

LWV-Kitsap Bremerton/CK Special Unit Meeting Notes--Thursday, June 23, 2022 Guest David Nelson, Editor of the Kitsap Sun

Notes submitted by Debi Barner

Attending our Zoom Webinar: Maureen Cervinsky, Robin Muir, Connie Marchant, Raejean Bridges-Avalos, Pat Troxell, Debi Barner, Mary Earl, Susan Griggs, Carolyn, Delight Willing, Kathleen Gallagher, Janet Stegemeyer (SK), Rande Gjerstad, Kathleen Cahill, Leni Skarin, Gail Sackman

Maureen asked David Nelson to introduce himself. He has been the editor of the Kitsap Sun for the past 14 years. Prior to that he was the local news editor for the Sun. Earlier he worked in Northern Utah for a paper called the Herald Journal. David has a Masters in Journalism from Boston University and a degree in English from North Park University in Chicago. David grew up in the Skagit Valley. He now lives in Bremerton.

The Kitsap Sun was founded in 1935 on 4th Street by a couple of guys in their 20's. It has been in the same building since 1946. The Sun Building was purchased in 2020. The Kitsap Sun continues to occupy some of the building, but since the paper is printed in Vancouver, Washington, the paper no longer fills the space. The Sun was able to renovate the newsroom while maintaining its history by keeping the Kitsap Sun there.

David spoke about the changes to the industry and socially "which influence what we can do and the limits we are placed under." But he reminded himself and us that is how change has always been happening. For example women were once only allowed to write feature articles; never news articles. And the paper was printed on a letterpress which uses hot lead to print, unhealthy for the people printing the paper and for the environment. So those things changed and they needed to change.

He said, "We have to embrace this and not get hung up on what a newspaper used to be."

Digital news is the current change. There was an attempt at putting news online in around 2000 with the Sun Link. It was not popular because people were not getting the news online then. There used to be only one computer that could update Kitsapsun.com whereas now all the reporters can put stories online. But digital news is now the way most people receive their news. There are 12,000 web subscribers with about 20,000 looking at some articles daily. This takes circulation up to what it once was with only print papers. The paper is still printed 6 days a week.

There are 9 journalists (2 Editors, 1 Photojournalist, 6 Reporters) at the Kitsap Sun. There are also some ad people who now prefer to work from home since the pandemic.

Local news coverage is a main focus for David and the Kitsap Sun. There are items that have been removed over the years, such as waiting to print to get latest baseball scores, lottery numbers, etc. He mentioned that feature articles are still wanted for the Sunday paper, but the thing the Sun can give is local news. "We try to make sure the stories will not only impact the community, but can allow this community to thrive, to address problems, to be healthy, and to also feel good about itself."

With so few reporters they have to be smart about what they cover, and David believes they do just that. An example of local coverage is the hammerhead crane being removed from the Navy shipyard in Bremerton. The Navy wasn't going to come tell us, but Josh Farley, who covers Bremerton and the Navy, persisted and worked hard to get the story about the hammerhead crane. It's important that someone was watching that story.

Speaking of Josh Farley. He has been with the paper as long as David, in fact he started the summer before David. He is very popular in the community with his Story Walks which he has been doing about 5 years and calls "Experiential Journalism." In fact, Josh was given an "Innovation Award" for creating and maintaining his story walks. His next walk is July 2nd - "Bridging Bremerton." The walk starts at Evergreen Park and will span both bridges, the Warren and Mannette, with speakers sharing history along the way.

Meegan Reid, the Sun's photojournalist, is another journalist with a special interest. Meegan likes scanning in pictures from the past and writing a piece called "Kitsap Archives Post."

Nathan Pilling is getting into drone photography giving him the chance to get interesting photos and this talent would be useful if needing to cover an emergency of some sort.

Another change was to not print a paper on Saturday to save money. It is designed and can be read online. David wants to make sure and keep reporters while having to cut costs.

