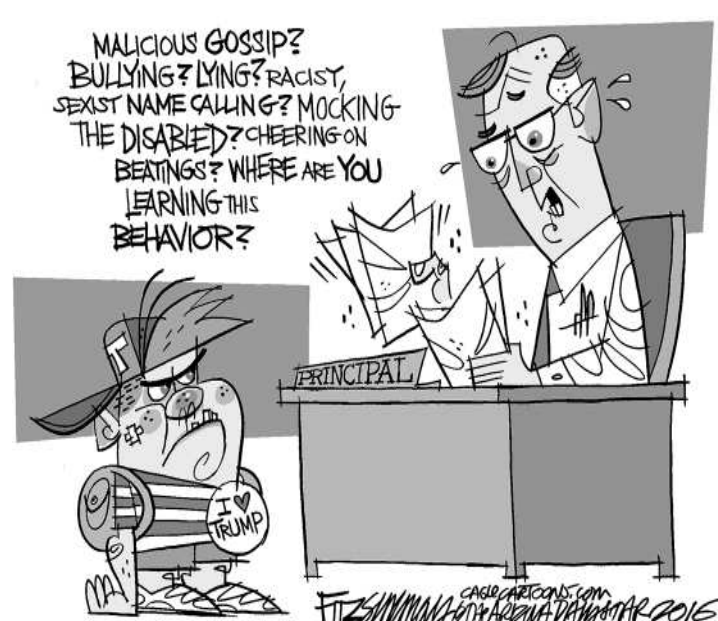


Mulkey McMichael
 Guest
 Columnist

converse with a live body in America! When I finally reach a living and speaking soul, thank them for selecting me to hear my business.

The acronym language became apparent to me as I realized the need to understand the abbreviations in routine conversation. Last week, I witnessed a courteous gesture by Samantha at J&R Quick Stop. Two young guys had stopped to ask for directions to Carrollton. I pointed north and tried to recall the road numbers. I then went to my car to retrieve a printed map. Recalling my discard of my maps because of my GPS system in my Kia, I returned to the counter and asked the guys about online GPS on their phones. They replied that the phone battery power was weak and would not display the route. Samantha produced a charged phone to share with the guys. The guys noted the route on a piece of paper and quickly left J&R for their trip.

I am guilty of slowly depending on electronics for information. Last week, I did end my use of Facebook. I was unhappy that my "likes" had spread to individuals who "posted" information that I thought was unsuitable for my review and retention. Except for sharing of family photos and events, I feel that social media and the attachment of personal images is not positive. I guess the modern world has left me behind to my more personal style communication.



The Journal

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PO Box 850 (71 Webb Lane), Buena Vista, GA 31803
 Phone & Fax: 229-649-NEWS (6397)
 email: tjournal@windstream.net
 website: www.tjournal.com

President, Publisher & Editor: Richard Harris
 Vice President: Michelle K. Harris
 Staff Members
 Linda Adams, Agnes Hanner, Arlen Harris,
 Kaye Queen, Joe Pollock, Melanie Rigby

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This newspaper is locally owned and operated and is published with pride each Wednesday by Harris Publications, Inc. for the residents of Marion, Schley, Chattahoochee, Stewart, & Webster counties. We believe local newspapers are good for the community. Our goal is to consistently publish an accurate and informative community-oriented newspaper. We strive to be professionals dedicated to truth, integrity and quality.

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This newspaper tries to provide balanced and fair reporting. Disagreement with how news is reported does not qualify customers for refunds. The newspaper does not select letters to the editor based on whether or not the staff agrees with the content of letters. Letters to the editor are a way for area residents to express their views.

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