

All the
rumors fit
to print

The Rhinoceros Times®

Greensboro's
Only
Newspaper

20th Anniversary Special Edition

Two Decades of Rhino Headlines

Naysayers Alive And Kicking Each Other

Oct. 16, 2003

County Board Cat Fight Coverage Begins

March 1993

Hammer Wins Moral Victory Mayor Allen Wins Reelections

Nov. 6, 1997

Cops In Black & White, Part 8: Police and Prostitutes

Sept. 28, 2006

Weast Plays Board Like Stratocaster

Sept. 12, 1996

The Female Parental Unit Of All Meetings

April 10, 2003

Ten Foot Pole Is Too Short

Sept. 9, 2004

Ding Dong The Mitch Is Gone!

March 5, 2009

Double Your Taxes But Not Your Fun

April 8, 2004

Free Advertising

One Reason Incumbents Always Win

Sept. 24, 1993

Hennis Hustled Out After Hussy Harangue

March 3, 2011

Plans To Renovate By Destruction Discussed

Oct. 30, 2003

Editor Offered Chair By Board

Aug. 31, 2000

Have we been Grier-ended?

March 30, 2006

Mapping Mega Mob Meets

Oct. 23, 1997

Yow's Whine Getting Ripe

Feb. 19, 2004

Why Hammer is running for Mayor

Oct. 23, 1997

At the new county prison farm dormitory

Sex And Drugs Still Popular With Kids

Jan 8, 2004

Floor Not as Flat as a Cow's Back

Oct. 17, 1996

Pants Down All Around on Land Sale Issue

Feb. 5, 1993

Basketball Starvation Diet Update

June 2, 2004

High Point Breaks Away From Guilford County

April Fools 2010

County Makes Offer For Old Pilot Land

April 13, 1995

It May Be Bye Bye Bats and Baseball

August 1, 1996

Responsible Party For Roof Failure Names

Jan. 4, 2001

It's Hammer time

Write-in Hammer For Mayor

Oct. 30, 1997

Wally's Rules Not Robert's Rule Govern Commissioners Meetings

May 5, 1994

Bostic & Co. Take Over on Monday

Nov. 28, 1996

N&R Apologizes and Apologizes to Mayor for Land Deal Stories

July 16, 1993

How Many School Administrators Are There? What Do They Do?

April 21, 1994

Helping Panhandlers To Pace Themselves

A Penny Saved Is A Penny To Be Spent

Nov. 6, 2003

June 12, 2003

Council Jumps On Sex Bench

Sept. 17, 2009

Billy Yow has a Cow over Skip's Bull

Jan 27, 2011



The Rhinoceros Times

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Downtown Greensboro, NC, Friday, October 18, 1991

1.00\$500



Teresa kisses off Rhino.

Rhino Rumors

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

It was reported, though it is can be believed only with great difficulty, that long-time Rhinoceros waitress Teresa Whitley was last seen working at Bert's Seafood. Convinced that Teresa was serious when she said that she would sooner push a shopping cart around the aisles than serve one more beer and that any such report had to be a scurrilous lie, numerous efforts were made to contact her. However, all efforts to contact Teresa so that she can deny these allegations have been thwarted. Reports that it is Teresa's identical cousin working at Bert's remain unsubstantiated. Film at 11.

What is Cyril Chavira's connection to the Peace Corps?

Those who missed the Octoberfest at Castle McCulloch last weekend missed a truly great time, where also can you meet a real mostly alive Burgermeister and polka the night away.

Hellraisers have invaded downtown Greensboro lately, causing streets to be barricaded, while they burn cars and try to run over young women. The Hellraisers leave hellraising out on the streets when they dash to the Rhino for last call.

There are some advantages to having an all but deserted downtown. Hardly a soul has been inconvenienced by the recent filming of the Hellraisers movie, even though Elm Street has been blocked off at night all week. How many pillow towns can close off main street for a week and have only the nobodies notice?

Tom Foyle, the manager of Harry's, the other finest drinking bar in town, was at the golf tournament escorted by an out-of-town guest. Reports indicate that spring will bring a challenge golf match between teams representing Harry's and the Rhino, time will tell.

It's prime time for outdoor dining, at least for another couple of weeks (when it's not raining) and our recommendation is Paisley's, great location (within walking distance of the Rhino) and great food.