The Opinion page is also changing. There used to be a need to print different opinions so the community could read about different views. He used to be able to pick out letters with a liberal viewpoint and a conservative viewpoint and print them. Now, however, there are opinions everywhere, and politics has changed which made it more difficult for David to pick out opinions to put in the paper. He doesn't need to compete with national voices. The Opinion page is now 3 days a week making it easier for him to focus on working with letter writers to hear local voices.

There was a question about Larry Little's Corner. He is a volunteer and sends in opinion letters. Prior to the Pandemic, there was a group of people with different political backgrounds and careers who made up the Editorial Board. They would interview candidates and give their opinions. During the Pandemic, the Board no longer met in person and interviewing over Zoom was too difficult and so David wants to rethink this opinion page section.

Someone asked about The Bainbridge Review. David said that is not his paper. The Sun does publish and distribute the Bainbridge Islander, which is mostly a reprint of Sun stories.

Question about press releases: We focus on stories and no longer have a section for press releases. David did give us his email: David.Nelson@KitsapSun.com There's also a general email box for the newsroom: Sunnews@Kitsapsun.com. Press releases are not longer printed in the paper. There is a section for promotions and announcements. He did mention Maurie sends information about forums which he includes in the Letters page.

There was a question about covering the Legislature in Olympia. He said the problem is not only does the Kitsap Sun not have a legislative correspondent, but many bills are dropped at the beginning of the legislative session which may or may not make it to the end of the legislature. We do write about legislative topics. If there is something pertaining to Bremerton, then Josh Farley will cover the bill. Nathan Pilling writes about transportation bills. The Sun does run the votes. It would be a dream to have a reporter in Olympia to cover the legislature. The Associated Press does not cover the legislature enough, nor does the Olympian.

During the summer two interns are hired with monies from a Kitsap Sun Journalism Fund which is a community foundation. David spoke about the benefits of having interns. Giving interns the opportunity to learn gives back to the field of journalism, helps the interns build their careers and may be hired by the Sun, and it enhances news coverage for our community. It is a good way to give to the Kitsap Sun if you want to donate. It takes about \$5,000 for an intern for the summer.

Pat asked about the Sun's Archives: The Kitsap Library does have a complete set of microfilm archives if you know the date. David said they are working with a company called News Bank to get many boxes of microfilm digitized. David is going to send what he has to News Bank and they will digitize all of it, and so it will be an actual newspaper page. There will be a fee of about \$8. Currently, the web archives have some gaps and nothing older than the 90's so this News Bank will be helpful for the staff and community.

Maureen asked, "What would your best possible newspaper be?" David said he had thought about that before. He said it would be great if he had 5 more reporters, even with three more we could do remarkable things. He would like to have city halls covered rather than just checking the agenda. Also more sports and arts could be covered.

Robin mentioned the LWVoters' Observer Corps and wondered about a partnership with the Sun and sending information about what was observed at local meetings without partiality. David said that they do read the agendas for local government but cannot attend all meetings, so it would be a good idea if observers notice something happening, let the Sun know. It just happened Thursday on the opinion page. Sun staff knew there was a meeting planned about the North Kitsap Trails at the Heritage Park. An attendee at that meeting reported to the Sun that opinions were coming from many different angles. The meeting turned into a shouting match and no one was listening. The Sun had reported that the trail was coming, but didn't know it was such a big deal. Now there is an opportunity provide some clarity, get a story, and work on understanding the issues.

Robin also conveyed a question from someone else about "small group chats" to talk local news and what's going on in the county. David said it is kind of like what Josh does. He said it has been done by other papers. It would be a good idea. Maybe a reporter just says their hanging out at Starbucks if anyone would like to come and chat.

David said that is one of the good things about Zoom; we get information from places we can't send reporters. Maureen pointed out Zoom allowed members from South Kitsap to Bainbridge to attend our meeting.

Maureen thanked David Nelson for being so gracious taking this time to talk and that we look forward to meeting with him again.

The Zoom call ended.