

‘Necessary watchdogs’:

Newsrooms must step up in a ‘changing, challenging’ world

Jack Willis
NonDoc.com

I had brunch with a former OU journalism student of mine a few weeks ago. It ended up with him assigning me a paper to write. Payback.

Between my bites of scrambled eggs and sausage, Tres Savage, this online publication’s editor, suggested I write an op-ed piece. What do I, as his old news writing professor, think about the state of reporting now?

I’m out of the loop in terms of today’s professional newsrooms. I’m retired. I’m the grumpy old guy in the house shoes — the has-been, the Max Goldman of Edmond.

I look at news reporting now more as an average reader would rather than how I viewed it as a newspaper editor or a journalism instructor.

As an average reader, I see shoddy, inaccurate, and incomplete reporting in newspapers, on TV, and on the internet. And, I see some excellent reporting.

I see investigative coverage that showed people who need mental health treatment dying in our local jails, reporting that revealed Chinese criminal networks taking over much of the illicit marijuana market in Oklahoma, stoking a wave of violence.

I also see people who view themselves as journalists when they are not, public servants who claim they are trustworthy and transparent when they are not. I see working news reporters belittled and degraded by nefarious officials who have a lot to lose if exposed to public scrutiny.

We readers expect truth and accuracy in reporting, and deservedly so. Journalism remains under fire in this polarized setting of our modern plight. That sort of environment makes accuracy and objective reporting more difficult.

Some readers understand, but that’s

the job, isn’t it?

‘The ABCs of good journalism don’t change much’

Use of the big lie for political gain is in vogue nowadays, but it has careened out of control. The big lie is a propaganda tool where a falsehood is repeated so many times that people tend to believe it.

We excuse lying because we say all politicians lie. Candidates for office see a higher good in lying. They first have to get elected before they can help their constituents, they reason. They have to do and say whatever it takes. Some forget when the campaign’s over and when they need to start helping their constituents.

We’ve carried the tactic of lying to new heights. Hyperbole and lying have stormed through society like COVID-19 on steroids. It’s filtered down and tainted all levels of our lives — our education system, local government, the judicial system, our professional interactions, and our social relationships. If we disagree with something, it must be a lie or fake news or a false fact, whatever that is.

Perhaps I’m putting too much emphasis on politics.

I, like most readers, don’t have the time or the inclination to follow the vast array of news outlets out there. I don’t see all the good and bad reporting. But when I do, I judge it through old-fashioned values. I want to see the basics in news reporting: Clear and thorough sourcing, fair presentation, facts that are checked. The ABCs of good journalism don’t change much.

On the good side of things, I see reporting today that revealed a fake ticketing scam with millions of dollars pouring into a Texas County district attorney’s office. Investigative journalism that revealed one-third of Oklahoma kids in foster care were moved at least two counties away,



increasing the strain on youth, foster parents, caseworkers, and families trying to regain custody. Explanatory journalism that showed wind energy’s impact on the impending energy crisis in Oklahoma.

Reporters from nonprofits such as Oklahoma Watch, The Frontier, and NonDoc are producing informative and important stories. They and others like them have helped fill the news vacuum created when the print industry began losing ad revenue and whacking staff rosters.

Properly trained journalists follow a code of ethics, a spirit of fairness and objectivity, truth and accuracy, integrity and accountability. People who don’t follow those values inevitably raise eyebrows among readers.

Media lining up on the left or the right is nothing new. Editorializing and outright bias in news stories are not new. They’re reminiscent in many ways of the 1930s and the William Hearst era of yellow

journalism. That set a precedent for advocacy journalism, which itself is controversial.

Amid all the noise, we sometimes forget that reporters are the buffer between us and a corrupt government, us and our unlawful detention, us and power-hungry or crooked officials. Some of those public servants want to keep us from seeing what they do, many intent on ingratiating themselves and taking care of their cronies.

