

WHY PEOPLE PRODUCE CITIZEN-JOURNALISM: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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JOSEPH KOKENGE

Dr. Clyde Bentley, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

WHY PEOPLE PRODUCE CITIZEN-JOURNALISM: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

presented by Joseph Kokenge,

a candidate for the degree Master of Arts

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Clyde Bentley

Professor Tom Warhover

Professor Scott Swafford

Professor Wayne Brekhus

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WHY PEOPLE PRODUCE CITIZEN-JOURNALISM: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Joseph Kokenge

Dr. Clyde Bentley, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

“Citizen journalism” is the term used to describe journalism-like mass media content produced and published by non-professional journalists, i.e. everyday people who produce and publish written, photographic or videographic content for free. Blogs can also fall under this rubric. This study answers the research question “Why do people produce citizen journalism?” To this end, four citizen journalists, affiliated with the citizen journalism publication Mymissourian.com, were interviewed to discover their motivations for producing citizen journalism. These interviews were analyzed using a theoretical framework developed from a synthesis of Weberian social action theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Interview questions sought to discover how the individuals felt before, during and after generation and publication of their citizen journalism content, the community's response to the citizen journalism that was produced, and the citizen journalist's relationship to the professional media of the community. Motivations for producing citizen journalism were categorized as gratifying either goal-directed or experiential needs related to sharing online.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Citizen journalism is a fashionable phrase these days. It is, as Steve Outing at poynter.org called it, “one of the hottest buzzwords in the news business...” Across the world, newspapers have incorporated citizen journalism into their print and online publications and citizen journalism only publications have sprung up almost as if unbidden.

In 2007, with its coverage of Myanmar’s governmental crackdown on protesting Buddhist monks, the BBC put citizen journalism to brilliant use in the midst of that repressive regime’s attempt at a comprehensive media blackout. The broadcast giant combed through the thousands of photos, text messages and blog entries that escaped the blackout via the Internet and incorporated these messages and images into its news reports. These images and messages came not from professional journalists but from citizens living and working in Myanmar.

As Aung Zaw, a Myanmar exile and editor for the Thailand publication *Irrawaddy*, told the *Wall Street Journal* on September 28, 2007, "Technology has changed everything... Now in a split second, you have the story."

The truth of Zaw's words was never more apparent than on January 15, 2009 when, just after take off, U.S. Airways Flight 1549 crashed into the Hudson River. Only minutes after the crash, an iPhone photo of survivors disembarking circled around the globe and, later, made the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* (*Los Angeles Times*, 2009.) Citizen journalism can be that simple and powerful.

Anyone can type or take a cell phone photo and produce a piece of citizen journalism, and the Internet provides an infinite, essentially free publishing and distribution network.

But the reality of citizen journalism is more mundane. Little citizen journalism has news value as obvious as the pictures, e-mails and text messages that escaped the Myanmar media blackout or that chronicled the crash of U.S. Airways flight 1549. Indeed, content analysis has shown that citizen journalists actually produce little original news reporting at all (Reese, 2007).

Scholars have already studied citizen journalism from numerous perspectives and have shown its power to circumvent traditional media's role as gate-keeper (Cohen, 2006), that citizen journalism and blogs are indeed news (Wall, 2005), and that citizen journalists have adopted some of the norms and practices of professional news organizations (Hass, 2005).

Scholars have also analyzed, to some extent, the motivations behind the production of citizen journalism (Korgaonkar and Wohlin, 1999; Sheehan, 2002; Li, 2007). These analyses, though, have all been quantitative in nature.

The purpose of this study is to add qualitative data to the quantitative already generated by scholars regarding citizen journalism. Specifically, this study will conduct interviews of five citizen journalists who posted regularly, and of their own accord, to the citizen journalism Web site, Mymissourian.com. In essence, this study will ask these five citizen journalists why they did what they did, how it made them feel, and why they would or would not do it again.

Social Action Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory will lend the theoretical framework within which these interviews will be analyzed. Together, Uses and Gratifications Theory and Weberian social action will show these five citizen journalists to be “a self-aware, goal-directed audience member, who is able to make sensible media choices in order to serve his/her interests (needs) and motives by means of media use” (Renckstorf, 1996) and who gratifies either goal-directed or experiential needs related to online sharing (Sheehan, 2002).

Research Question: Why do people produce citizen journalism?

Although citizen journalism has been variously studied by scholars, few have addressed the question of why people produce citizen journalism. One such study, conducted by Clyde Bentley, concluded that “readers are not turning to citizen journalism for specific political news.” Instead, “The most liked factors were an alternative to traditional media at 73 percent and building community relations at 65 percent” (Bentley, 2006).

The current revolution in mass media makes this question important to anyone interested in journalism and mass communication. As newspapers continue to die away and more people migrate their media consumption to the Internet, media professionals will be increasingly faced with this new type of citizen-generated content. Indeed, citizen journalism has become so prevalent that even the staid *New York Times* is testing the waters (Strupp, 2009).

Sometimes professional journalists must edit citizen journalism that is published in affiliation with traditional, professional news organizations; at other times, professional journalists cull information from blogs as part of their daily news-gathering routines. Or, having had their entire news gathering purpose usurped by unpaid citizen journalists, professional journalists may simply find themselves, jobless, lounging at home, with plenty of time to read citizen journalism.

Whatever the case, citizen journalism is here to stay and it would serve well all those interested in mass media and its future to learn as much as possible about the motivations behind this phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

What is citizen journalism?

Mass media content, generated by every day, unpaid folks and published in one form or another, has been called by various names over the years. “Participatory journalism,” “open source journalism,” (Bentley et al., 2005) “grassroots journalism,” and “user generated content” (Gillmor, 2004; Schweiger and Quiring, 2005; Littau, 2007) all, at one time or another, have been the *nom du jour* of what is now generally termed “citizen journalism.” And, although the term “citizen journalism” is the term that is the most generally accepted (Littau, 2007), the debate does continue.

This study, however, analyzes citizen journalists affiliated with one specific publication, *Mymissourian.com*. Professor Clyde Bentley of the Missouri School of Journalism, along with a team of graduate students, oversaw the launch of this publication. Inspired by the Korean citizen journalism Web site, *Ohmynews*, Bentley and his team, in May 2004, set out to establish a citizen journalism Web site that would function in conjunction with *ColumbiaMissourian.com*, the online arm of the local daily newspaper, *The Missourian* (Bentley, 2005).

The editorial goal of *Mymissourian* was simply to follow the mandate of citizen journalism.

“Every submission is newsworthy. Every opinion is valid. Every reader could potentially be a writer as well. To succeed, the Mymissourian site had to attract the widest variety of submissions and readers as possible because mass appeal, in this case, does not mean publishing something everyone will like. It means creating a place where everyone feels welcome and free to share” (Bentley, 2005).”

Citizen journalists who submitted to the Web site were to receive no pay for their submissions. As an evaluative criteria of submissions for publication on the site, the *Mymissourian* development team settled on simple rules (Bentley, 2005).

1. No nudity.
2. No profanity.
3. No personal attacks.
4. No attacks on race, religion, national origin, gender or sexual orientation.“

“The rules would only work, however, if we maintained some of the editing traditions of the newspaper. Every submission would go through a trained editor who would vet it for libel, clean up the spelling and grammar with an eye on simple readability instead of style, format it for the Web style and place it in an appropriate category” (Bentley, 2006).”

Critical to any conceptual definition of citizen journalism is the blog, which is a Web page that is published in reverse chronological order and that can concern a variety of topics but usually is concerned with daily events and the more mundane happenings of everyday life (Rodzvilla, 2002). A blog can be published by individuals or by a group (a community blog), “be personal or expressive, and it can be written in any manner from everyday prose to formal essay style (Bar-Ilan, 2004; Littau, 2007).”

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Fifty years ago, Elihu Katz noted that the important question in mass media research was not “What do the media do to people?” but instead “What do people do with media?” (Katz, 1959). This “uses” approach assumes “that the message of even the most potent of the media cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no 'use' for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives” (Katz, 1959). Although the mass media landscape has changed drastically in the past 50 years, Uses and Gratifications and its application to mass media research has experienced a revival in the Internet age. Many scholars argue that the level of interactivity inherent in online media use, the array of media choices now available online as well as the variety of gratifications these media choices offer, all make online media particularly suited to explanation by the Uses and Gratifications theory (Ruggiero, 2000; Littau, 2007).

In 1999, media scholars Pradeep Korgaonkar and Lori Wohlin outlined seven different categories of needs fulfilled by Internet use. Their needs categories are broad and diverse including: among others, social escapism motivation, transaction-based security/privacy concerns and interactive control motivations, and they conclude that media “consumers use the Web for many more reasons than the often overemphasized reason: to retrieve information” (Korgaonkar and Wohlin, 1999).

Kim Sheehan (2002) classified the needs of Web users into two basic categories: goal directed and experiential. A goal directed user specifically chooses certain content over other competing forms of content, while an experiential user simply surfs the Web with no specific goals or purpose in mind.

Sheehan notes, too, that these two categories are not mutually exclusive and that a single user might move along a continuum between being a wholly experiential user and a wholly goal-directed user all within the same online session (Sheehan, 2002; Meyer, 2006).

Specifically related to blogging and citizen journalism, the Pew Internet and American Life Project produced two studies. One of these studies addressed bloggers in particular and showed that most bloggers use their blogs as personal journals and “do not think of what they do as journalism” (Lenhart and Fox, 2006). Nevertheless, in their production of journalism-like content they often adhere to and adopt the norms of professional journalism practice (Hass, 2005; Perlmutter and Schoen, 2007; Kuhn, 2007). Fifty-seven percent of bloggers include links to original sources either “sometimes” or “often” and 56 percent of bloggers spend extra time trying to verify the facts in their blog posts either “sometimes” or “often” (Lenhart and Fox, 2006). Yet, ironically, and despite the undeniably public reality of publishing anything on the Internet “most bloggers view it as a personal pursuit” (Lenhart and Fox, 2006).

The Pew study also found that bloggers are predominantly younger, having an average age of 25 (Lenhart and Fox, 2006). But, as Meyer (2006) notes, “identifying only young people as content creators would be incomplete.” Lenhart et al. (2004) also denoted two other groups that create content online, and the reasons they share are linked strongly with the reasons they go online and why they might be interested in citizen journalism.” These two other groups were termed the “older creators” and the “content omnivores.”

Older than the blogging demographic, a majority of both groups have incomes over \$50,000 and are highly educated. Less likely to blog, these groups instead prefer to share content on the Internet through the maintenance of personal Web sites or contributions to family, business or organizational Web sites (Lenhart et al., 2004).

Huang et al. (2007) found five primary needs that bloggers sought to gratify: self-expression, life documenting, commenting, community forum participation and information seeking. These scholars note that in previous studies of bloggers' motivations the information-seeking need has been neglected (Huang et al., 2007). Through the use of hyperlinks and information subscription services like RSS feeds, bloggers are able to more easily gather the information they need (Huang et al., 2007). Researcher Dan Li (Li, 2007) arrived at conclusions similar to Huang et al. Li found seven different motivations for blogging: self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time, and socialization. Li found that these motivations are not separate, however, but are, instead, related to each other (Li, 2007). Two European researchers, Haferkamp and Krämer found that male blog readers and writers are primarily interested in informative blogs whereas female blog writers prefer to write about personal experiences (Haferkamp and Krämer, 2008).

Social Action

Max Weber defined action as “any human attitude or activity (no matter whether involving external or internal acts, failure to act or passive acquiescence) if and in so far as the actor or actors associate a subjective meaning with it.”

Weber defines social action as “such action as, according to its subjective meaning to the actor or actors, involves the attitudes and actions of others and is oriented to them in its course” (Weber, 1907/1956:3) (Parsons, 1937/1968:641). Social action “involves the attitudes and actions of others and is oriented to them in its course”, and it is “a carefully planned activity in the light of the person's own hierarchy of relevances” (Renckstorf, 1996.) When applied to mass media research, social action theory illuminates “a self-aware, goal-directed audience member, who is able to make sensible media choices in order to serve his/her interests (needs) and motives by means of media use” (Renckstorf, 1996).

Paul Hendriks Vettehan notes that with the social action model and the application of a qualitative methodology “the inner world of the participants stands central.” Together, they “provide a description of the world from the perspective of the people under study....qualitative here means that kind of research material in which the meanings of the people under study are expressed the 'actors point of view' and 'members knowledge' are two expressions commonly used to convey this aspect” (Vettehan, 1996.)

Combining Uses and Gratifications and social-action theory, human behavior is viewed in terms of what it does. Action is taken by an individual, and that action takes place within a given society. Although this formulation takes into account that any human action occurs within a social, political, and economic context, this formulation stresses that the action is founded on one's own individual goals, motivations, and values. Here, the individual audience member has a problem or a perceived problem and an array of media mediated perceived solutions.

Weighing the two together, the audience member then selects a course of action to be later evaluated based on “goal attainment” (Renckstorf, 1996).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The primary researcher selected five citizen journalists from among the pool of contributors to the citizen journalism Web site Mymissourian.com. These five citizen journalists were selected based on their contributions to Mymissourian.com during the calendar year of 2008. All five submitted multiple times throughout 2008. During the period in which these citizen-journalists contributed to Mymissourian.com, none were paid professional journalists, and none were paid (or offered any other material incentive) for their contributions to Mymissourian.com.

These five citizen journalists: John Hall, Van Dyke A. VanDyke, Wideman Wideman, Robin Nuttall and Dudley Dudley Jr., produced a variety of citizen journalism throughout 2008. John Hall produced over 100 photo essays and thousands of photos which chronicled life throughout Mid-Missouri. His subject matter included high school sports, area weather events, wildlife, commercial construction projects, celestial events, and indigenous wild-life. In addition, Hall produced numerous written works including a thoroughly researched historical essay that told the story of a long forgotten small cemetery, the Holtclaw/Sprinkle cemetery. It is important to note, too, that Hall self-published three books throughout his life and hundreds of KOM Newsletters, of which bound editions now reside in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. Hall's self-published materials all relate to the old Kansas-Oklahoma-Missouri Baseball league which was active in these states in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Mickey Mantle famously began his playing career in this league.

Although the focus of this study is primarily on work published on Mymissourian.com, in the case of Hall, it is impossible to separate his long history of self-publishing from his work that appeared on Mymissourian.com.