(RUMORS CONT. ON PAGE 2)

International Southern Lights "One of Greensboro's Best" To Go Global

After years of careful planning and preparation, Southern Lights Bistro & Bar is taking the final steps toward becoming an international food marketing power. Owner Peter Hamilton recently returned from Lisbon, Portugal, where he reportedly initiated final settlement of lengthy negotiations to open an International Lights there.

The idea is the culmination of hard work and planning that started in 1985 late one night at the Rhinoceros. At that time, Hamilton persuaded local restaurateur, raconteur and n'er do well John Hammer to travel to Europe and search out an up-and-coming location for an International Lights Restaurant.

Hammer fails to negotiate deal

After a brutal trip during which Hammer eliminated almost every known country in Europe as too cold, too smoky or both, Hammer somehow -and the facts here are sketchy- wound up in Lisbon, met Dom Marcos who owns a 16th century Palace in the heart of old Lisbon and the negotiations were on. After 18 months of sniveling and quibbling, Hammer couldn't take it anymore. He left the country in the middle of the night and returned to the U.S. to accept a prestigious position in Washington, D.C.

At first, Hamilton was unable to get any indication of exactly what had stalled the negotiations for 18 months. As it turned out, much of the 18 months was spent debating who should pay the bar tab at the establishment where the negotiations were held, as the negotiations continued, the bar tab continued to grow.

Rudy brought into the fray.

There was obviously only one solution and that was cash. Being unable to leave his thriving business in Greensboro for an extended period of time, Hamilton enlisted the support of John Rudy and Rudy's long-time caretaker Melissa Allen to travel to Lisbon, settle the bar tab and get on with the negotiations.

All might have gone well if Rudy and Allen had been able to find Lisbon. Refusing to use maps or talk to strangers, the two adventurers pinned all of their hopes on blind luck. Melissa reportedly called it quits in Madrid and flew back to the U.S.

Rudy was determined to find Lisbon no matter what. Eventually he did. Unfortunately for Hamilton, the cash item with Rudy to settle the bar tab had been left in Madrid with a very persuasive thief. Needless to say, when Rudy finally located Lisbon and Dom Marcos, the negotiations continued and the bar tab grew astronomically. The thief with the cash in Madrid refused to come forward and pay the tab. And without cash to grease the skids, the negotiations did not go smoothly.

Rudy resumed with wonderful tales of the grandeur of the Palace but with only sketchy notes on the monetary level of the bar tab. Hamilton, refusing to give up in the face of adversity and unqualified buffoonery, sent Megan Wertz to Lisbon with the sole purpose of finding out the exact nature of the bar tab. After all, in a country where a bottle of beer costs less than 50 cents American, how astronomical could the bar tab be? (On second thought with both Rudy and

Hammer drinking on the tab for over two years, there's no telling.)

The big guns sent to Lisbon

After Megan returned with a figure, Hamilton felt he had a firm grasp of the situation and decided that negotiations had gone on long enough. Not musing around any more he enlisted a commando team of attorneys, North, Bogan, and O'Hale.

This team entered the Iberian Peninsula under the guise of running with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. Their true purpose was to engage in kamikaze around the clock negotiations with Dom Marcos. Usually reliable sources indicate the world renowned team of attorney's was in Lisbon for less than four hours.

Negotiations were completed, the lease ready for signing and the lawyers were off to the beach. In less time than it takes most attorneys to draw up a will, these seasoned professionals had managed to complete negotiations that had been stalled for over five years.

Sweet Success

In September Hamilton traveled to Lisbon to sign the lease and began the process of opening the first International Lights Bistro & Bar. Hamilton had nothing but praise for his negotiators, including Rudy, who had done little more than get robbed and drunk or was that drunk and robbed.

Hamilton announced that if plans continue to proceed at the breakneck speed for which Portugal is known, then the restaurant would have no problem opening its doors for business before the turn of the century. (more later)

LITTLE KNOWN RHINO ACTIVITIES

Bowling

Rhino Bowling?

Who knows? The bar is certainly long enough for bowling. But the floor is by no means shiny.

What do the folks standing at the bar do when a bowler is bowling? Do they all jump up on the rail? We know they don't jump up and sit on the bar. And my notes say that this activity takes place Monday nights. I've been in the Rhino Monday nights, I'm almost certain and to the best of my recollection no one was bowling.