A free press mandated and protected by the Constitution offers the necessary watchdogs for our way of life. The platform — print, TV, online, radio — doesn’t matter. It’s the skilled communicator, the meticulous researcher, the ethical, passionate, and dedicated reporter that matters.

My hat’s off to the conscientious reporters who watch over the public interests of this changing, challenging new world.

And that, Tres, is what I see. That’s the job.

LEGALS

**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

Marriah Baker, Personal Representative of the Estate of George Stephen Darnell, Deceased. Plaintiff,

v

Thomas Enix, Paul Enix and Debra Enix, All if Living, or if Any Be Deceased, Their Unknown Heirs, Successors and Assigns, Defendants.

**Case No. CV-2025-176
NOTICE BY PUBLICATION**

THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, TO: Thomas Enix, Paul Enix and Debra Enix, All if Living, or if Any Be Deceased, Their Unknown Heirs, Successors and Assigns

You are hereby notified that you have been sued in the District Court of Delaware County, State of Oklahoma, in Case No. CV-2025-176, by the above-named Plaintiff, wherein the Plaintiff is seeking to quiet title to the following-

described real property situated in Delaware County, Oklahoma, to-wit:

All that portion of the N/2 SE/4 SE/4 NW/4 lying South and West of the GRDA taking line in Section 24, Township 24 North, Range 23 East, Delaware County, Oklahoma.

You are further notified that unless you answer the Petition of the Plaintiff on or before the 6th day of February, 2026, the allegations of the Petition will be taken as true and judgment rendered determining that the Thomas Enix, Paul Enix and Debra Enix, All if Living, or if Any Be Deceased, Their Unknown Heirs, Successors and Assigns, if any, have no right, title or interest in and to the above-described property and quieting title in the name of the Plaintiff. You are referred to the Petition for further details.

WITNESS my hand this 22nd day of December, 2025.

**Karma Sapp, Court Clerk
Delaware County, Oklahoma**

**By: /s/ Ashlynn Roberson
Deputy**

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Attorney for Marria Baker, Personal Representative of the Estate of George Stephen Darnell, Deceased**

(Published in the Grove Sun December 26, 2025, January 2 and 9, 2026)
LPXLP

**“NOTICE OF PROPOSED
PRESCRIBED BURNS”**

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation will be conducting prescribed burns on portions of the Spavinaw WMA in Delaware and Mayes Counties. Prescribed burns will take place between the dates of January

20th and April 1st, inclusive. For additional information or a copy of the prescribed burn plans, contact the area biologist Russell Perry at 918-629-5286. Burn Plans are also on file with Kenwood, Eucha and Jay Fire Departments, and at the Jay District Forestry Office in Jay, OK.

(Published in the Grove Sun January 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27, and 30, 2026)
LPXLP

**“NOTICE OF GRAZING
LEASE SALE”**

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is accepting cash bids for one grazing lease on the Spavinaw WMA in Mayes county. For additional information or a copy of the leases contact the area biologist Russell Perry at 918-629-5286.

(Published in the Grove Sun January 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27, and 30, 2026)
LPXLP

**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

In the Matter of the Estate of Garry Neal Riley, Deceased.

**Case No. PB-2024-171
Judge David Crutchfield
NOTICE OF HEARING
FINAL ACCOUNT AND
REPORT OF PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVE, PETITION
FOR DETERMINATION
OF HEIRS, DECREE OF
DISTRIBUTION AND
DISCHARGE**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the duly appointed and qualified Personal Representative of the above-captioned estate has filed in this Court a Final Account of the administration of said estate and a Petition for Determination of Heirs, Decree of Distribution of said estate and Discharge; hearing of the same has been fixed by the Judge of the District Court for the 13th day of January, 2026, at the hour of 1:30 p.m. at the Courtroom of said Court, in the County Courthouse at Jay,

Delaware County, Oklahoma, and all persons interested in said estate are notified then and there to appear and show cause, if any they have, why said Final Account should not be settled and allowed, heirs determined, said Estate distributed and the Personal Representative discharged.

**/s/ David Crutchfield
JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT
COURT**

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