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CCL's foray into the future



By Julian Sereno

In July, I stopped by the office of the Chapel Hill Herald in mid morning to pick up a paper that had a photo of my daughter in it. The newspaper office had a hand-written sign in the door that said to knock loudly. There was no receptionist, no reporter-filled cubicles, no ad sales staff. Neil Offen, the editor, heard my knocking and answered the door. He found a copy for me – the paper was a few days old – and we chatted. I commented on his lonely newsroom; and how bustling it had been when I was an editor at the Herald-Sun, the Chapel Hill Herald's mother paper, more than a decade before.

He talked about hard times in the newspaper business. He said that while giving a guest lecture at the UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communications, he asked the students how many had read any newspaper or magazine that day – exclusive of any class assignments – that wasn't online. No hands went up.

We agreed — those 30 and under got all their news online.

For years, daily newspapers have complained of dwindling circulation – a loss of about one percent per year – from 1970 until recently. But that didn't affect the bottom line since most revenue comes from advertising, and newspaper readers remain well educated and well off. They are also aging.

Well-educated well-off younger readers go straight to the net. Over the last year or two, decline in dailies' circulation has become precipitous. Advertising has followed young readers onto the Internet.

That explains the axing of staff at the News & Observer and the nearly constant lay offs at the Herald-Sun. All of their content is free on the web. The New York Times and Washington Post have more readers than ever, they're just not much money off them. Why buy a subscription?

The only bright spot in the newspaper industry are micro publications, which focus intensively and exclusively on certain areas. Their content is unique – they are the sole source for the articles that they publish.

Chatham County Line is such a publication. Our newspaper is widely read and well received. The papers fly off the news racks – in Pittsboro and Siler City and Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Our great strength – our excellent writers – frequently write more than we have space to print.

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26 Hours at the Denver Democratic National Convention

By Lesley Landis

Non-stop flight from RDU to Denver: 4 hours, 30 minutes

Arrival gate to curbside shuttle (no checked baggage): 30 minutes [The Denver airport is big and spread out in three separate terminals connected by an electric shuttle.]

Van shuttle to hotel: 90 minutes [Normal drive time is 30 minutes. Traffic is practically motionless but street fair atmosphere makes plenty to watch out windows.]

Gaining access to hotel lobby requires security check: 20 minutes [Rumor is the Michelle Obama is staying here. Lots of cops in riot gear.]

Though we cleared outside security, the front desk has no record of us as guests. Sort that out: 20 minutes [Lobby is teaming with hundreds of people and various convention ephemera for sale.]



Find room, dump bags, run out, grab cab: 5 minutes

Sit in traffic to travel 16 blocks: 20 minutes [Our cab driver tells us we should get a Pedi-cab because "they can go on sidewalks."]

Note to self: Next time know how far your destination is from your departure point.



DNC scenes, including peculiar partisans and the Hope Sculpture by Robert Indiana.

PHOTOS BY LESLEY LANDIS

At outer security gates of Pepsi Convention Center wait for contact to get basic entrance passes: 40 minutes [While waiting we encounter "Rednecks for Obama," a "Super Delegate" (a Brit dressed up as a superhero and claims he's just flown in to cast 10,000 votes for Obama) a Fox News fan, an anti-abortion group which almost gets into a

DENVER continued on page 15.

Foster parents get involved

Chatham couple feels a moral imperative to help troubled kids become whole.

By Deborah R. Meyer

Connie and Marty Root were 54. Their three children were grown with six children of their own and Connie's dad, who was an integral and special part of their daily lives for years, had passed away. "Our life was so clean and convenient. We'd sit on the couch and eat dinner and drink wine with a fire in the fireplace and it was really scary," said Connie, who just finished her second year of teaching at Pittsboro's Northwood High School. She worried that she and her husband would become unusable to society. "I feared that we would not be willing to get involved. That we would put blinders on to the needs of others," she said.

She knew they needed to get involved in something, but what?

Her daughter Emily guided her to the answer at a Pittsboro Street Fair. "The Department of Social Services had a booth there and Emily grabbed my arm, took me to the booth and said, 'You want this woman.' I signed a paper to get more information and that was it," Root said.

Chatham offers foster parent training.

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The "it" was becoming foster parents for children in the Chatham County foster care system.

In the past two years, the Roots have welcomed four teenagers into their home. "We realized that we had more parenting to give," said Root, who has been married for 35 years. They agreed to specifically take in teenagers though they knew this age group could be even more challenging than young children. "For every year the child was in a bad situation, it will take at least that long to work out emotionally. When a child is 15, you won't see returns for many years," Root said.

"It is a lot of work but the reward is knowing that you are doing something right. You are helping a person become whole. We are taking active steps to break the craziness of these children's past. We are hopefully stopping the dysfunction and helping them learn an alternative," Connie said.

Some of the big lessons she has learned – and that she and her husband will take with them as they move to the mountains — are that it is not about her but

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