Silent Monday Night Football at The Rhinoceros International Sports Bar

We've questioned quite a few people about this and no one is quite sure what silent Monday Night Football is.

Exactly how silent is it?

Is the phone allowed to ring during silent Monday Night Football?

Are the billiard balls muffled or are they allowed to click?

Can a customer order a beer if it's done quietly?

Classical Music Sunday Afternoon

I know I've been at the Rhinoceros for this. One after another these instrumentalists kept playing on the jukebox with not a single lyric heard in the bar. It's a strange auditory experience. The three people who were there all had this wary look in their eyes and shushed me every time I tried to talk, as if they were listening to someone speak or sing. It was kind of soothing and pleasant and I recommend it for about seven minutes any Sunday afternoon when you cannot think of anything else to do. But if the yard needs raking or the windows washing, well raking and washing have some interesting points of their own.



Tuesday is Rhino Dollar Day?

What exactly is One Tuesday Dollar Day?

We took this question out on the streets to see what the average person in downtown Greensboro thinks about it.

We were unable to find any average people in downtown Greensboro. In fact we were unable to find any people at all other than one group that was busy burning a car and didn't have time for trivialities such as Rhino Dollar Day. We'll try again next week.

First Edition

First Edition

The Rhinoceros Times

International Friday, October 18, 1991

Page 1

DRINKING AT 16 & DRIVING AT 21

BY JOHN HAMMER

Age is a weird thing. Attitudes about age are weirder and the laws are weirder still.

Take drinking and driving for instance, but not at the same time.

At 16 you can legally drive a car. You can legally attempt to maneuver 3,000 pounds of steel on the highways and byways in all imaginable conditions, rain, fog, snow or ice, and even rain-fog-snow and ice. You can whip past playgrounds at 35 mph or mosey down the interstate at 65. But to be honest, 16-year-olds are not very good drivers, if they were better drivers, insurance rates for those under 25 would not be so high.

At 21 you can legally buy an alcoholic beverage and consume it on or off premises depending on the sign.

What's the big difference between these two state-sanctioned privileges? Did I hear someone say, "Five years." Thanks for the insightful answer. Any others? "Drinking is more fun than driving." In some cases that could be true.

How about this answer? Simply turning 16 does not automatically earn you the right to drive. Turning 21 does automatically guarantee you the right to buy alcohol.

The difference is training. Drinking and driving (not at the same time) are state-sanctioned privileges and both can be fun or complex and confusing. To suddenly be faced at 21 with the myriad possibilities for alcohol consumption is mind boggling. The state requires that drivers pass a driver-training class. Why not offer a drinking-training class for young drinkers?

A drinking training course could be offered to 20-year-olds. The course would be taught in two parts, classroom and drinking. In the classroom, students would learn about alcohol in its many forms. And the answers in such eternal questions as: What is the big difference between imported beer and domestic, other than price? Why does single malt Scotch cost an arm and a leg, and is it worth it? Is it proper to order a gin and tonic in December? And is the correct sequence tequila, lemon, salt; lemon, salt, tequila; salt, tequila, lemon; or does it really make any difference?

Students would also be required to watch films showing British behavior by people that had not been drinking

responsibly. Films that depict in graphic detail people vomiting for hour after hour. Films that attempt to create the horror of a wine and tequila hangover. Films that show a Baptist wedding reception where the punch was spiked with grain alcohol and the ensuing mayhem. And a film that exposes the horror of waking up in a strange house with a sickening hangover beside someone that you don't know and that you don't think that you want to meet again.

After the successful completion of the classroom part of the course, the students would go out in groups of three with qualified, state-certified instructors and drink. While one student drinks, the other two observe. Periodically they would switch places so that all the students had adequate time drinking and observing. To warn other drinkers that the student drinker's behavior might be erratic, and as a courtesy, all students would be required to wear hats with the inscription "DRINKING TRAINING" visible from front and rear.

In the beginning the instructor would demonstrate different techniques. Students would learn:

- how to get a drink in a crowded bar
- the proper amount to tip
- proper drinking techniques at different social events such as keg parties, wedding receptions and office Christmas parties.
- the appropriate time to order shots
- that mixing tequila, B-52s, red wine, