

'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 OTTAWA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN RE: The Application of
Jesse Skaggs
To Issue Title

Case No. CV-25-110
APPLICATION FOR
COURT ORDER

COMES NOW the applicant, Jesse Skaggs of Ottawa, Oklahoma, and hereby makes Application to the District Court of OTTAWA COUNTY to issue an order directing Service Oklahoma to issue an Oklahoma Title bearing the VIN # F25D5K21847 in the name of Jesse Skaggs 1955 Ford F-250

In support of this application, the Applicant would state under oath that he is the Owner of said vehicle. That the above described property is not stolen. The he/she claims ownership to the above described property as follows:

Clay Gering had an auction run by Bud Armstrong. Denzil Arms bought a 1955 Ford F250 from that auction. Buyer #118. He (Denzil) paid \$600.00 receipt att.

I Jesse Skaggs bought 1955 Ford F25 R# F25D5K21847 I have put used motor \$500.00, clutch pressure plate \$150.00 broke master cylinder and wheel cylinders, all brake lines starter, alternator, fuel pump seat, 4 tires @ 150.00 rewired truck, new tail light new rear glass

That ownership of the above described property is not disputed or that an ownership interest may be claimed by no one, whom will have served with a copy of this application along with summons notifying them of the allegations of this application and date and time of the hearing.

Dated this ____ day of ____ 2025.

/s/ Jesse L. Skaggs
Applicant's signature

IN THE DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR OTTAWA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

In the Matter of
Jesse Skaggs
1955 Ford F-250

Property and VIN#

F25D5K21847

Case No. CV-25-110
ORDER OF SETTING

Now on this 22nd day of December, 2025, the Court finds this matter should be set before me the 15th day of January, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

/s/ Andrew Meloy
Judge

(Published in the Miami News Record December 30, 2025)
LPXLP

IN THE DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR OTTAWA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

In the Matter of the Estate of CORINNE R. SMITH, Deceased

Case No. PB-2020-33
NOTICE OF HEARING
PETITION FOR ORDER
DETERMINING HEIRSHIP,
DISTRIBUTION AND
DISCHARGE

NOTICE is hereby given that Corinne R. Nelson, Personal Representative of the Estate of Corinne R. Smith, Deceased, have filed in this Court her Petition for an order determining heirs, determining distribution and discharge of the Personal Representative.

Notice is further given that the hearing on the same is hereby fixed by the undersigned Judge of said Court for the 8th day of January, 2026 at the hour of 9:30 a.m. in the Ottawa County Courthouse in Miami, Oklahoma; and all persons interested in said estate are then and there to appear and show cause, if

any they have, why such Petition should not be settled and allowed, the heirs of Corinne R. Smith, deceased be determined, the assets of the estate distributed and the Personal Representative thereupon discharged.

DATED this 17 day of December, 2025.

/s/ R. Matt Whalen
Judge of the District Court

John W. Thomas, OBA #22445
DAVIS & THOMPSON, PLLC
Attorney for Personal
Representative

207 East Central
Miami, Oklahoma 74354

918-542-5524

(Published in the Miami News Record December 23 and 30, 2025)
LPXLP

IN THE DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR OTTAWA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

In the Matter of the Estate of ROBERT WHITEBIRD, III, Deceased

Case No. PB-2025-57
NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TO: The Creditors of Robert Whitebird, III, Deceased

All persons having claims against Robert Whitebird, III, Deceased, are required to present the same, with a description of all security interests and other collateral, if any, held by each creditor with respect to such claim to the named Personal Representative at the law office of John W. Thomas, Attorney at Law, 207 East Central, Miami, Oklahoma 74354, on or before the following presentment date: February 20, 2026, or the same will be forever barred.

DATED this 18th day of December, 2025.

/s/ Joseph J. Tyner
Joseph J. Tyner,
Personal Representative

John W. Thomas, OBA #22445
Attorney for Personal
Representative

207 East Central
Miami, Oklahoma 74354

/s/ Ravyn Whitebird

Ravyn Whitebird, Personal Representative

John W. Thomas, OBA #22445

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the Oklahoma Statutes.

Dated this 18th day of November, 2025.

Jeffrey Burton (OBA #31955)
Seth Schwenn (OBA #34777)

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ATTORNEYS FOR PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVE

(Published in the Miami News Record December 30, 2025 and January 6, 2026)

LPXLP

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF DELAWARE COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE
ESTATE OF BEVERLY ANN
COX, DECEASED

Case # PB-2025-74
NOTICE OF SALE
OF REAL PROPERTY

Notice is hereby given that, pursuant to an Order of the District Court of Delaware County, State of Oklahoma, made on the 21 day of October, 2025, in the Matter of the Estate of Beverly Ann Cox, Deceased, the undersigned, as Personal Representative of the estate of said deceased, will sell at public or private sale, to the highest bidder, subject to confirmation by said Court, on or after, the 26th day of December, 2025, all the right, title, interest and estate of the said Beverly Ann Cox, Deceased, at the time of her death and all the right, title and interest that the said estate has, by operation of law, or otherwise, acquired in and to all that certain real property, situate, lying and being in the County of Ottawa, State of Oklahoma described as follows, and upon the following terms and conditions, to-wit:

706 Admiral Trussler Blvd. (a/k/a 706 Goodrich Blvd.), Miami, OK 74354, more particularly described as: Lot Five (5), Block Four (4), Goodview Addition, Ottawa County, State of Oklahoma (the "Property").

TO: The Creditors of CHARLOTTE FELICIA HOFFMAN, a/k/a Charlotte F. Hoffman, a/k/a Charlotte Hoffman, Deceased

All persons having claims against Charlotte Felicia Hoffman, Deceased, are required to present the same, with a description of all security interests and other collateral, if any, held by each creditor with respect to such claim to the named Personal Representative at the law office of John W. Thomas, Attorney at Law, 207 East Central, Miami, Oklahoma 74354, on or before the following presentment date: February 20, 2026, or the same will be forever barred.

DATED this 18th day of December, 2025.

/s/ Joseph J. Tyner
Joseph J. Tyner,
Personal Representative

John W. Thomas, OBA #22445
Attorney for Personal
Representative

207 East Central
Miami, Oklahoma 74354

/s/ Ravyn Whitebird

the Oklahoma Statutes.

Dated this 18th day of November, 2025.

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Seth Schwenn (OBA #34777)

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