VanDyke produced four pieces of citizen-journalism not unlike many feature stories that run in professional newspapers across the United States. VanDyke's subject matter included a book review and a French film review as well as two personal essays. Nuttall produced more than 20 citizen journalism pieces in 2008. She carved a niche for herself as a local food/restaurant blogger with her contributions to the CoMo Whine and Dine blog. Having begun this blog with a few friends independent of Mymissourian.com, Nuttall was eager to have her blog included in Mymissourian.com's blog roll and, in this way, to gain a greater readership. In addition, eager to share her more than 20 years of experience as a competitive show dog trainer, Nuttall became a popular pet columnist. Wideman is one of the youngest citizen journalists associated with Mymissourian.com and also one of the most prolific. Wideman's contributions include a weekly NFL preview that offered popular advice to sports gamblers. Wideman also produced humorous essays on a variety of topics and one of Mymissourian.com's most popular single stories, a picture of a funeral procession carrying the casket of the honored deceased in a bass boat. Dudley Dudley Jr. is a Columbia area blogger whose activism and citizen journalism helped save an Adaptive Recreation Program from budget cuts in the summer of 2008. This program had been around since 1973 and, although open to all Columbia residents, was mainly used by the disabled residents of the Paquin Towers apartment complex.

An appendix of sample posts from each subject interviewed follows the Discussion section of this paper.

It is important to note as well that during the calendar year of 2008 much of the content that was published on Mymissourian.com was also published in the citizen journalism section of the traditional print publication the *Weekend Missourian*, distributed at no cost to 43,000 households. There was little if any modification to the citizen journalism contributions when they were moved from the Web site to the print publication. Any modifications that were made to citizen journalism contributions printed in the *Weekend Missourian* were made under the simple necessity of the space limitation inherent to the print format but nonexistent online. In addition, although there are obvious differences between publication online and in print, research issues inherent to this intersection are beyond the scope of this analysis. Nevertheless, the citizen journalists interviewed for this study were asked whether traditional print publication offered greater incentive for continued production of citizen journalism than online publication alone.

The primary researcher for this study interviewed these five subjects in their homes, at their places of employment or at a local Columbia, MO, coffee shop, the Cherry Street Artisan. The following was the interview schedule used for all five subjects (Lindlof, 1995).

Interview Schedule:

Please tell me a little about you personally, whatever you feel like sharing: name, occupation, where you live, where you grew up, your educational background—high school attended, college attended, hobbies, interests, how long you submitted pieces to Mymissourian.com, do you blog, keep a diary, take photos for pleasure. Why did you write these stories and submit them to Mymissourian?

What did you gain from submitting and publishing your work in Mymissourian.com?

What effect did your work have on the community?

Secondary questions:

How would you describe yourself and what you did here to someone who doesn't know/isn't familiar with it?

What do you think about the media community in Columbia?

What is the difference for you between publishing online and publishing in a traditional, "print" publication?

What was the community's response to your work?

What effect does "publishing" have on work like this?

How did you feel about your work as you continued to do it?

What are your responsibilities to your readers?

What is the relationship between the work you do here and the professional media of your community?

How do you define journalism?

As each interview was conducted, the researcher made the interview questions specific to each of the five citizen journalists by referring to specific pieces published by each citizen journalist. Specific, *ad hoc*, follow-up questions were asked throughout the interview to help clarify the responses of the five citizen journalists (Dominick and Wimmer, 2003).

Moreover, although an interview schedule was used, the actual interviews qualified as semi-structured and not fully structured interviews. Seemingly tangential lines of conversations were often pursued by the primary researcher in order to elicit a more comprehensive answer from the research subjects (Dominick and Wimmer, 2003).

It is important to note, too, that the primary researcher's year-long experience as Managing Editor of Mymissourian.com facilitated and aided meaningful pursuit of far-reaching side conversations with the interview subjects. This researcher was intimately familiar with the subjects and their work having corresponded with them previously, often in-depth, regarding their submissions to Mymissourian.com. The primary researcher edited and published all of these posts to Mymissourian.com and so was able to accurately judge when the interview subjects were inadequately expressing what their true intent and meaning was. In this capacity, the primary researcher was as much a participant observer as he was an impartial, objective researcher (Dominick and Wimmer, 2003).

The interviews were recorded with an Olympus DS-330 digital voice recorder, multiple copies made and then stored electronically in various locations and formats. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim from the electronic recordings (Lindlof, 1995; Dominick and Wimmer, 2003).

The constant comparative data analysis paradigm will be used to structure and analyze the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Dominick and Wimmer, 2003). After transcription, each interview was cut apart along each question and answer. These pieces will then be categorized based on similarity of response.

After separation and categorization of responses, the categories themselves were refined and analyzed. The researcher wrote “rules or propositions that attempt to describe the underlying meaning that defines the category” (Dominick and Wimmer, 2003). These written statements were then be compared in order to find meaningful relationships between the categories. Finally, these relationships was synthesized into a coherent theoretical framework in an attempt to answer the posed research question, “Why do people produce citizen journalism? (Dominick and Wimmer, 2003).

Limitations

All research has limitations, and this study is no exception. While its qualitative approach will no doubt elicit great individual detail, its small sample size is in no way generalizable to the greater population of the tens thousands of citizen journalists who presently contribute their content to the greater worldwide media community.

This study will be conducted in Columbia, MO, a community universally regarded as media saturated. The population of this community is approximately 80,000 and yet this community boasts two daily newspapers, a powerful NBC affiliate, KOMU, an award winning student-run university newspaper, the Maneater, an NPR station, KBIA, as well as numerous other magazines, Web sites and alternative publications. This saturation stems primarily from the prescence of the large and nationally recognized journalism school associated with the University of Missouri, the Missouri School of Journalism, as well as the related journalism think-tank, the Reynolds Journalism Institute. Motivations to be a “published journalist” within this community may be different from those in communities with less media saturation.

Also, the presence of this well-known journalism school and this school's affiliation with the community's primary citizen journalism publication may also have an influence on each individual's motivations to produce citizen journalism.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In order to better facilitate analysis, the responses to the interview questions were group into categories based on underlying themes that emerged upon initial analysis. These categories are: Reasons for Writing and Submitting, Gains from Submitting and Publishing, Effect on the Community, Immediacy and Readership, Conceptions of Self, Relationship to the professional media in Columbia, Responsibilities to readers. From these categories and the responses contained within, a coherent picture was produced regarding why these five individuals chose to produce their citizen journalism and submit their work for publication on Mymissourian.com.

Reasons for Writing and Submitting

Reasons for writing and submitting content to Mymissourian.com uniformly revolved around the idea of sharing within each research subjects own community of media interests.

Charles Dudley Jr. sought to inform residents of the city of Columbia about the merits of a city-funded Adaptive Recreation Program that served the disabled residents of the Paquin Towers apartment complex. This program was set to be cut from the City of Columbia's 2009 budget.

“Basically, to get the word out to the community and some community awareness about this program and how valuable it is to this community.”

Initially, John Hall offered the basic response of *“Somebody asked me too...who was it? The head down there...he called me one time and he said 'You know we're doing an article every week...”* When pushed deeper, however, Hall said, *“Yeah, I was just sharing it. I had a pretty good sized market. And I thought some of these other people might be interested...but, just sharing it.”*

Van Dyke Van Dyke's response refers first to his history of blogging, <http://dvdinterrobang.blogspot.com/>, *“I wrote the stories for enjoyment, my own enjoyment mostly. And then to share it, assuming that some people would find it enjoyable also.”* Van Dyke then expands on his experiences blogging to explain his motivations to submit to Mymissourian.com.

“Then I submitted it to Mymissourian for the same reasons only just bigger. Maybe a few more people would see it, maybe there'd be a little more attention to Bike, Walk and Wheel Week, maybe a few more people would enjoy it.

Although Robin Nuttall never explicitly mentions “sharing,” it is clear from her response that she enjoys offering her point-of-view and getting feedback about her views in return.

“Most people would tell you it's because I'm very opinionated and I like to have my opinion known. (laughs) I would more say maybe a little bit more genteel that I have a point of view and I like doing it. I enjoy it...I really try to post something when I've got a point-of-view, you know, something I want to talk about. And, it's really fun and satisfying when you get response, when people, you know, when you realize people are actually reading what you write. Whether they enjoy it or not, even if they're upset about it, it's kind of neat to know that people are at least reading your point-of-view.”

Wideman lists three reasons that he contributes to Mymissourian.com: to help his friends, to share his penchant for storytelling and as a creative outlet. In subsequent questions, it became clear that this second reason is Wideman's primary motivations for contributing to Mymissourian.com.

“One, helping out some friends. I figured it was an easy way for them....they needed something done, they needed people to do it, no problem there. Secondly, it's...our whole family, well I shouldn't say our whole family, my dad is a storyteller and he comes from a family of storytellers, so, growing up you get captivated by those stories and you understand those stories. So, growing up, as I got older my brother and I really kind of took to that...So, the second reason is...I guess there's a third reason too. The second reason is a family history of telling stories. We're a family of storytellers so it's something that we do. And the third reason is because with my job at the bank, I don't get a whole lot of creative outlet (laughs), you know, a lot of what I do is numbers, money, very hard factual data. So, to kind of put your own spin on things and just kind of exercise other parts of the brain and get out there and have an outlet for those things, it just helps release some stress and change up the daily routine. So, it's a nice little outlet....”

Gains from Submitting and Publishing

Sharing was not only a motivator for submitting and publishing citizen journalism on Mymissourian.com. Sharing, and satisfaction from sharing, was also listed by the research subjects as a personal gain from submitting to Mymissourian.com.

Dudley deflected the question to discuss not personal gain, but, instead an overall community gain from his contributions to Mymissourian.com.

“I think the community has gained. I think they've gained knowledge of the program at Paquin Towers that's for the disabled and for all the community. I've gained a lot of knowledge about local news, local politics, how things work, how things don't work in this city, how bad things are in this city and how much they need to be improved. I think I've got a lot of community awareness out there. Just letting people know, you know, that this is wrong...”

Hall answered, “*What did I gain...satisfaction of sharing*” and did not elaborate even on further questioning. Yet, throughout the long interview Hall told numerous anecdotes about experiences he has had self-publishing his three books, people he has met while researching the books, and places he has been while taking photos. Hall related how he began researching the books because of extreme turmoil within his family and it was clear that these books were the outlet that buoyed him through those tough times. Moreover, although the books are already long published and Hall has no plans to research or write any others, he still keeps tabs on the retired old KOM veterans, updating these old-timers on who is living and where, as well as who has passed. Hall also continues to organize reunions for these men, although it is clear these reunions place a burden, both temporal and financial, on him and his family. If Hall were not such a modest man and were to tell truthfully what he has gained from submitting and publishing his work, he might succinctly answer “A good life.”

Van Dyke stated that he personally gained very little from his submissions to Mymissourian.com

“I don't know if I gained anything. I can think of two instances of affirmation...one comment, one time, someone who liked what I wrote. One time I submitted something, you commented back, you replied back on email, you were like 'Hey, I like this.'”

Nevertheless, in light of Van Dyke's primary motivation for contributing to Mymissourian.com as a desire to “share,” Van Dyke did not find his lack of personal gain at all important.

“So....that was affirming, you know. If you put anything out there, you always like to hear 'Hey, that looks good.' ...But, those were two very small instances, so I would say overall 'What have I gained?' I would say nothing. Or very very little. If there is anything that I've gained, I don't know about it. But, you know, that wasn't really my goal. So, that's okay.”

Nuttall listed improved writing skills and greater skill at self-expression as skills gained from her contributions to Mymissourian.com.

“I think that...I think my writing skills have improved. I think I've gotten better at expressing myself more clearly. I think that through the interaction and dialogue I've learned a lot. And I've enjoyed it.”

Like Van Dyke and Hall, Wideman found personal gain from sharing his stories on Mymissourian.com.

“For me, the best part about it is, like I said, we come from a family of storytellers, so, whether or not anybody listens to the story or reads the story, just to kind of get it out there...the writing part is fun because you're reliving it, you're telling your story and it's got to be entertaining to you, the writer, or else it's definitely not going to be entertaining to the audience. So, for me, it's about entertaining myself and hopefully entertaining others and also just kind of having fun, and just throwing stuff out there.”

All five subjects, in some form, either verbally or non-verbally, attempted to deflect the idea of personal gain regarding their contributions to Mymissourian.com.

Nuttall listed the most concrete gains from her participation on the site, i.e. improved writing skills, but even this gain is an intangible. Although never stated out loud, the notion that “we're not in this for the money” was pervasive throughout any discussion regarding gains from their participation on the Web site. Dudley even related that he took offense and had strong words for an acquaintance who accused him of submitting to Mymissourian.com for fame and notoriety. In much the same way that professional journalists emphasize that they do not undertake the journalism profession out of a desire for significant financial remuneration, so too did these citizen journalists emphasize, in their own way, this same idea.

Effect on the community

Research subjects saw sharing and community interaction as effects of their work on the community.

Dudley cited greater community and community awareness as a lasting effect of his submissions to Mymissourian.com.

“I think mainly community, mainly. That's the main focus is community awareness, getting issues out in the open, not shoving them to the side or shoving them in the closet like a lot of people want to do. I think that's all across our country these days. There's more people that are speaking up and wanting to get that community, that grassroots movement going. So that people know what's going on.”

Ostensibly, John's response was that his contributions to Mymissourian.com had no effect whatsoever on the community or anyone at all.

“Probably none...Nothing that I've ever written had an effect on anybody, let's put it that way. That's in the same

vein as somebody asking me how my book was doing and I told them it was a 'million seller,' a million of'em down in the cellar.”

Nevertheless, in what is typical of the interview with Hall, on the one hand, he would flatly deny that his work had any effect whatsoever on the community, while, on the other hand, he would quietly relate an amazing anecdote where his effort had a profound impact on someone's life.

“Big Bill Verden who was a National League Rookie of the year in 55' for the Cardinals and played for the Pirates on the Pennant championship teams, managed the Yankees, managed Houston, still goes to spring training every year with Houston. In '99, these guys got together and raised about \$10,000 to make a plaque and put [it] on the ballpark entrance down at Carthage and it was a likeness of me...my mother said 'It don't look anything like you.' And, Verden came down for the ceremony and Bill's a pretty quiet guy, he doesn't say much and he had driven down and he got ready to leave, he said 'I gotta go home. I got company coming.' He said, 'I'm gonna tell you something. I've been in baseball for 60 years and what you've done with this project is the single greatest feat I've seen in the history of my time in baseball. You were able to pull us guys back together, get us back to thinking when we were teenagers. And he said 'It was a rare feat and I don't think anyone else could have pulled it off.' And I said 'I don't think anyone else would have wanted to pull it off.' But the women really enjoyed it because they had heard about the feats of their husbands all of these years and they didn't care and they'd heard about all of these guys that they'd played with and they didn't care. And then they get to meet'em and it's become a deal where if I don't hold a reunion.”

Van Dyke felt that it was difficult to discern what effect his work had on the community.

“That would be unknown to me. Honestly, it would be, for Mymissourian. It would be unknown, because there's no comments, people don't comment, so I have no idea. Now, if I'm blogging, or through Twitter I know what the effect is because people respond or they reTweet or it's like...you can count it. On Mymissourian, I have no idea what the effect on the community is. I honestly don't.”

Nuttall's initial response to this question was that she did not know the effect of her contributions on the community. Nuttall, however, qualifies this answer by referring not to any work that appeared in Mymissourian.com but to other online contributions she made regarding a possible spay/neuter law that was being considered by the City of Columbia. As a semi-professional breeder and trainer of show dogs, this law would have adversely affected Nuttall's livelihood.

“I think that I have...you don't know. You don't know. I think it changed some minds on some things. This isn't pertaining to one of these particular blogs but here's a recent thing that I've been doing...you know the Boone County Department of Health is contemplating a mandatory spay/neuter law and some other things as they're trying to figure out what to do with the pet issue here in Columbia...the Board of Health did set up a blog saying we want your input and a friend of mine and I have been putting out some posts there about why certain things are a really bad idea...and we went to the Board of Health meeting last week and it's very clear that they had read that and basically they said at the Board of Health meeting, 'Okay, mandatory spay/neuter, it's just not going to work.' So, I feel like sometimes I do have an influence on things that happen.”

Immediacy and Readership

When asked to discuss the differences between publishing in the print edition of Mymissourian and the Web site Mymissourian.com, notions of immediacy and access to a greater readership were prevalent throughout subjects' responses.

For Dudley, the immediacy of dialogue is most important as well as access to an online archive of previous posts and stories.

“Online, it's there, it's easily accessible, it's faster...Your print publications anymore are just, they only have so much room, they're limited...Trib talk you can go up and, bam!, you're posting, you're in there. The Missourian's the same way. In their stuff, you can post and you can go back a week ago and reference some other post on another story and pull that over.”

Van Dyke was the only interviewee to understand the realities of the readership numbers between the Web site Mymissourian.com and the print edition of Mymissourian. Van Dyke understood that, in this case, publication in print actually meant a greater readership than publication online. Nevertheless, Van Dyke, although a devoted online reader, would prefer that his work be published in whatever publication afforded him the greater readership.

“Because I think probably more people would have read it than would have read it online. I don't...I understand that the general population does not read news like I do...”
“It'll catch up. Yeah. But there's still a lot of people out there that don't and they read that paper. And so yeah it would...so I don't want to give that impression because I don't read the paper. It would make a difference to me if the stuff that I had submitted online ended up in print, into print. Yeah it would.”

Like Dudley, Nuttall was excited by the immediate possibilities for comments and dialogue that publication online afforded her.

“I think the big difference is immediacy. It's far more loose. And, again the opportunity for communication, more of a two way conversation. And it's not that I didn't get comments on the stuff that I was writing for the national magazine. I would. I'd go to a dog show somebody would come up to me and say 'Hey, I read that, dah, dah, dah.'...But, the immediacy of the Internet is that I can write it in an hour, I can slap it up there and fifteen minutes later I can have somebody email me back and tell me how full of crap I am or whatever. I like that.”

How subjects viewed themselves

Subjects universally rejected the notion that they themselves were journalists. Instead, they variously saw themselves as “common men,” iconoclasts, and storytellers. Nevertheless, in spite of viewing themselves as “common” or “everyday,” these five subjects also often saw themselves as set apart, a voice of dissent.

“I just would be like something informal, informative, just informing people what was going on, trying to educate people from a different point of view than what they're normally seeing.”

Hall typifies the dichotomy these five often held about themselves. Initially, he responds that he is “a common guy”, even quoting Abraham Lincoln.

“I guess just an individual with pretty normal talent....Just a common guy taking pictures of common things, sharing it with common people. As Abraham Lincoln said, 'The Lord must have loved the common man cause he made so many of us.'”

Later in the interview, however, Hall volunteered that he also saw himself as an iconoclast and that sharing his photography through Mymissourian.com was a way in which he could indulge that notion of himself as an iconoclast.

“I’m an iconoclast, I guess you could say. I see things different than other people...And I enjoy sharing the scenes of my environment and I like sharing with people in other parts of the country that don’t get to see Missouri the way I do. I guess in the last few years I wanted to find something that was of interest and something that I could share and I found that a good digital camera fit that bill pretty well.”

As a contributor to Mymissourian, Nuttall saw herself simply as an opinion writer.

Van Dyke viewed himself simply as a commentator.

“I’m just an opinion writer and I’m just a normal, everyday person that no, I did not graduate from the j-school. I’m not a journalist. I’m not...I’m just like a lot of other people. I actually think I represent a lot of things about a lot of people I know in Columbia...”

Van Dyke viewed himself simply as a commentator. Both, however, were quick to point out that they had no affiliation with journalism, no formal journalism training, or, indeed, any desire to be considered journalists.

“I define what I do as commentary. I do commentary, no journalism. To me, journalism is finding out what’s actually going on and communicating that to the public...If I went to the a city council meeting I’d probably go home and write a commentary on what I saw there (laughs). In there, there would be some facts and observations and there would be some reporting but that wouldn’t be my intent because that’s just not my style.”

In his role as a storyteller, Wideman saw himself as removed and even impatient with the normal rules and practices of traditional journalism.

“For me, when I look at my submissions to Mymissourian, I'm not really a journalist, I'm a storyteller. And, I think that's a distinction that should be made, there's not a problem with that distinction. But, you have journalists and you have writers and there should be a difference. A writer tells a story, a journalist should give you news and facts and have standards and what not. And you should definitely know, one way or another, whether you're getting your story from a writer or a journalist. And, so, from that standpoint, your journalist has to adhere to different standards. I know a lot about the stock market, but I wouldn't call myself a financial adviser, that's for damn sure. Because that guy better be held to some sort of accountability and standards. And, I think the same thing for journalists and I would never call myself a journalist, but I would 100 percent call myself a storyteller. And, if you wanna hear any of my stories, I'll be happy to lay'em on you....and that's the other thing is, for me, personally, the journalism aspect of it always kind of got in the way.”

Wideman shows that he is keenly aware of the difference between a “writer” and a “journalist,” a distinction that many young journalists themselves cannot make. For the journalist, writing is a tool by which he or she can organize and then transmit the facts he or she has gathered. It is a necessary component, but not a *sine qua non* component. A journalist could just as easily use an infographic to organize and transmit his or her information or a Web application, i.e. the writing is not what makes a journalist. Wideman recognizes that he gathers no facts and even implies that his stories are not necessarily 100 percent true. Indeed, the rigorous effort and standards applied to achieve the “verified 100 percent true” stamp-of-approval is, in many minds, the *sine qua non* of “journalism.”

And, whether the story is written, an infographic, a Web application, a podcast or a video, journalists all agree that this “verified 100 percent true” has to be there for the work to be considered “journalism,” otherwise, the maker is, just like Wideman, simply a storyteller.

Relationship to the professional media in Columbia

These five interview subjects voiced no displeasure or concerns when asked what they thought about the professional media community of Columbia. Although their conceptions of the media community in Columbia were basically positive, Dudley and Nuttall did feel that their work somehow supplemented or complimented the professional media community of Columbia.

Dudley saw that his work supplemented the professional media of Columbia by keeping them honest.

“Mainly keeping them honest. A lot of it, you know. And helping too at the same time. I try not to be detrimental to them, I try to compliment them, but it's keeping them honest, you know it's keeping the city honest, it's keeping the city government honest about things.”

Nuttall viewed her and her colleague' restaurant review blog as a supplement to the coverage of Columbia-area restaurants and dining.

“Yeah, I think that in some ways we do supplement, especially if you're thinking about the food blog, just what we were just discussing. That often I feel like the...part of the reason why we started the food blog is I feel like the journalistic community...sometimes I feel like they have to maybe compromise their forthrightness in order to keep advertisers satisfied and we don't. So in that way, it's a supplement...”

Van Dyke found the Columbia media community “pretty good” and he noted that he is a voracious consumer of Columbia-area media, in print and online, and that he has

been interviewed numerous times over the years for stories on a variety of topics. Nevertheless, Van Dyke asserts that nothing that he does on his blog or for submission to Mymissourian has any affiliation with Columbia's media community. Van Dyke does not even take his subject matter from the local media.

“No, I don't know anybody. I don't know anybody in the media community...I don't have any connection there, I don't..I wouldn't know who to submit my stuff to...there's no connection, I don't base what I'm writing off of what I'm hearing in the local media, none of my topics are, except for Bike, Walk and Wheel Week, that's the only one that I've ever done that's driven off of a local event.”

Wideman lives in St. Louis, not Columbia, so he was not asked about his perception of the Columbia media. Overall, Wideman views himself as entirely separate from all professional media.

“None. Pretty sure CNBC's not checking out...for me, I've got to imagine that I'm pretty well of the beaten path when you consider people that would consider submitting to Mymissourian. You don't often meet a lot of hard core financial banking specialists that also want to write journalistically unless it's about banking...So, for me, Mymissourian is just so completely different than what I would consider that other aspect of my life, that work aspect. It just doesn't fit in to what I do for a living, one way or another. If I was a swim coach, it doesn't fit in, but for me it's a personal release.”

Responsibilities to readers

Responses regarding each interviewee's responsibility to his or her readers can be summed in the word “honesty.” The interview subjects, in some form or another, mentioned that each owed their audience an “honest” product, whether that product was a point-of-view, an opinion, a commentary or a story.

“To give them an honest view, basically. The best honest view that I can, from my point of view, as I see it, try to keep them informed of the issues that I feel are important to me or maybe important to them. Basically that's about it.”

Van Dyke went so far as to distinguish between honesty and factual correctness.

In his mind, as a commentator, factual inaccuracy was excusable, as long as the error was made in earnest and good faith. Most important to Van Dyke was that he was clear to his readers that he offered opinions and views not reports.

“I think the number one that I have to do is be honest, truthful. I can certainly be wrong, I don't feel like I have to be right. I can even get a fact wrong, which is fine, but as long as I'm just honest about it. Here's my source, here's where I got it or it's only my opinion, I'm not saying this actually happened...you know it's like in some fashion be honest...I think if you lose that, I would certainly quit reading anybody who you couldn't distinguish between them, their mind and what actually happened.”

For Nuttall, her responsibilities as a citizen restaurant reviewer were to be fair, and consequently, honest.

“I think my responsibilities to my readers are to try to convey my point of view in a way that is clear. And I will not pretend to be the best writer on earth. I am an untrained writer, but I think I do a fairly good job of that. So, if I'm going to be egotistical enough to feel like I'm going to shove my opinion out there, then I should be clear about it and I should try to be as fair about it as possible.”

Throughout the interview, Wideman highlighted that he saw himself as a storyteller and an entertainer. Consequently, Wideman saw that his most important responsibility to his readers was to entertain, to “captivate” his audience.

“I guess for me the only responsibility that I think I have when I write for Mymissourian, the only responsibility that I have is to captivate them. And that's a strong word, but,

at the same time, if you can't draw them in, at least for the first paragraph, then, all I've done is fulfill my own ego by getting my words out to society....So, if no one else enjoys it, if no one else wants to read it, then it's all for my benefit and so for me, the responsibility I have is to draw them in, to at least give them something to read. To at least make them continue past the first couple of sentences, because if I can do that then, they at least got to a deciding point and said, 'Alright, I'll continue.'"

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Through five in-depth interviews and a qualitative analysis of the resulting transcripts, this study answered the research question “*Why do people produce citizen-journalism?*”

If this research question were to be answered in a single word or phrase, that phrase would be “to share.” An analysis of the interview responses of all five research subjects shows that each contributed his or her work to Mymissourian.com primarily to share with the media community that Web site serves.

As mentioned earlier, Kim Sheehan (2002) classified motivations of Web users into two basic categories: goal directed and experiential. The goal directed user has specific reasons for choosing certain content over other competing forms of content while the experiential user, like someone on a spring stroll through the English countryside, has no specific destination in mind. Sheehan notes also, and Meyer (2006) emphasizes, that these two categories are not exclusive, but are, instead, a continuum that any user might freely slide along in a single online session (Sheehan, 2002; Meyer, 2006.) Through their own unique motivation to share on Mymissourian.com, the five subjects interviewed in this study exemplify this continuum.

To add further clarification to Sheehan's two basic categories of gratifications, we look to McQuail (1994) who notes that researchers have come to accept four typical gratifications associated with the application of Uses and Gratifications theory: information, personal identity, integration and social interaction/entertainment (Littau, 2007; McQuail, 1994.)

These four gratifications are not distinct in their own right but exist along a continuum much like Sheehan's concept of the goal-directed and experiential online user. Of these four gratifications, information and social interaction/entertainment best serve to describe the type of sharing need these five sought to gratify through participation in Mymissourian.com.

For Dudley, the need to share came in the form of a desire for greater community awareness, *“to get the word out to the community and some community awareness about this program and how valuable it is to this community.”* As a participant in the City of Columbia's Adaptive Recreation program, Dudley stood to lose when, and if, funding for that program was cut from the City of Columbia's budget. Consequently, fear of losing the program, and the hope that greater community awareness could save it, spurred Dudley to begin posting to Mymissourian.com.

Dudley is an example of the goal-directed user, who's primary usage of Mymissourian.com was to share civic information. Dudley began posting on Mymissourian.com with the goal of affecting change and preventing the loss of the Adaptive Recreation Program. During the interview, Dudley even seemed to take offense at any question or intimation by the interviewer that he might have achieved some personal, even only “experiential” gain. The other was his primary concern.

Although similar to Dudley, Van Dyke's motivation to share was less “community activist” and more “community commentator” but still primarily goal-directed. Like Dudley, Van Dyke did submit content regarding community events (Bike, Walk and Wheel Week), but his subject matter was not driven by community events or what was

covered in the local media. Van Dyke submitted commentary based solely on what he personally enjoyed sharing about, any greater community connection or effect was simply value added. For Nuttall, “sharing” meant having her opinion known throughout the community. Nuttall, however, focused her Mymissourian.com posts not on community events, but on expressing her and her friends' views regarding local food and restaurants.

Both Nuttall and Van Dyke are more goal-directed than experiential in their sharing but they would both readily admit that they hoped their sharing was also entertaining as well. Both have clearly enjoyed the experience of sharing on Mymissourian.com, but, nevertheless, both do have an agenda of a sort. As Van Dyke said, “to be honest...there's some attempt at influence and I think that it's, you know, not convincing. If I ever find myself trying to convince someone, whether in writing or talking, then I'm off track.”

Nuttall, in addition to the personal enjoyment she derived from sharing online, also recognized that Columbia residents could easily benefit from an unbiased, honest critique of local eating establishments and that her years of professional experience training show dogs gives her a bona fide expert opinion that she is glad to share freely.

Unlike Nuttall, Van Dyke and Dudley, Wideman and Hall stated more artistic motivations for sharing their work with the Mymissourian.com community, and, thus, tend more toward experiential and socially interactive/entertaining sharing.

Wideman frequently referred to himself as a storyteller, and he said that his primary responsibility to his readers was “*to captivate*” them. Hall, on the other hand,

initially said simply “*Yeah, I was just sharing it.*” Later in the interview, however, when asked how he saw himself, Hall responded,

“I’m an iconoclast, I guess you could say. I see things different than other people...And I enjoy sharing the scenes of my environment and I like sharing with people in other parts of the country that don’t get to see Missouri the way I do.”

Of Hall and Wideman, the argument cannot be made, however, that an “audience” is the goal of their participation in MyMissourian.com. In reading the transcript of each man’s interview, we have the sense that both men enjoy sharing their craft with their audience and see the process of sharing as engaging in a mutually beneficial relationship, that is, like a good friendship, more fulfilling through the honest participation of its members. They are not using their audience as a means to fulfill a goal; they are there with their audience, sharing and experiencing.

Although readily amenable to categorization through Uses and Gratifications theory, for each of these five citizen journalists the process of sharing on MyMissourian.com was, in fact, as unique as a fingerprint. In selecting what to write about or share on the site, in crafting the actual post and in processing the feedback, each revealed him or herself to be an individual interacting with their environment, experiencing, sensing and processing various stimuli.

Paul Hendriks Vettehan notes that with the social action model and the application of a qualitative methodology “the inner world of the participants stands central.” Together, they “provide a description of the world from the perspective of the people under study....qualitative here means that kind of research material in which the meanings

of the people under study are expressed—the 'actors point of view' and 'members knowledge' are two expressions commonly used to convey this aspect” (Vettehan, 1996.)

Specifically, through the application of the qualitative methodology to these five citizen-journalists, we see their “inner world” to be one where sharing is both part of the motivation and part of the gratification. This sharing is necessarily part of a relationship between the citizen-journalist who submits and the audience member who reads and comments. We also see that simply having a “readership” is not enough. For this sharing relationship to be fully consummated and satisfying to the citizen-journalist, a dialog must occur, presumably through comments on the Web site. In addition, the more immediately the comments or feedback is presented, the more satisfying and gratifying is the sharing relationship.

Finally, as would be expected from any successful relationship, trust, honesty and respect were integral parts of the relationship that occurred between these five citizen journalists and their readership.

Social action was previously defined as an activity that “involves the attitudes and actions of others and is oriented to them in its course.”

Often, it is “a carefully planned activity in the light of the person's own hierarchy of relevances” (Renckstorf, 1996.) This definition is an apt one for the actions of these citizen journalists. Both motivated and satisfied by sharing, an act that requires an “other,” these citizen-journalists required that “other” to gain complete satisfaction from the process of submitting and publishing on Mymissourian.com. When faced with a lack of comments or interaction online, a lack of the “other,” the process of submitting to

Mymissourian.com was less satisfying for each citizen-journalist. Moreover, their own individual focus, be it community commentary, community activism, storytelling, artistic pursuits or expressing opinions, was reached “in light of the person's own hierarchy of relevances.”

When applied to mass media research, social action theory illuminates “a self-aware, goal-directed audience member, who is able to make sensible media choices in order to serve his/her interests (needs) and motives by means of media use” (Renckstorf, 1996). Although in this statement “audience members” refers to media consumers, we see that it is perhaps more fitting when applied to citizen-journalists, audience members who, in fact, produce media. That they are self-aware and goal-directed is revealed within their own unique motivations to share their work on Mymissourian.com, and that they “make sensible media choices in order to serve his/her interests (needs) and motives” is revealed by their very act of sharing. Citizen-journalism is indeed social action.

This study sought to answer the research question “Why people produce citizen-journalism?” through the application of qualitative research methodologies and social action theory to these results. I believe this study has achieved only a partial answer. The small sample size pulled solely from the contributors to a small citizen-journalism publication in a small, Midwestern media community is not generalizable to the greater population at large. A larger sample size of perhaps 20 citizen-journalists from a variety of citizen-journalism publications would give much more representative results.

In addition, and as mentioned earlier, the media saturation of Columbia, MO. cannot be ignored. If these subjects are at all representative of the media consumers of the city of Columbia, it is safe to assume that, in general, Columbia residents are far more media saavy than other Americans in comparably sized communities. It would be instructive to conduct a similar study of citizen journalists in a comparably sized community in which the media had a more normal level of presence.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Who they are and what they do...but is it Journalism?

From the first interview with Charles Dudley, I was impressed by the sophisticated understanding each subject had of the Columbia media community. Nevertheless, it was because of this sophisticated understanding that I was astonished at the great lengths each subject went to highlight their impression that they were not journalists and that their work was not journalism. Indeed, the only subject I agreed with regarding how he or she viewed themselves and his or her work was Jack Wideman.

Wideman is clearly not a journalist. He is a storyteller, a spinner-of-yarns. He was clear that his stories mostly are anecdotes pulled from his own life, but the gleam in his eye as he made this statement also made it clear that sometimes, like any good fish story, details of his stories get lost, changed or omitted for the sake of a better story.

Nuttall, Dudley and Van Dyke, on the other hand, all perform to some extent the exact same function of a journalist. Nuttall and Van Dyke serve as commentators/columnists and Dudley as columnist/reporter. The difference between each one's work and that of a journalist was not a difference of kind but a difference of degree. All three took pains to inject no factual errors into their work, but none took great pains to verify the accepted "facts" their work contained.

Journalists use the word “cover” often. They speak of “covering” a beat or an event. Neither Nuttall, Dudley, Van Dyke or Hall ever used this word and this omission, as much as anything else, could sum the differences between the work of these four individuals and the professional media of their community.

Despite Dudley’s intense interest in Columbia’s Adaptive Recreation Program, he made no phone calls to city officials to verify or elaborate on facts reported by Columbia’s professional media community. Instead, Dudley simply relied upon the professional community as a basis for his own commentary and “reporting.” The same can be said of Van Dyke and Nuttall, and, indeed, Van Dyke himself made this distinction regarding his own work.

None of these four, however, made the conceptual leap to see how close each was to being a true “citizen-journalist.” None seemed to understand how close they were to literally performing the exact same function as the professional media of their community but simply for no pay.

At this point, it is impossible, I think, to underestimate the influence of the Missouri School of Journalism on how each of these five viewed themselves and their work. This journalism school is large and well-known, nationally and internationally. Having lived in Columbia for two years, I can attest that, even among those citizens who have no interest whatsoever in the media, the journalism school is well-known.

All five, including Wideman who is not even a resident of Columbia, categorically said that they are not journalists and they did not attend the local journalism school.

It was clear, that, in their minds, a journalist, especially a good one, needs to have attended a journalism school. Yet, even a cursory glance at the professional journalism world shows that this statement is clearly not the case. Many journalists around the world have received no formal, academic journalism training, but, have, nevertheless, achieved great professional status as a paid journalist and have produced high quality, award-winning work.

Early on, this study attempted to define “citizen-journalism” and mentioned that there are many names currently bandied about to label this type of content. Although reaching a consensus definition for this type of content was beyond the scope of this analysis, this paper does add significantly to this debate.

This five individuals clearly understood what journalism is and is not and they understood, with no hesitation, that what they do “is not” journalism. So, what is it? The long answer is “work produced by a group of civic minded individuals with close similarities to what professional journalists produce but, nevertheless, work that lacks the rigorous fact checking and research that separates their work from the work of professional journalists.” This definition lacks the media-savvy panache of “citizen-journalism” but is definitely more apt and illustrative. With the exception of Wideman, what these folks do could, with more work, be considered journalism, but the temporal realities of their professional and personal lives probably makes this increased effort an impossibility, or, at the very least, a financially unattractive option.

In this sense, it seems that “citizen-journalism” is no threat to professional and certainly not a viable alternative to professional journalism. Without the professional

media of their community, these five would be left alone with literally no leg to stand on. Their work added a viewpoint and voice to their community, but did little to increase the body of civic understanding that professional journalists offer through their in-depth local reporting.

That is not to say, however, that their work was not valuable. Dudley may have played a small part in the continued funding of Columbia's Adaptive Recreation program, but he played a part nonetheless. Nuttall's blog work on the spay/neuter law played a part within that civic debate as well, even if only to educate Columbia's civic leader's regarding the overlooked perspective of professional dog breeders.

Comments and Gains

This study attempted to answer the question "Why people produce citizen-journalism?" A thorough analysis of the interview transcripts and the application of a theoretical framework provided by both Uses and Gratifications theory and Social Action theory to these transcripts shows that these five individuals produced citizen-journalism in order to share with their community. But, there was more.

Although all five were at pains to deflect the notion that they received any tangible gain from their submissions on Mymissourian.com, they all highlighted how much they enjoyed the affirmation that they received through comments on the site and all mentioned that they wished they had received more comments on their work.

While interviewing these subjects, it was difficult to address the reasons why more Mymissourian.com readers did not make comments on the site.

These reasons included technical aspects of the site itself and a discussion of these technical limitations of the site were outside the purview of this study.

Upon reflection, however, I noticed that there was a distinct personality trait inherent to each of the five subjects interviewed. Each one could be considered a “social media junkie,” in that each subject, to some extent, wrote each post in an attempt to generate comments, much like someone might update their Facebook status or their Twitter feed. Nuttall and Dudley specifically mentioned how much they enjoyed the immediacy of dialogue that posting online afforded them. And, although not explicitly mentioned, both Nuttall and Dudley intimated that they waited around after posting to see who would comment and what they would say. Van Dyke was keenly aware that certain types of posts, those that touched upon religious issues, for example, would generate more comments than other more innocuous posts, i.e. book and film reviews. Indeed, Hall was an avid commenter himself, commenting on the comments to his posts whenever appropriate or applicable.

So, although each one’s stated motivation was “to share” there was a secondary layer within their motivation. Given the extent to which all five attempted to deflect the notion of any personal, selfish gain from posting to Mymissourian.com, it is no surprise that they would either consciously or unconsciously not acknowledge that part of their motivation to post to Mymissourian.com was to generate comments and conversation. Upon analysis, however, this motivation was definitely present.

Within my own interactions with each, at one time or another, I made comments to each one personally, telling them I enjoyed their posts and encouraging them to post more. My motivation was simply a content-driven editorial decision.

I did, indeed, enjoy their posts, but I also needed a constant stream of content to update the site and I hoped that my affirmations and encouragement would motivate them to continue to post, which it did.

I sincerely believe this study added to the wealth of knowledge surrounding the “citizen-journalism” debate, but I also recognize that this study raised more questions than it answered. Left out of the discussion were any questions surrounding the thorny intersection of print and online publications. All five research subjects had their work published in the print edition of *MyMissourian* as well as on the Web site, *MyMissourian.com*. Because publication of the print version of *MyMissourian* has ceased, for financial reasons, by the time this study was conducted, it was thought best to leave issues related to the print product out of the interview questions. How publication in the print product might have affected the motivations of each of the five remains to be seen.

The print version of *MyMissourian* was a free, weekend tabloid style “shopper” circulated to 43,000 homes in Columbia. A circulation of forty-three thousand gave this shopper approximately a 50 percent penetration in the Columbia market, far higher than any other publication in Columbia and presumably far-higher than the circulation numbers for the Web site, *MyMissourian.com*. But, as mentioned earlier, it is difficult to understand how this print publication affected the Web site, *MyMissourian.com*.

Van Dyke typifies the difficulty this print publication lent to the discussion of his own motivations to contribute to MyMissourian.com. On the one hand, Van Dyke stated that he never read the print paper because he prefers to consume his news content online. Yet, he also mentioned that the possibility of inclusion in this print publication would give him greater motivation to produce a more finely written piece because of the possibility of a larger audience. Van Dyke also correctly assumed that work published in the print version of MyMissourian underwent a higher level of editorial review, multiple editors reviewed the print content whereas the online content was reviewed only by me, and that, because of this more rigorous editorial process, he would derive greater satisfaction from publication in the print version than in the online version. Considering that Van Dyke was not a reader of the print version and so never knew that his work would be published in print, unless I happened to remember to tell him, this situation and its affect on his motivation is ironic.

Citizen-journalism in all its manifestations and definitions is here to stay. That much is certain. It is also certain that this type of content is neither a replacement nor a threat to professionally produced journalism. From a purely commercial standpoint, this type of content is extremely valuable to both print and online publications. This content offers innumerable ways for a traditional publication to interact with its readers and to promote its own professionally produced content. And, at a time when the financial aspect of the mass media market could not be more uncertain, it seems foolish not to capitalize on the ways in which citizen-journalism might benefit any publication's

balance sheet. From a research standpoint, citizen-journalism can offer a wealth of insight to the irreversibly changing mass media landscape.

APPENDIX A-John Hall MyMissourian sample posts
(Published comments in italics)

A cemetery comes alive with new meaning
July 13, 2008

Shared by

John G. Hall

Frequent MyMissourian contributor John Hall shares some interesting historical research on the so-named Holtzclaw/Sprinkle Bluff Cemetery on Chapel Ridge Road.

Back in ancient days, 1991, I returned to Columbia, Missouri and established a residence in an area sparsely inhabited. It was on Chapel Hill Road which only a few years earlier was a dirt road, seldom traveled. By 1991, civilization had started to move into the area bounded by Fairview to the east and Scott Boulevard to the west.

Many an afternoon, in the early 90s, my son and I would cross Chapel Hill and a hundred yards or so behind the Fairview United Methodist Church we would find ourselves in dense woodland that we could traverse all the way to Twin Lakes without ever encountering a modern structure of any type. There was a very old barn that we would observe on our walks and it was apparent it had been there for a very long time. As research was conducted on the old cemetery residents, recently, I surmised that the barn was probably built and/or used by one of the families whose final resting place is the little cemetery on Chapel Ridge Road.

