

GUEST

Interning with the Independent

BY WINNIE WENINGER

Last spring, I graduated from North Dakota State University with a Bachelor of Science in strategic communications and visual arts. While in college, I participated in a variety of news-related fields. This included writing for their newspaper, being an anchor on their television channel, and being the president of the advertising and design club for multiple years. Although I was unsure of what I wanted to do post-grad, I knew I had a strong interest in broadcasting things that I found to be important.



This led me to seek out similar opportunities while I moved back home in between seasonal work out of town. I was curious about how news is handled in “the real world.” Luckily for me, both Carrington and New Rockford had a strong reputation when it came to both newspapers and printing. I knew that this internship would allow me to continue growing my skills in both communications and graphic design.

This internship was flexible enough for me to work on my own schedule before I have to return to Medora to continue my tourism work. Not a lot of places would be as accommodating as the Foster County Independent or the New Rockford Transcript, so I consider myself lucky in that sense. Upon starting here, I felt very welcomed. The people working at both locations are seasoned employees with a wealth of knowledge that they were more than willing to share with me.

I only knew the basics, so I had to ask lots of questions when it came to different processes, machinery and interactions with the locals. Regardless of how many times I interrupted their work, they would take the time to show me what to do, all with a smile on their faces. I got to learn their personalities, as well as how their expertise in their respective fields fit together to help everything come together in the end. Understanding all of these moving pieces really highlighted the importance of attention to detail. Everyone was uniquely themselves, which I appreciated as it created a fun environment.

I quickly learned that, while there are consistent deadlines, no two weeks would be the same. However, I also realized that that was something I enjoyed. There was always something extra to be done, and I often stepped up to the challenge. Even though they were seemingly random, I have gained a wealth of knowledge and skills that I otherwise wouldn't have in most other jobs.

I had tasks ranging from writing articles and creating ads to taking pictures and putting together awards. When I first arrived, my focus was on graphic design, which was my area of study in visual arts while I was in college. I started by putting together the annual planning calendar for New Rockford. This was a great starter project for me, because it allowed me to acquaint myself with different Adobe programs and use my previous knowledge on them.

From there, I got to work on the basketball programs for neighboring teams. I learned how important community outreach was. Without the support of local businesses sharing their ad spaces, we wouldn't be able to have what we've come to expect at sporting events. I found this to be a great win-win scenario for all those involved. Getting exposure for your business while assisting the youth is incredibly important in small towns like ours.

Other graphic design projects that I worked on included updating menus for local restaurants, designing posters for different events, creating advertisements for businesses, and producing other miscellaneous items that people would order. My most recent assignment was helping to update the Turtle Mountain Guide and Lake Region Guide, two travel publications produced. If you see one of these free booklets around, know that a lot of hard work went into them. I can say with confidence that these tasks have helped me sharpen my design skills, as well as better understand the logistic aspects of working for clients.

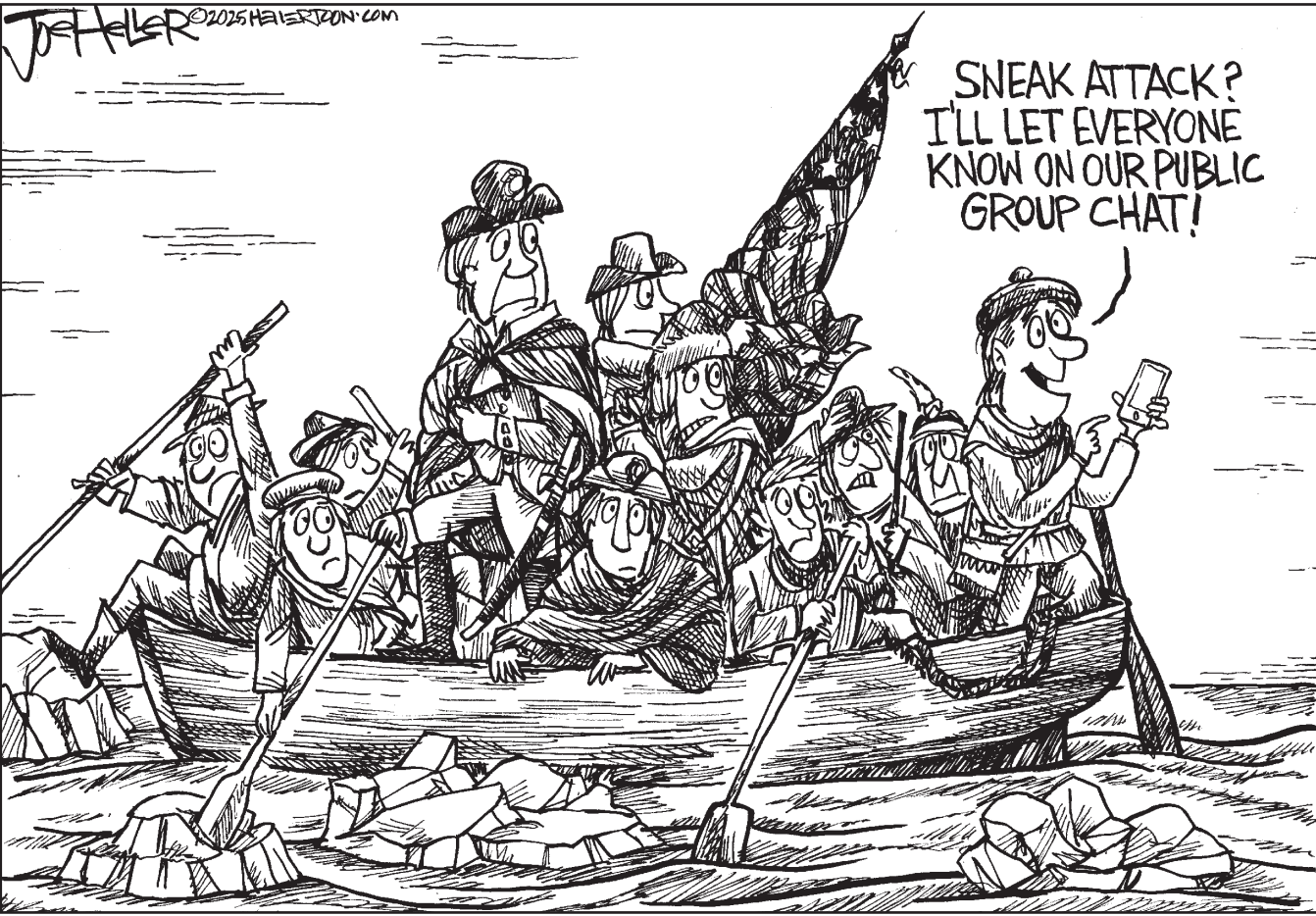
I arrived here to work during raffle ticket season as well. Since I am a fan of repetitive tasks, I have now created over 5,000 raffle tickets. Starting from designing them, to printing them, then perforating them for easy tear, next cutting them down to size, and finally stapling them into their booklets for people to share. I definitely have a deeper appreciation for raffles now, and plan to support their causes more in the future.

I also learned a lot about general printing. The process was quick for general orders, until the machines would jam or otherwise act up. I became well acquainted with the inner workings of these large machines. This definitely helped me improve both my problem solving skills and my overall patience. I consider myself lucky to be living in a time where we have these machines to do the printing for us. With newspaper printing, I learned more about the organizational process that goes into getting the physical copies to your front door.

When it comes to the actual newspaper, I even got to write a couple of small articles! However, you were more likely to see my name in the paper for my photography skills. I have previous experience with both digital and film cameras through my time at NDSU. But those classes helped spark a deeper interest into the world of storytelling through a lens. Due to my past, I got sent on quite a few photography-based assignments. This included taking pictures to accompany news articles, documenting different concerts and attending local sporting events. My favorite thing I covered was the Carrington Girls Basketball team while they competed at the state tournament!

A few more skills I recently picked up came from the process that goes into creating awards. The Independent creates the trophies and plaques that are presented at Carrington High School's Athletic Award Night. We worked in a production line, and my job was to burn ink into the plates. I had to be very careful, but it was a cool experience!

Interning for the Independent and Transcript has been an adventure. This quick-paced work environment has kept me on my toes and allowed me to learn about a variety of things. I have enjoyed being a part of something bigger than myself that also serves my community. I now also have a better understanding of the importance of local news and why it should be preserved. Jobs like this keep life in small communities!



UPSIDE DOWN UNDER

March is National MS Month ...

BY MARVIN BAKER

*Editor's note: This is the second of a three-part series examining links to multiple sclerosis (MS) and why they may trigger this auto-immune disease that attacks the central nervous system. This information isn't an opinion, but is statistical and draws from several research studies at home and abroad.*



A report published May 11, 1995 in the Mandan News indicated that radiation could be a link in causing multiple sclerosis. More specifically, it was the radiation that escaped from nuclear reactors at Chernobyl after it exploded in April 1986.

Two specific types of radiation that escaped into the Ukrainian atmosphere were strontium-90, a radio-active isotope that, upon decay, can damage DNA and lead to cellular dysfunction. Another isotope is called cesium-137 which is a long-lived isotope and can persist in the environment and the body for up to 30 years and can damage various parts of the body.

Unfortunately, most of the people who survived the fire and evacuation from Chernobyl and the nearby town of Pripyat contracted MS. A 1994 article in the Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press indicated up to 29,000 people exposed to Chernobyl's radiation either contracted a type of cancer or MS.

Although science today doesn't tell us whether or not radiation actually causes

MS, numerous studies have revealed the damage that radiation such as cesium-137 and strontium-90 can do to the human body, certainly makes it more vulnerable to contracting MS.

In addition, a National Institute of Health study said the use of radiation therapy in patients with MS is controversial because people with MS experience severe or more frequent adverse effects after radiation treatment intended for tumor control. Strontium-90 is used in bone tumors and although cesium-137 is no longer used, it was most often administered for cervical cancer treatment.

Another unusual link to MS could be salt. Like radiation, salt isn't positively known to trigger MS, but it does cause inflammation which eventually can break down the immune system.

A Yale University study from November of last year has identified a high-salt environment as one of the contributing factors in the development of MS.

According to this research, increased levels of the protein PRDM1-S, triggered by a high salt intake, disrupts immune regulation and contributes to diseases such as MS. This leads to what is called Treg cell dysfunction. Salt induces inflammation causing the loss of normal Treg cell function, which in turn creates the inability to effectively combat infections or tumors, leading to a weakened immune response.

It is now known, through this study, that instead of suppressing inflammation and maintaining immune balance, faulty Treg cells allow auto-reactive Treg cells to attack the myelin, leading to impaired nerve signal transmission. Myelin is an

insulating layer or sheath that forms around nerves including those in the brain and spinal cord.

Yet another culprit is the lack of Vitamin D. In a Mayo Clinic study, evidence shows that people with lower levels of Vitamin D have a higher risk of developing MS. People with MS tend to have lower Vitamin D levels than people without MS. Certain genes involved in Vitamin D metabolism have been linked to increased risk.

There are several additional potential factors that may increase the risk of MS. They include geography, certain viral infections, obesity and smoking.

MS is more common in regions farther from the equator, potentially because of lower levels of sunlight exposure. Viral infections like Epstein-Barr virus have been linked to an increased risk. Smokers are more likely to develop MS and experience more severe symptoms. And finally, obesity, particularly in childhood and adolescence, has been associated with an increased risk of MS.

In addition, there could be combined factors that can trigger MS.

Besides extreme fatigue and lack of motor skills, MS has some unusual symptoms. They include an itch you can't scratch, face flashes, fiery feet, difficulty swallowing, spine tingling shock, blurred vision, optical illusions, sudden spasms, migraines, hearing problems and vertigo.

Any of these signs could be a red flag, so it is best to contact a physician and get a proper diagnosis.

*Marvin Baker is a news writer for the Kenmare News and formerly Foster County Independent.*

GUEST

Drowning in decisions

BY TOM PURCELL

Here's something that can make us miserable if we let it: too many decisions!

Social scientist Barry Schwartz says Americans are becoming less happy because we're allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by too many choices. His groundbreaking idea, originally published in his 2004 book The Paradox of Choice, has been echoed by recent studies.



Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania recently found that while having some choices is beneficial, excessive options often lead to decision paralysis and reduced satisfaction.

No sooner do we wake in the morning than we have to choose among hundreds of breakfast cereals, drinks and coffees. There are more than 40 kinds of toothpaste to choose from, hundreds of shampoos and, for the self-care-obsessed, hundreds of other ointments, salves and moisturizers.

Throughout the day, we're pestered by telemarketers, pop-up ads and random texts that promise us we'll be fit, smart and stylish if we buy the products they are pushing - and fat, dumb and dorky if we don't.

Schwartz gives an example of a visit to a Gap clothing store to buy a pair of jeans. In the old days, the average fellow had only to choose between Wrangler or Levi's, but not anymore. The Gap now offers slim fit, easy fit, relaxed fit, baggy, stonewashed, acid-washed, distressed, button fly, zipper fly, faded or regular.

Gone are the days of the cardboard-thick Sears Toughskins I was forced to wear as a boy.

But decisions over material things are just the beginning of our confusion. We've allowed ourselves to become as equally overwhelmed by the careers we choose, our jobs, our spouses... or even if we should marry at all.

From the Greatest Generation to now, the percentage of people of marrying age who got married dropped from 81 percent to just 44 percent, reflecting a dramatic decline in marriage rates over the decades.

And many young people who still hope to find a life partner aren't just looking for a spouse or a companion, but a soulmate - that perfect person who is going to fill their hearts with joy every moment of every day.

The peculiar thing about the American mind - and I'm more guilty than anyone - is that we equate freedom with unlimited choice, when it is the opposite that is actually true. It is by limiting our choices

that we are set free.

G.K. Chesterton said that marriage brings a man happiness because it gives him clarity and focus. By focusing his energies and affections on one woman, he is able to know the inner beauty and closeness of one woman.

Could you imagine being an artist, he said, who was trying to paint a canvas as large as the moon? Where do you start painting? No, it is the frame that liberates the artist. By being boxed into a small rectangular area, he is given a point of reference and perspective. It is the frame that sets the artist free.

Chesterton argues that true freedom comes not from limitless choices but from making a committed choice and sticking to it. Marriage, in his view, is an example of how committing to one person for life creates genuine freedom within boundaries. That makes perfect sense to me.

I'm going to mull this important concept over as soon as I'm done choosing among 47 streaming services, 63 flavors of coffee and 27 types of hamburger patties - some of which have no meat!

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