During one walk through the wooded area we came upon rocks that had obviously been placed in a structured formation. Kicking around some leaves and branches it was

evident we had come upon an overlooked and mostly forgotten cemetery. Over the intervening months we cleaned the area and brought the site to the attention of anyone who was interested. However, few were. To my son and I it became known as the Holtzclaw/Sprinkle Bluff Cemetery. The only markers with identifiable names were those of the Sprinkle and Holtzclaw families. One stone identifies the deceased as “Susan A. daughter of” and another marker carries the initials “B. A. T.”

Over the seventeen years since my son and I stumbled into that cemetery a modern housing development has sprung up around it. However, much to the credit of the developer that cemetery is now surrounded by a nice metal fence. I’m sure that cemetery has been around since at least 1839, possibly longer. Also, I’m just as certain that my son and I are just a long line of people who have come across that site over the past 169 years and have wondered who all those people were, where they originated and what fate befell them. We knew, shortly after arriving that the Holtzclaws and Sprinkles were not the first inhabitants of our new neighborhood. Every time it rained hard, following excavation work on the new home sites, we would find some beautiful arrow heads.

On March 16, 2008 my curiosity got the best of me and with camera in hand I recorded the information found on the tombstones and then went home to do some research on Ancestry.com.

The trail on Robert Holtzclaw, the person with the largest stone in the cemetery, didn’t produce a great deal of information. He was a young man born on March 28, 1824 and died on May 25, 1844. The only leads on the Holtzclaws indicated they probably

came to this area from either the states of Virginia or Kentucky.

Moments into the ancestry search I became discouraged. There is a stone in the cemetery with the name, Henry Sprinkle: Born October 27, 1819 and Died August, 30, 1839. That is all that I could uncover regarding Henry. He, like Richard Holtzclaw, died at age 20.

1850 Census

However, within moments of the discouragement of not being able to find anything on Henry Sprinkle, the old cemetery came alive in ways I never imagined. In the 1850 Federal Census, conducted on September 25, of that year, by George L. Hickam, Assistant Marshall, the name of Mary Sprinkle appeared. She was residing in District 8 of Boone County, Missouri. Mary was listed on the tombstone as the wife of Charles Sprinkle. Excitedly, I found that she was born in North Carolina in 1790 and that her husband, Charles was born in the State of Virginia in the same year. At the time of the 1850 Census, Charles was a farmer with real estate valued at \$2,500. The home of the Sprinkles was the 960th visited during the census period. Listed as living in the household were:

Son: Robert M. Sprinkle a farmer who was born in 1825.

Daughters: Elizabeth born 1833, Susan A. born 1836 and Jane born 1838.

In an attempt to ascertain why there were so many unmarked stones in the cemetery, a search was conducted on the Sprinkle family in the 1840 Census. In that census gathered by Robert Schooling, Assistant Marshall, very little data was collected with the exception of the number of people in the family, along with the sex and ages of

each person. In that year Mary and Charles Sprinkle had one son at least age five but under ten, two sons over ten and less than fifteen and two sons over fifteen but less than twenty years of age. Also, there were two daughters less than five and two daughters over five but less than ten years of age. Thus, it appears that five of the children died in the period from 1840 to 1850. Henry Sprinkle, mentioned as having died in 1839, was most likely the oldest son of Mary and Charles. Thus, the family experienced great grief and probably great hardship, thus allowing for the graves only being marked by field rocks.

In attempting to explain the loss of life of so many of the Sprinkle children my best guess is that they were the victims of the great cholera epidemic of 1849. Much has been written on the subject and one source claimed that, approximately one-tenth of the population of St. Louis died from the disease.

1860 Census

By June 19, 1860, when the census was taken on the Sprinkle family, they were living in Missouri Township and Mr. Staley was the Assistant Marshall. It showed that the Sprinkle family's real estate holdings had risen to \$4,600 and their personal estate was worth \$700. However, death had entered the scene once again. Mary had passed away in 1855 and on October 23, 1859 Charles married 50-year old Delphia Street. By that time all the children were either married or had moved elsewhere. Charles was still farming and living with him and Delphia was an 18-year old laborer by the name of Ambrose Grant.

Checking further into the whereabouts of the remaining family members indicated that Mr. Staley, the Census Marshall, got to the Robert Sprinkle residence on June 12 of that census year. His post office was Rocheport, Missouri and his occupation was listed as being a merchant. His real estate holdings were \$2,000 and he did not appear to have been married at the time. Living at his residence was Jane A. and James Conley both in their early 20s. Mr. Conley was listed as a clerk and was probably employed by Robert Sprinkle. Interestingly, Susan A. Sprinkle was listed as being a 25-year old member of the household and there was a Frances Sprinkle, heretofore not identified in any family record as being a resident of the Robert Sprinkle household.

1870 Census

By the time the 1870 Census rolled around, Charles, the patriarch of the Sprinkle family was gone, as was Susan, the young lady whose small tombstone lies flat on the ground in the Holtzclaw/Sprinkle Bluff Cemetery even though it was originally placed in an upright position. Over the years, in observing the stones in that cemetery, I had envisioned the marker for Susan A. as being for an infant. After a couple of hours researching the census data it is obvious that she lived somewhere between 25-35 years.

A good investment?

The land where the Holtzclaw/Sprinkle Bluff Cemetery is located was just west of the property purchased by Charles Sprinkle from the United States Land Office on April 24, 1833. Mr. Sprinkle purchased two 80 acre tracts and they are were posted in the Boone County Assessor's office as being located at the 5th PM Meridian, in Township 48 N, Range 13-Wes Quarter as Sections 21 and 22.

The United States Land Act of 1820 specified that land could no longer be purchased on credit. Thus, Public Lands could be purchased in tracts as small as 80 acres for \$1.25 per acre. Mr. Sprinkle purchased two adjoining 80 acre tracts. He thus had an investment of \$200 in those 160 acres that is now known to most Columbia residents as Twin Lakes.

7 Responses to "A cemetery comes alive with new meaning"

1.

Molly & Dick McCoy, on July 13th, 2008 at 1:36 pm Said:

Enjoyed this story and I'm now printing it so Dick can read it at his own leisure.

Thanks

2.

Hank Chott, on July 13th, 2008 at 1:36 pm Said:

I enjoyed the pictures and article.

3.

Rich & Barb Eichhorst, on July 14th, 2008 at 8:51 am Said:

Being history buffs, we really enjoyed this walk down Chapel Hill Road & thru the Sprinkle Family history. Most interesting.

4.

Sam Dixon, on July 15th, 2008 at 9:42 am Said:

Quite interesting....especially the ages of those named. In comparison.....I have lived close to FOUR (4) of their lifetimes. I wonder what a price those two 80 acres would go for today. This piece also proves what a GREAT Dad John was.

5.

Ron Newbanks, on July 15th, 2008 at 11:21 am Said:

There are many, many old cemeteries scattered about the country, frequently having been located in areas that were rural at the time the location was chosen, but now being located in or near urban areas. Mr. Hall's diligent research has unearthed (no pun) some interesting facts relating to this particular cemetery. Perhaps his story will serve as an incentive to others who are aware of an abandoned cemetery in some other location.

6.

Betty Marty, on July 15th, 2008 at 12:00 pm Said:

As a "taphophile" (lover of cemeteries/stones/history) I enjoyed the story at the above site. Too many cemeteries are "lost to time". From the tiny family plots to the much larger ones, much can be learned from cemeteries. Thank you and your son for your work on this one and the research you did.

7.

Scot Hutchins, on July 20th, 2008 at 9:32 pm Said:

I discovered these graves around 1972 when I was 16 years old. I came across them while out exploring alone the surrounding woods, where I spent a lot of time in those days. I remember the barn and other old structures, and the bluff.

When I needed some place to be alone, I would head out to the graves to just sit, often wondering just who Richard Holtzclaw was and why his life ended so soon, only a few years longer than mine then, and pondering the meaning of life.

I ended up spending numerous hours in the basement rooms of the Missouri Historical Society on the UM campus just a block my school at the time — U-High.

After figuring out the various systems and poring over birth, marriage and death records, and old newspapers on microfilm, I pieced together some of what Richard's life was like and learnt that he had drowned in Perche Creek. I tried to locate the spot without success.

Within in a couple of years I moved away from Columbia, but never forgot those graves and Richard Holtzclaw. Last month, I returned to Columbia for my 35th high school reunion and visited the graves for the first time in probably more than 30 years. It's amazing how time has changed all that was around them, but the stones themselves looked the same and brought back a flood of memories. I'm glad I knew them as long forgotten lonely overgrown graves, and also glad that they have been given the respect and spot they now have.

Mickey Mantle, tornadoes and Columbia
May 11, 2008

Shared by

John G. Hall

John Hall of Columbia is the historian and newsletter editor for the KOM League, an organization of players and fans from the Kansas-Okhlahoma-Missouri professional baseball league that once packed Midwest stands and sent 30 players — including Mickey ManKOM booktle — to the Majors. His email network of colleagues has become an unofficial news service in the Midwest and went into action when tornadoes ripped

through the area Saturday night. Here is his report.

9:51 a.m. Sunday: Last night a major tornado swept through part of KOM League country. One of the hardest hit towns was Picher, Oklahoma. That city, much in the news, due to lead contamination, suffered a direct hit from the storm.

Picher is not a large city to begin with. A town that once reached a population of 20-30,000 during its heyday of the lead and zinc mining era had dwindled to 800. Last evening the population went even lower. Hearing where the storm was centered made me acutely aware that Johnny and Patty Lafalier would be in the middle of it. For those of you who have never read my book about Mickey Mantle, Patty is the sister of Mickey Mantle's widow, Merlyn. (On page 20 of Mickey Mantle Before the Glory is a photo of Johnny Lafalier going into the home of his mother-in-law, Reba Johnson. That house was located across the street from his. That was the site of the marriage of Mickey Mantle and Merlyn Johnson. That structure no longer exists.)

Opening up the e-mail, this morning, it was obvious that the readers of these reports were concerned. Inquiries regarding the effects of that storm upon people who were mentioned in the Mantle book came from as far away as New York. I knew it wouldn't do any good to attempt to call the Lafaliers. A call was placed to Max Mantle in Joplin. Max and his wife had not been able to get in touch with the Lafaliers even though Max's son operated the only nursing home in Picher. All that is known at present is that the Lafalier home was completely destroyed and at present neither Johnny or Patty have been located or appeared on a casualty list.

A number of calls have been placed to the media and hospital representatives in

Miami, Oklahoma but no information has been released. Many of the injured are in St. Johns and Freeman Hospitals in Joplin.

Max Mantle works in Miami and is there at the present time. He is going to check on the Lafaliers today. Knowing that Patty and Merlyn are very close an attempt was made to contact Merlyn in Dallas early this morning. All that I got was her answering machine. I asked that she call me if she knew the whereabouts of her sister and brother-in-law.

If any of the readership of this report in the Picher, Carthage, Joplin, Granby, Seneca and surrounding areas have any comments about the storm feel free to share your stories. I hope you are all well. When I know more about the Lafaliers I'll pass along the news.

11:25 a.m. Sunday: Thanks to Tom Richardson, first cousin to Mickey Mantle who e-mailed from Grove, Okla. Shortly after the storm last night his brother Jimmy, who lives in Oklahoma City, was in touch with Johnny and Patty Lafalier and they are okay. Their home wasn't that fortunate.

Jim Ellis of the Miami, Oklahoma News Record got in touch after reading the earlier Flash Report and that paper is covering the storm on their website. If you care to go there you can see the effects of a devastating tornado. I know that newspaper articles will abound regarding the Picher and all it has endured over the last several decades. I'm sure one of the story lines will be that in a brief span of time a tornado did more to convince the residents to leave than years of pleading by governmental and health agencies in convincing residents to leave the town that was contaminated by the mining

practices of a bygone era. It is the largest super fund cleanup site in the United States.

My condolences go out to those who lost family, friends, pets and/or the worldly belongings. I'm also thankful that others were spared. A niece of mine was nearly in the direct path of the storm near I-44 and Missouri Highway 43 but she escaped with only broken windows and roof damages from hailstones, the size of softballs.

Thanks to all of you who have responded to the first e-mail of the day with your concerns. The Midwest isn't a place for sissies.

4:06 p.m. Sunday: This will conclude the tornado in Picher, Oklahoma story for today. Since early morning I've attempted to track the whereabouts of Mickey Mantle's sister-in-law, Patty and her husband Johnny Lafalier.

After returning from a Mother's Day lunch I found a message from Max Mantle on my answering machine. The call was returned and the good news is that Johnny and Patty are at Mickey's former home at Loma Linda just southwest of Joplin, Missouri. The Lafaliers are fine. When the storm approached Picher they saw it coming as they sat on their front porch. They went inside and took refuge in the bathroom. The home was battered but withstood the storm, contrary to what Max and his wife Neva had heard late last night.

Max was reporting some firsthand information received from his son who lives in Picher and he said had Lafalier's home been one block south it would have been completely flattened. Lafalier was out early today to borrow a pickup truck to move some of his belongings. His vehicles had the windows destroyed by the large hail. The town of Picher is now under martial law and anyone who left will not be allowed back for a

while. I'll call Johnny in a couple of days and tell him a lot of folks were concerned about him. He is a world class nice guy and I know he'll appreciate the concern all of you expressed.

It has never been a well-guarded secret that Merlyn Mantle has urged her sister and brother-in-law, many times, to move into the Loma Linda home. There are there now and will most likely remain at that site for a long time. I've been there a couple times and it is a fine home.

Max made the trip from Joplin to Miami this morning and passed through some of the storm damage. He has lived in that area for seven-plus decades and said it was the worst storm he had ever witnessed.

Again, thanks for all of the readers who had a concern for the folks in Picher. I did my best to learn the facts of the situation although it took a few hours to sift through the rumors to get to the facts.

Courtesy of: The KOM League World Wide News Service. Johnny Hall, founder, pastor and general overseer of the flock.

4 Responses to "Mickey Mantle, tornadoes and Columbia"

1.

Bob Stephenson, on May 11th, 2008 at 5:10 pm Said:

John...this was a great public service on your part. You are blessed. Your readers are blessed with your writings. I really think you should start a radio or TV talk show...I would love to chat with you on the air and I think a lot of other folks would too....

Bob S

2.

John Hall, on May 12th, 2008 at 2:43 pm Said:

Second submission: I'd love to do a radio talk show. The problem is, no radio station would hire me or even let me volunteer. I was going through some items last night and there are over 36 radio shows on which I have tapes where I've appeared from a couple of minutes up to two hours. I'm ready for prime time, unfortunately prime time isn't ready for me. TV? That's out of the question. I'm too ugly to get into that medium. All the make-up in the world wouldn't make me presentable. If you "see" me, it will have to be on the radio. Thanks for the comments.

3.

Clyde Bentley, on May 12th, 2008 at 3:33 pm Said:

What if we offered MyMissourian variation on the radio talk show — a hosted discussion online? I've been toying with the idea of using the discussion board format like a radio talk show. The nice part is you don't have to have a voice or face at all — just the ability to type in your comments. Do you think anyone would participate in that format?

Clyde the Mizzou prof

4.

John Hall, on May 13th, 2008 at 12:44 pm Said:

What a great idea. I'm sure Bob S and John Hall would participate. Two is company one more 'yea' would make a crowd.

Election Day and a Birthday
August 7, 2008

Shared by

John Hall

Tuesday, August 5 was Primary Election day in Missouri. There weren't any candidates on the ballot who thrilled me a whole lot so I went out and voted for the folks I felt were the least dangerous in running my city, district and state.

It was really a big day since it was the 47th birthday of my son-in-law, Mr. Bucky Pescaglia. After spotting a lone goose very early in the morning about a block from the house, it was off to vote and then home to check out the tomato and zinnia patch. That tomato patch is as barren of fruit as any I've ever tended in about 50 years of raising them. So I hustled, well crept, over to the zinnia patch and spied my first ever, Siamese zinnia. The top and underside of the flower was photographed to prove I wasn't using trick photography.

With the heat index starting to rise, I went inside to see if Banshee and Thor wanted to go outside for a game of ball. Banshee responded by finding her tennis ball and heading to the couch. Thor on the other hand grabbed his tennis ball and made a move toward his bed.

Around six in the evening it was time for the birthday party. When you get to be as old as my son-in-law, your tastes changes and the preference is a "fruit cake."

In any family there are the dysfunctional faces, however, my grandson had gotten his face straightened out and was ready to head off to a local Italian restaurant for an evening of fun and frivolity with his older and much dumber grandfather. The only wise thing I've learned in all my years is to always carry the camera and thus avoid being in the photographs. A party of nine made the trip for Italian delicacies but only eight members of the group will be seen in photos.

John Hall's Dying Days of Summer
September 10, 2008

Shared by

John Hall

You know that summer has about run its course when they start playing football. There isn't much to photograph during the dying days of August. However, this year things were not quite as dead as they usually are about this time.

Friday afternoon, things weren't dead at all. I went to the bank and it had just been robbed. I got out of there before being accused of looking a lot like the fellow who made the heist. So, I took a drive in the country and found the creeks at their summer low point. However, there has been around 40 inches of rain to date and the soybeans and the corn look good and the crop will be a bumper one. There is so much corn the farmer won't miss this one that some blackbirds feasted upon.

A little further down the road, in the early morning hours the Morning Glories were being held up by the soybeans. The pools of water in the wildlife area have about

disappeared. That brings in the Egrets, Turkey Vultures and Blue Herons to clean things up. With no oxygen left in the water this large carp awaits the garbage collecting vultures to dine on his carcasses.

A few items are still in bloom in the wildlife area including the Primrose. The Darning Needle enjoys the Primrose blossoms. Snake Doctors only seem to want to dart around and race pick up trucks. In photos, this Snake Doctor easily kept up with my truck speed.

The Heron's find what few fish remain in the small pools and the Vultures eat the ones who have died.

A rare site for late August and early September is corn that is still green. This is the first time I've ever seen corn in this good of condition at this time of year, in my life. I'm sure its happened somewhere by my eyes haven't beheld it. A scene that will not be repeated many more times this year is a butterfly in the zinnia patch.

APPENDIX B-Jack Wideman MyMissourian sample posts
(Published comments in italics)

The Best Funeral Procession Ever
April 10, 2008

Shared By

Jack Wideman

So, I was driving back to Columbia on Tuesday April 1, 2008 and was slowed on I-70 by the funeral procession that was taking up the right lane. I merged into the left lane to pass the procession. As I was passing car after car with their emergency flashers on I thought to myself “Man, this is a long procession. This guy must have had a lot of friends.”

Shortly after this thought popped in my head, I noticed something slightly amiss up ahead. In the funeral procession was a pick-up truck towing a bass boat. “That is pretty tacky....and weird,” I thought. But wait, it gets better. As I approached the bass boat, I glared at it with a slight amount of contempt mixed with a large dose of curiosity as I wondered who would tow a bass boat in a funeral procession. Little did I know that my question should not have been the who, but why. The bass boat had a very specific purpose for this funeral. I peered into the boat only to spot the coffin. Yes, folks, that’s right. The bass boat was serving the purpose of hearse for this particular funeral. Immediately, I started laughing almost uncontrollably. As I passed the pick up truck, I noticed the driver grinning ear to ear. Seeing this I realized one very important thing: Enjoy life.

Apparently, whomever was in that coffin really loved fishing...or the lake...or bass.
And, everyone in the procession was proud to tow a bass boat with only one passenger.

6 Responses to "The Best Funeral Procession Ever"

1. **Joe Kokenge** said at 11:59 am April 10th, 2008: *Jack, I dig your posts man. thanks.*
2. **Sean** said at 2:47 am April 12th, 2008: *That is excellent. I imagine the man being buried wanted something like this to happen, and all the family members were ecstatic that it played out the way it was supposed to. It is great that you did not stifle your laugh, but bellowed it, because if the family members were grinning, people were supposed to laugh. I wish I could jump out of the coffin at my funeral! Some mechanism to pop me right up! Scare the living heck out of my family and friends! That would make them remember me!*
3. **Joe Kokenge** said at 4:40 pm April 15th, 2008: *Yeah. Leaping out would be awesome. Especially since it would mean you're not dead.*
4. **Kay** said at 10:24 pm April 19th, 2008: *Is it possible that this was an April Fool's joke?? Just wondering...*
5. **Jack Wideman** said at 2:14 pm April 22nd, 2008: *Recently, it had crossed my mind that this could have been an April Fool's Day joke. At first, I was a little disappointed by the thought that this was not an actual funeral, but then I thought some more about it. Yes, this happened on April 1st, but it was a Tuesday. Think of the time, effort, and planning that would be required to pull off a prank of this size. The*

purveyors would have to gather/convince a rather large number of people to cruise I-70 while towing a bass boat with a coffin in it. (Also, do they have an extra coffin lying around or do they go out and buy one specifically for this prank?) Given the large amount of evidence against this being a prank, I still feel it was the real deal. But if it was a prank, I stand and applaud the genius that thought it up. Either way, I got a good chuckle out of the experience.

6. **Marla** said at 5:06 pm April 22nd, 2008: *To start with this was no PRANK. I know this for a fact cause it was my Dad who was in that casket. Let me start from the beginning, While I was growing up we lived on a lake. My dad didn't fish or swim, but did enjoy going for a boat ride. He used to tease mom and I and say "When I die put me in the boat and sink it." My dad had Alzheimer's and passed March 25th. While making the final arrangement for his funeral, the funeral director was telling us how Dad would go from the funeral home in Grain Valley to the veterans cemetery in Higginsville. We told him what Dad used to say about sinking the boat, he said he had a boat and truck and would be glad to rig it so dad's last boat ride would be in a boat down I-70 on April Fools Day. Which was perfect, because Dad always joked around. This was also a surprise to some of my brothers and sisters. There are 7 kids left alive. We had a brother from Germany, a sister from Texas, a sister from Wisconsin and a niece from Alaaka to come into town for the funeral, so only a few of us knew how Dad would take his final ride. In the back of the boat. It was a day that none of us will forget and the best funeral I have ever attended. And please do laugh and enjoy the site of Dad in a coffin in the back of the boat. Because we always will. Also, the driver of the truck was the*

wonderful funeral director who volunteered his boat and truck decked out with the flags for the honor of my Dad serving in the Army. He said it was one of the most memorable trips he will ever make. All the way down I-70 people were waving and saluting my Dad and this made the funeral director very proud and us as well. I do have pictures if anyone would like to see them or if you know how to add a picture here so people will believe that this was real.

Growin' Old
March 30, 2008

Shared by

Jack Wideman

Sitting at my desk in a cubicle for 9 hours a day is not my idea of valiantly fighting the aging process.

Unfortunately, I have failed to achieve my goal of being paid to sleep and watch TV. I think I may have recently discovered a set of activities that provides me with the fabled fountain of youth. Ponce De Leon may have gone begging for this legendary fount, but that be a result of his pursuits being geographically limited. Located in the heart of Columbia lies the spring of eternal youth. Or in my case, eternal immaturity sprinkled with a dash of wisdom and guidance.

On two separate weekends I have trekked to MU in search of the smile that used to continually adorn my face when I was an undergraduate. On both occasions I have driven home on Sunday evening, grinning ear-to-ear, rejuvenated and ready to trudge through the upcoming workweeks. Maybe it is the alcohol. Maybe it is the pretty young

women that accompany me (don't ask me how or why they do because it is a mystery to me). Maybe it is the complete removal of all things adult. I think it is more than that. I truly believe that the attitude of the students and the pure reckless abandon they take toward being "grown up" permeates the entire atmosphere of the town. I am just lucky/happy to breathe it all in.

Being an Old Man

March 20, 2008

Shared by Jack Wideman

While this will be nowhere near as innovative or entertaining as Being John Malkovich, I believe that this is something that needs to be said. I, John (Jack) Patrick Wideman am an old man. You may ask yourself why I believe this to be some revelation that will truly enlighten you. First and foremost, I am 26 years old. I could make jokes about going to high school with Moses or remembering the creation of dirt to drive home some semi-sarcastic association between my age and being old, but that would be something someone from the Greatest Generation would enjoy. I am attempting to acknowledge the fact that I am an old man and destroy the relationship between being old and the number of years you have roamed the Earth. Old is a state of mind and, more importantly, a lifestyle. It is a mindset that contributes to going to bed at 9:30p.m. on a Friday night because you want to be well rested for your round of golf on Saturday. It is passing on a Wednesday night out at the bars because you'll have heartburn for a week. It is getting ties for Christmas.....and being excited about your "snazzy" new look. It is someone you love suggesting that you pick some Rogaine before you "lose it all". There

was a point in my life where I would rage against the dying of the light. Now I would rather slip into a warm bath after another day in my cubicle. Old doesn't get you. It wears you down. It hangs around your neck like a 50 pound weight. Sure, you go through many years being strong, spry, and exuberant. Nothing could stop you. Now all you want to do is nap. The only people I know who can carry a 50 pound weight every day and still be energetic at the end of the day are Army Rangers. It takes a trained killer to beat old age. Ask yourself this simple question: Would you rather make a \$100 contribution to your IRA or a \$50 dollar contribution and have a \$50 bar bill from a wild night out with your best friends?? I used to answer resoundingly in the latter. Now I longingly daydream about a time when my 401(k) will provide me the comfort to golf four mornings a week and sleep in until 8:30 AM the other three. So for all you youngsters out there enjoying your youth I say one thing....exercise. Otherwise, old will wear you down.

APPENDIX C-David Van Dyke MyMissourian sample post
(Published comments in italics)

Ready for Gridlock
May 1, 2008

Shared by

David A. VanDyke

BikeWalkandWheelWeek is “a weeklong program of events designed to encourage all Columbians to use active modes of transportation to get to work, school or wherever they need to go around town.” Most years, I try to bike to work every day of BWWW. It is a 5-mile commute, which is an easy ride – if it weren’t for the hills. Columbia is very hilly but I have figured out a route that includes only 1 big climb and adds little distance. But it’s really the hills that keep me from biking to work more often. It’s not the work of the hills, it’s the sweating. But BWWW is always in May and usually the perfect temperature for riding so I try not to let excuses stop me this week. Monday morning I got up a little earlier than usual and was ready to go. Of course, I had not prepared; what’s to prepare? I’m riding a bike. I couldn’t find my helmet. I asked Aaron (my 5-year old boy) and without hesitation he said, “It’s in the box with our helmets and pads.” How does he know these things? My bike was hanging on the ceiling hook I use for storing the bike. I lifted it off the hook and let it swing to toward the ground. Unfortunately, my car was parked closer than I thought and the tire bounced off the bumper sending the bike back up at my head. It hit me in the mouth hard enough to start bleeding.

Being the first ride of the year, the tires were flat. No biggie, I have a pump. Sadly, the pump hose sprung a leak. So I had to pump furiously and quickly pop the nozzle off to gain a net increase in tire pressure. The tires managed adequate firmness. I need a locking bike chain to park my bike at work, and I have two. I could not remember the combination to one, no matter how many times I tried. I should have told Aaron the combo last year, he would know it. My other chain was a key lock and I could not find the key. I never did find the key or remember the combination, and at some point I realized I was supposed to be at work 5 minutes ago. I did not ride my bike to work on Monday of BWWW. But I did on Tuesday! And I planned to do the same the rest of the week, unless there were thunderstorms Wednesday or Thursday as they predicted. Fortunately, the weather for Friday morning was looking clear because on Friday of BWWW there are several locations that offer free breakfast for active commuters. Last year I managed to stop at 3 (although 1 of those turned out to be a stop for school kids, but I didn't find out till I was sitting there eating my muffin and sipping my juice box and looked around and it was all school kids, and there were the busses, and the teachers were looking at me strangely, and it WAS a juice box after all...). As it turns out, the weather could hardly have been worse for BWWW. But Tuesday was pretty uneventful and the only nice weather I had the rest of the week. For Tuesday, just a nice 25-minute bike ride in to the office. I coasted down a steep hill as fast as it would go, enjoying the wind and feeling fast. I heard a sound and looked over my shoulder just in time to see a woman whip by me on her road bike.

“No one likes a show off!” I tried to remind her, but she was already out of earshot. Wednesday was rainy and muddy, I reluctantly drove my car. But I knew that Thursday the buses were free all day, so as I was leaving the office Wednesday I told my department colleagues, “I’m riding the bus tomorrow.” They all started laughing. I huffed a bit, then someone said, “You have a 9 o’clock meeting, you know.” Now I was upset. There was no reason to worry about that. I had studied the schedules and maps. I assured them I understood the system and could make the transfer. The word “transfer” sent them into hysterics. Thursday morning was very light rain, almost a mist. I wanted to get to my bus stop, only 3 tenths of a mile from my house, a few minutes early. I arrived at the corner at 7:45 am, 5 minutes ahead of time. And it was a good thing, because there was the bus! I hopped on and settled back to enjoy the ride. I love mass transportation when I’m in larger cities, and honestly it has just been that “transfer” that has kept me from riding it here at home. We picked up about 20 more riders, all young college age kids. At what I estimated to be halfway to the bus station, and maybe a minute or two ahead of schedule, the bus turned onto campus. Uh-oh. The bus stopped at the student union and everyone got out. The bus driver looked at me and asked, “Where are you trying to go?” I told him I was headed to the downtown bus station. “Wrong bus,” he said. I was stunned. He explained that on university school days, they run an additional bus that only goes onto campus, then back to neighborhoods. No map or schedule I looked at had this special Gold Route bus on it! From every map I looked at, the only bus that would come by my street was the Orange Route bus that would take me to the station!

Talking with the driver for 5 minutes was more helpful than all my map and schedule studies. He even apologized, “It’s on me. I thought maybe when you got on, and I should have asked. Maybe if you were 50 pounds heavier and your hair...” I took that as a compliment. He told me I could go back one block and catch the Brown and it would take me downtown. I waited on the corner a bit, then realized I had no idea when it would come and (having already missed one transfer) I could not afford the time to miss another transfer. I was only a mile from the bus station so I walked it (with a quick stop at a downtown coffee shop I rarely get time to visit anymore). I arrived at the bus station with about 15 minutes to wait for the next bus going the direction I needed. With the specific instructions from the first driver, I had no trouble. The bus dropped me off a short jaunt from my office at 8:56. Four minutes to make it to my 9 o’clock meeting! I hustled and walked straight into the meeting right at 9 with my bag still on my shoulder. It was my department that was meeting, the people who had laughed the evening before, and my reception was great fun. My ride home was uneventful and much faster, only 35 minutes from getting on the first bus and arriving at home. I felt like a pro already and bought a 25-ride bus pass. And that was only Thursday, Friday was Free Breakfast Day! Friday morning it was raining, but I had only biked once this week and I really wanted that free breakfast for walkers and bikers. I wore my waterproof hiking pants and jacket over my work clothes and headed out on my bike in the rain. After just a couple miles my ass was wet. Just what does waterproof mean, anyway? I passed the first breakfast station without stopping because I wanted the one hot breakfast being offered and it was downtown.

Free Broadway Diner breakfast made the wet, muddy ride worthwhile. I enjoyed flaky biscuits, sausage gravy, hot eggs and orange juice. I stopped at one more station and huddled under a canopy with a few other bikers and hot cups of strong coffee. Having a wet ass at work is rather annoying, but there you have it: Bike Walk and Wheel Week. I will call this BWWW a success for me. It has certainly motivated me to ride my bike and the bus to work more often. My commitment is to ride the bus at least once every week, and to get my young boys on the bus regularly.

APPENDIX D-Robin Nuttall Mymissourian sample posts
(Published comments in italics)

Drive can be a mixed blessing in dog training
April 25, 2008

Shared by

Robin Nuttall

Most of us who do agility want a dog with what we call “Drive.” The word Drive is sort of a catch-all term, and it means different things to different people and can be applied differently to dogs. As an example, drive in a sporting breed could be tied to birdiness—the overwhelming desire to hunt/flush/point/retrieve birds. In agility, we’re a bit more generalistic. I think of drive as focus, intensity, speed, courage, desire, and resilience (ability to bounce back rapidly from adversity). The dog we’re looking for in agility is not footing, body, or sound sensitive. The dog should have a “damn the torpedo’s, full speed ahead” attitude. Who wants to work, and who is not happy without work. This is the dog who will fall off the dogwalk and immediately scream to get back on. The dog who wants to always go faster and will get impatient if you don’t keep up. But, they’re dogs you have to watch, because sometimes their drive will write checks their bodies can’t cash. Viva, Cala’s dam, has drive in spades. She’s retired now (shhhh, don’t tell her). Over the years her drive has led to so many injuries I can’t name them all, and now her body can’t keep up any more but the spirit and the will to work is very much still there. Viva also has another critically important quality. It’s called an off switch. She’s a dog who could be sound asleep in the sun ringside. I’d wake her up, walk to the line, and by the time she got there she’d be screaming to go.

So in spite of what she always looked like in the ring, she's easy to live with. Now Cala, she's got insane drive. I've talked about that before. She's got all the intensity and speed and resilience. But focus? Not so much. And off switch? Tonight I took all three dogs for a long run. Cala ran full out for a good 40 minutes or so. I came home, got their supper and mine and settled down to watch Dancing With The Stars (I love it, so sue me!).

During Pricella Presley's waltz I was also being serenaded by pig grunts from the Cuz toy Cala was thrusting into my hands to throw for her. I kept putting it down, she kept giving it back. I finally got her to give that up. She wandered off. Came back and shoved a postcard into my hand. An invitation to a party at Rock Bridge Animal Hospital. I took it away from her. She wandered off again. This time it was a dog food coupon. Took that away. The next item to appear? Zipper's metal food bowl which she summarily dropped to the floor and stomped on. So much for a relaxing night watching TV. This is pretty much how I spend my nights. She will eventually settle down, which is an improvement over when she was a puppy; she was six months old before I ever caught her laying down except when crated. Living with Cala is endlessly amusing and also infinitely tiring. And now I must go. Cala is picking at Viva, she loves to nibble on Viva's head and Viva hates it. Be careful what you wish for if you ever see Cala at the building and wish your dog had drive like that.

The best scallops Evah!
December 10, 2008

Shared by

Robin Nuttall

Saturday night I had the best scallops I have ever eaten in my life, which is saying something since I love scallops. The Hazard Grill scallops came with an incredibly creamy corn risotto, grilled asparagus, and a balsamic reduction. It was the perfect size portion and every single bite was a taste sensation. Where, you ask, is Hazard Grill? Well I'm afraid it's a bit of a drive; it's in Enfield, Massachusetts, just south of Springfield. I flew up there last Thursday to go to a dog show. But the issue of eating out when in strange locations is one many of us face. When I travel to new locations, whether alone or with friends, I always want to find a place to eat that's good and that is hopefully somewhat different than the usual chain fare. But that can be difficult to do. If you are at a more upscale hotel, you can ask the concierge. But honestly I've found that to be a mixed bag. Sometimes they recommend what most tourists seem to want or whatever restaurant is paying the hotel kickbacks. I've eaten at blah places on the recommendation of a concierge often enough that I rarely consult them. If it's a larger city you also often have an in-room tourist guide. I use those, when available, to give me a feel for the type of food available. But again, with those guides, sometimes what you're getting are indeed top restaurants; often with top prices to go along. Or tourist trap restaurants. In those guides, I tend to look for the smaller, more quirky ads. I avoid places that prominently advertise banquet facilities; I'm more into off the beaten path and intimate than mega-dining.

These days you can also look online for blogs or other restaurant review places like ours. On my trip, I was in a very modest motel in a suburb of a big city. I didn't want to drive far. I tried another of my tricks, asking the hotel desk if they knew anything great locally. Got nowhere. So I ended up just driving around and looking for likely spots. Hazard Grill was bigger than I usually like but I knew from the name (the hotel was on Hazard street) that at least it was local, not a chain. In this case I got super lucky. On another night, not so much when I ate stringy lobster at a local place. So what do you do to find good restaurants when you're in a completely strange place and don't know any locals?

The working miniature pinscher
March 14, 2008

Shared by

Robin Nuttall

For some, the phrase of "working" along with "Miniature Pinscher," is an oxymoron. Min Pins, I have been told, are stubborn, wild, uncontrollable. Won't stand still for the judge, don't even judge them on the table, you're lucky if one stacks at all, much less the right direction. Housebreaking is impossible, just settle for the fact that you're going to be using belly bands and litter pans and cleaning up accidents. Never, ever let them off a leash or they'll be gone. Obedience? Agility? You're joking, right? I mean, sure a few trainers have managed to do those sports but not many. And those trainers who do manage to actually do something with the dogs must either be uber-trainers, or too stubborn to know when to quit.

Before I go any further, let me be right up front and say I own one Min Pin. I do not have decades in the breed. My first breed was Dobermans, and those I've been training since the early 1980s in obedience and, more recently, agility and Rally. I currently teach agility classes. At the center where I teach, we train any dog that comes our way, from Chihuahuas to Chows, from mixed breeds to Champions. So I get to see a lot of dogs of varying abilities. Some are structurally ill-suited to any sort of jumping. Some are very low drive, approaching every new task with apprehension or disinterest. Some don't care at all for either food or toys. Some are noise sensitive, others touch sensitive. Even with these deficits, many of these dogs do go on to have good, sometimes outstanding agility and/or obedience careers. Part of my job as a trainer is to assess each dog that comes my way and help the owner learn how to bring out the best that individual dog can do. Obviously it's pretty much impossible to find a dog who is perfect in all these areas. Just as there's no such thing as a dog who absolutely perfectly meets the breed standard, there are no dogs that are perfect in temperament and structure for work. Many Border Collies are very noise and touch sensitive, yet they are the pre-eminent agility breed because their plusses far outweigh their minuses and they can be trained through their issues. Some dogs who have hip dysplasia are able to be very successful competitors, as are some of the heavier, more massive breeds, especially in obedience. It's harder for the mastiff-type dogs to be successful in agility, but it has been done. While there will never be a Mastiff on World Team, they can certainly achieve titles. When I look at the Min Pin, I see a dog who, when bred according to the breed standard, has a lot of the traits I look for in a working dog.

They have very high energy, generally love food and toys and don't seem to care much about what surface their feet are on, nor do they mind the teeter. They are curious and love to stick their noses into everything and figure out what's going on. They want to be the center of the action. They can be very single-minded as well. Many have good structure, though for working I would watch for good movers. The hackney gait isn't so much a problem, but avoid the spidery gait with no forward drive and a lot of flipping of feet and elbows. The dog who has slightly less hackney, stable and solid front movement and good smooth drive from the rear would be a good choice. I'd also look for good feet; many Min Pins have very flat feet and that's a detriment to a long working career. Min Pins have what I call "happy drive." When engaged positively with food and toys and when things are going well, they can be spectacular. But they are not as mentally resilient as some breeds, though they actually tend to be pretty darn tough physically. They don't like to be wrong. If over corrected, some Min Pins may shut down and associate either the training or an object associated with that training with suspicion and avoidance. Other Min Pins may simply go off and do their own thing. It may seem like they are "blowing you off" or being "stubborn" or "spiteful." What they are really doing is telling you that you have not made training them fun or rewarding enough for them to want to participate, or you have pushed them too hard or trained too long. Dog stress behaviors come in a wide range. Some dogs shut down when stressed, and that's fairly easy to read. Other dogs react to stress by zooming madly around the room or otherwise getting out of control. Instead of shutting down they are blowing off stress through physical action.

Min Pins have the ability to work at a very high level of intensity, but it's more difficult to get them to sustain that high level over a period of time. They tend to be visually alert to their environment and are easily distracted by things moving or by that tiny white crumb you never saw on your floor. They miss nothing! As a trainer, my job is to help my Min Pin attain and keep focus, and to make what he is doing exciting and rewarding enough that he is less tempted to let his mind, eyes, ears, and feet wander. Because of their temperament, I feel that Min Pins are especially well suited to positive and clicker training. Frequent, short sessions of training at a high level of intensity develop the desire to work with you. You can then slowly increase the amount of time you wish your dog to work. Most Min Pins simply do not respond well to force, and they aren't stupid, you don't have to train them for hours and hours every day. Overall, I find Min Pins to be one of the most naturally gifted breeds when it comes to training and work. They have many plusses and just a few minuses. I was shocked when coming into the breed to find so few who actually work in agility or obedience. Min Pin breeders who breed to the standard, that "fearless animation, complete self-possession, and his spirited presence," that I often see in the show ring, are producing dogs who are very well suited to agility, obedience, Rally, or earthdog. It's time for the Min Pin to come out from under the bushel and for trainers to see them with a clear and unprejudiced eye. This breed may be small, but it is mighty in ability.

Nail trimming a troubling aspect of pet ownership
September 3, 2008

Shared by

Robin Nuttall

Yesterday I got an email from Zipper's breeder. "Can you come over tonight and help me do nails?" She's getting ready to head to a National then the Louisville cluster and the kennel needed nails done. And since Zipper's also needed doing, I carted him along too. Zipper tends to think of his breeder's house as a cool day-camp, where he gets to romp around and play with all his Min Pin friends. Poor guy, if only he'd known! We did him first, then two Poms, two Norfolks, and six more Min Pins. For the most part the dogs tolerated it as a less pleasant but survivable part of life. A couple were less happy but we all escaped with fingers and toes intact. As I was reading Ginger's excellent blog about partnership responsibilities today, it occurred to me that nails are another really important partnership responsibility; and one that is too often ignored by owners. Yes, teaching a dog to tolerate nail trimming can be a bit of work. Yes, you can take the dog to the vet or groomer. But I prefer to do nails at home. It's not only cheaper, but if I do them myself it happens more often. Further, if I have taught my dog to tolerate nail trimming then it's not such a huge hassle. I think we all know dogs that have a screaming hysterical fit at nail time, mostly because they have been terrified and hurt in the past. And they've been terrified and hurt because some vet or vet tech or groomer is having to deal with dragon nails and is intent on getting it done as fast as possible, regardless of the trauma to the dog. The trick to getting a dog to tolerate nail trimming has several facets.

Start young if possible. A young dog will not be able to struggle as hard (and they all do struggle right at first) and you can get the upper hand more easily. Use food. I do not reward AS I am clipping a nail, but I do bring out the food (good food treats!) before I start, show it to the dog along with the clippers, then give a small, soft treat AFTER each and every nail done. Tolerate a nail being trimmed, get a treat. Regularly touch and grip your dog's feet even when not doing a trim. I am constantly "fiddling" with my dogs as they're on the couch or bed. I pet them, I look in ears, I open mouths, rub muzzles, and grip feet. I also gently pull toes apart. You should handle feet firmly without squeezing too tight. Feet are ticklish, so don't lightly brush. Just grip. Be calm. Do not make a huge production of it. It's best if you catch the dog when sleeping or tired, and I think it's best to clip nails alone. Two people ganging up just makes it worse. I like to trim nails on my couch. It's soft, the back helps prevent the dog from being able to escape, it's more comfortable for me AND the dog. I use a combination of clipping (I use a Resco gillotine clipper) and a dremel for rounding. I clip first, then buzz the edges smooth with the dremel. With a puppy, I may start out just doing one foot per session or if it seems horribly traumatic, just a single toe. If you're rehabbing a dog that's been hurt before, you may spend weeks just getting the dog to let you handle their feet. Do not do nails yourself until you can handle your dog's feet without them levitating to the ceiling. Do not do nails if you're convinced your dog will bite you. You can use a muzzle, and/or work longer on the foot part. Handling feet, then handling feet with the clipper on the table, then handling feet with the clipper 6" away, then handling feet and touching with clipper, etc.

Optimally, nails should be done every couple of weeks or so. Because especially for agility, we want nails short. Long nails are not only uncomfortable for the dog (they force the bones of the foot backwards) but they're also dangerous. Dogs can rip them out on slats and it makes doing the dogwalk and aframe painful to say the least. As a general rule of thumb, if your dog's nails click on the floor, they're too long! Good luck and happy trimming. Tonight it's Viva and Cala's turn. Neither of them love nail clipping time but they run to the couch when I get the clippers out because the treats are worth it!

APPENDIX E-Charles Dudley Mymissourian sample posts
(Published comments in italics)

Outrage at a rumor that the city is closing the Parks and Recreation Department programs at Paquin Towers
July 12, 2008

Shared by

Charles Dudley Jr.

Today, I heard from my good friends who work and run the Columbia Parks and Recreation programs at Paquin Towers (Columbia Housing Authority living complex) that the city manager might or will be closing the Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers at the end of August or shortly there after.

This I heard directly from an employee who works there. Without this part of our city programs that help hundreds of residents within Paquin Towers on a monthly basis these residents will not have the extra help or access to many things. Help to places they would like to go as well as help with other things.

What is this city coming to when it can go out and buy new vehicles every year when the old ones still work just fine and then turn around and lay off employees and close down a department that helps this cities disabled population on a daily basis. If this happens alot of these people who are helped by the Parks and Recreation staff will not have other venues to turn to for assistance. The residents depend on the staff of the Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers.

The Parks and Recreation Department does so much for the people who live at Paquin Towers on a daily basis such as: helping with legal advice, work advice, medical advice, doing health checks if needed, providing people with somebody to talk to about problems in general, transportation to stores, going to places that some disabled cannot normally go to and too much more to list. This department is such a valuable resource to those residents who use it on a daily to weekly basis and being that there is NO one in the Columbia Housing Resident Services Office 5 days a week as there is in the Parks and Recreation office those employees in the Parks and Recreation office pick up that slack as it is needed.

As I get more info I will post it to keep all informed but I am outraged that our city who claims to be friendly to our disabled population would even consider closing down a department that helps hundreds of disabled people on a monthly basis.

5 Responses to "Outrage at a rumor that the city is closing the Parks and Recreation Department programs at Paquin Towers"

1.

Alison Martin, on July 12th, 2008 at 8:50 pm Said:

"Helping with legal advice, work advice, medical advice, doing health checks if needed, providing people with somebody to talk to about problems in general, transportation to stores, going to places that some disabled cannot normally go to and too much more to list..." These individuals are the most "vulnerable" with the least resources.

We need to maintain these services. Perhaps Boone County Family Resources (11 cents per \$100 property assessed- more than county roads receives from property taxes) with offices in Paquin and at Walunt can step up and advocate for these residents? Boone County Family Resources provides services to citizens in Columbia and Boone who have developmental disabilities. They are committed to serving individuals at Paquin and so is Bob Pund! This is a wise use of tax dollars. If our city is unwilling to help, what about our county– Boone County?

2.

Chuck65201, on July 14th, 2008 at 6:32 pm Said:

This is a great point but my point I have made known to the Columbia City Mayor, Manager and Councilmen via email and talking to a 3rd Ward representative is “How come the City of Columbia is not actively looking into any number of Federal Grants that are possibly available for people and programs relating to disability?” I mean after all these council people say they “work for Columbia citizens” so if this is true how come they are not actively seeking out these potentially available grants instead of talking about cutting these valuable services to the disabled?

My other question to the City Councilmen is what exactly are you going to cut if you decide to leave the program intact? There are two part time employees and both are needed to keep the program running as it does, one of who is disabled herself. There is one full time employee who works her tail off keeping up with all of the different activities that need to be coordinated so everything runs smooth.

These three employees are the most valuable resource you have as an employer and they know their jobs better than anybody you could hire right now off the street with all of their past back round experience here working at Paquin Towers for the Parks and Recreation Department.

So just how do you think you can cut anything at all being everything this program provides is so beneficial to everybody involved?

Instead of cutting out programs such as this one at Paquin Tower they should be looking into expanding and advertising these types of programs making them even more accessible for those with disabilities and other interested groups. As my friend has told me “Recreation should be available for everybody”.

The City Mayor, Manager and Councilmen say they work for us the people and our city as a whole? Well I say “Show Me!” and that does not mean cutting programs it means developing them.

3.

Alison Martin, on July 18th, 2008 at 3:58 pm Said:

Yes, I agree! While I do not know of any grants specifically, there have to be several out there to address the recreation needs at Paquin. Boone County Family Resources, BCFR, may be able to partner with the city to find a solution. Les Wagner, Excecutive Director BCFR, and his administration are fabulous at finding money and providing services to people with developmental disabilities. BCFR has partnerships with many other agencies, private and public, who serve people in our city and county with disabilities.

4.

Chuck65201, on July 18th, 2008 at 4:28 pm Said:

Yes I will look into emailing them in the near future or if you can have them contact Sean Spence that would be great.

At the Paquin Tower Parks and Recreational Council meeting on Thursday 7 17 2008 we found out through Sean Spence that there is a program called a 501 c3 I think he called it that basically helps to set up a "Friends Of Paquin" type of fund raising non profit committee to help in raising funds to help fund the Parks and Recreation Programs now in operation at Paquin Towers. I am not sure how it gets formed or what is involved but Sean Spence seemed very positive that it was easy to form and easy to maintain.

At the same meeting Bob Pund was in attendance and voiced his views on the proposed closing which he said once again was a very bad idea.

Also in attendance was Gary Ristow one of the heads of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department explaining how the budget gets put into place and how voting goes on.

At the meeting I asked Gary Ristow point blank that if was known all of these past years that this program only brought in so much money but actually needed more money and in the future there was a chance of total closure how come no "contingency plan" was in place or had been thought to be put into place in the past to help in this issue. At this he could not really answer from the response he gave as it was kind of vague to me and he had to back peddle quite a bit.

The residents and the friends of the residents and participants of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers are into this for the long run and as many a person has said “We are not going to give up with out a good fight” and that has been the hopes and the prayers of all involved.

There is also a very nice lady named “Virginia” who has been coming over to Paquin Towers on her own time and helping those who wish to write letters but have trouble with writing to write those much needed letters to the City Councilman conveying their thoughts and wishes about the programs they utilize now through the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers. She is one of the “unsung heroes” and a friend of all involved.

5.

Chuck65201, on August 18th, 2008 at 6:46 pm Said:

Whoohoooo!! Mad props and approval for the saving of the Adaptive Recreational Program residing at Paquin Tower to be saved in it's entirety including all programs as well as all staff was given to the entire City Council at the City Council Meeting Monday evening August 18 2008 at 7pm by the Chairman of the Columbia Disability Advisory Commission which advises the City Council on all issues concerning all programs relating to citizens in our city with disabilities.

Another huge plus towards our over all goal of saving this program intact.

Woott!!!!!!!!!!

Gone fishing from Paquin Towers
July 26, 2008

Shared by

Chuck

Enclosed is an article about a group of people who enjoy an activity available through the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department currently at Paquin Towers that is possibly facing budget cuts or total elimination this coming fiscal year.

I ask you to read this article in all earnest and to think deeply of how much this entire program means to these people and our community as a whole.

Please respond back if you will so I know you have read this article as a matter of courtesy. Thank you for your valuable personal and professional time.

A small group of dedicated fisherman and one lady who enjoys the activities provided by the Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers ventured out into the warm and humid climate of a mid July day for some relaxation and the challenge of fishing.

This group was ready to go at the crack of dawn although they knew their time of departure from Paquin Towers was several hours still in coming but it was the spirit of being able to get out of their apartments, enjoy some fresh air, have some good times and enjoy the day with their fellow residents who enjoy a common interest that motivated them.

For this group, this was something that they normally would not be able to do or to participate in without the program provided by the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department whose funding is talked about being cut in the upcoming City Manager's Budget Cuts for the coming fiscal year.

This program has been enjoyed by a lot of the residents who have participated in the Parks and Recreation programs over the last 35+ years and if the budget cuts go through this activity will be a thing of the past.

When these brave adventurers got to their destination they were met by the lovely sites of trees, green grass and the most pleasant out of the way fishing pond that is located at Rock Bridge State Park just off of Grind Stone Parkway. It was a very pleasant site that all complimented on and said they would love to go back to once again in the future on another fishing outing. This group usually tries out all of the different fishing places that are within the boundaries of the city limits or close by. The most common factor is wheelchair accessibility and the ease of use for those who may have problems in walking normally so often times their choices are limited due to these needs.

Once this group was near the water it was the art of looking for that choice fishing spot, of rigging their poles, getting those lines wet and their worms drowning. It was an exciting time because they were all helping one another in this venture of getting the poles properly rigged and making sure everybody could fish as comfortable as possible. Life is not as easy as one might think for those with disabilities.

Some brought chairs while others stood around or walked around looking at different angles and spots around the pond to fish from but once the lines hit the water and the ripples settled down from their bobbers splashing, it was all about enjoying their time on the water and taking in the beauty of nature's surroundings that were provided to them by this activity.

This activity and others provided by the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers through out the year are so vital to many lives both at Paquin Towers and around the community in general as it shows the drive and determination of those with disabilities of mental and physical nature to over come what many think are not over comable obstacles in their lives.

They are a corner stone of our disabled in and around our community we live in and through their continuous participation and having the programs to participate in they show the others a way to retaining a quality of life that should be able to be enjoyed by all whether disabled or not.

If the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department at Paquin Towers is cut as it has been in proposal and talked about by our City Manager this and all such enjoyable activities will end forever on the level of ease of access these people enjoy now and a cornerstone of the disabled community in which we live will also be gone forever as well.

If you think that this cornerstone of our disabled in our community we live in should be spared any budget cuts now or in the future please write or contact your local councilman for your area and voice your opinions and concerns. Often times in our busy lives we do not realize this could be us or a family member in this same situation.

Recap of public hearing on the Adaptive Recreational Program at Paquin Tower
September 4, 2008

Shared by

Chuck

The evening of Tuesday 9 02 2008 at the City Council Public Hearings Meeting was a great night for those of Paquin Tower and the Adaptive Recreational Program that as a community program is open to all citizens of the City of Columbia.

The night was a night of power speaking and a lot of heart felt commentary that at one point had the City Council Meeting Chamber erupt in a round of applause.

Many topics relating to the proposed elimination of the Adaptive Recreational Program were brought up to the City Council such as how those with disabilities need a special needs recreational type of program so they can enjoy their crafts, ceramics, painting and other crafts related types of recreational needs. Other topics brought up to the City Council were how important out of town trips are to those with disabilities so they can feel like any one else in society itself who enjoy these kinds of recreational activities. Also was brought up the special needs of disabled individuals to be able to have adequate transportation needs met so they can get to the local grocery stores to be able to make their grocery purchases and as it was presented not always is this possible by Columbia Transit, Columbia Para Transit or the Columbia Housing Authority Van nor private taxis or other privately run transportation organizations.

It was pointed out as well that the service that is provided by the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department with their driver who does fully understand the over all needs of the disabled population that partakes of this Adaptive Recreational Program has the experience to be able to provide the needed service in this part of the program and in the proposed budget cut this valuable city employee would be losing his part time job. It was also pointed out to the City Council at this time that the part time Adaptive Recreational Program employee who is the main office assistant who also happens to be disabled is also a very valuable employee in that she knows all of how the disability system works, workings with in the health care systems, workings with in the legal systems and so much more.

It was also pointed out to City Council that these two part time employees of the Adaptive Recreational Program with their years of experience could not be properly replaced by volunteers nor other outside organizational help due to how well they interacted with all of the participants of this program who have special needs. It was pointed out to City Council by one participant in the program that as part of her rehabilitational program was to get out and mingle with other citizens and this program helped her in doing this due to her documented medical problems she deals with on a daily basis. It was pointed out to the City Council about the indoor recreational activities going on such as the ongoing Wii Games that are becoming quite popular among the participants and are helping to bring more of this disabled population with in Paquin Tower out of their rooms due to often times due to their Developmental Disabilities.

They have trouble relating into society but this great interactive game sponsored by the Adaptive Recreational Program is working these miracles amongst these residents. It was pointed out to City Council as well that this program helps and provides outside services such as the 100 Hat Program where participants make hats and hand them out to local shelters in the city. It was pointed out to the City Council about how the Hickman High School Special Needs Students benefit from this program every year. It was pointed out to City Council about the other programs provided by this program such as the sponsoring of the local Santa's Help Line, The Easter Egg Hunt that is sponsored and held in Paquin Park, the annual Music Festival where the local preschools bring in their children to learn about music, the annual art show that show cases paintings and art work crafted and created by the participants of the program and other art related activities. So many things were brought up to the City Council that this valuable program provides that no other city based department does for the city of Columbia. Phil Steinhaus of the Columbia Housing Authority spoke up in favor of this much needed program with a lot of back and forth discussion between himself and the City Council and the participants look for more of these types of negotiations in the near and far future to help maintain the integrity of this program. Many outside of the program citizens spoke up in favor of the Adaptive Recreational Program about their thoughts, feelings and hopes for the future of this program and how it should be expanded in the future so that even more citizens of Columbia could enjoy the benefits it has to offer.

As you see by these things presented here about what was brought up at this meeting that this program that is open to the entire community of the City of Columbia is a needed program that helps this city to be a diverse community that we are all building towards and as such the words needed, necessary, practical, community driven and so many more come to mind.

This is not the end of this issue by far as even though it looks like for this year this program will be saved in part we need to look at next year's budgeting and such where will this program be at that time. The participants are hoping this will help to publicize and advocate more use of this program by the citizens of Columbia and in so doing bring life back into this program it once enjoyed back when it started in the mid 1970's.

This program is open to every citizen of Columbia no matter of any social status, disability or any other aspect of life. It provides a great way for any family or individual citizen to enjoy a little quality time in doing crafts or other recreational activities that are available to the community.

Thank you to all of the supporters of this program from all over the City of Columbia who have written letters, sent emails, made phone calls, spoke to your Councilmen directly, participated in the program and who have spoke up at City Council Meetings in support of this type of program. Your support is more appreciated than you know by the participants of this program as you also help to preserve this program for future participants as well. That is what community support for these types of programs is all about.

If you have any questions you can call the Adaptive Rereational Program office during normal business hours at 874 7473 and one of the friendly staff will be glad to explain to you all of the great programs provided or you can stop by the program located at 1201 Paquin St in the Paquin Tower Residential Building in Room 102 andpick up a calender of events every month.

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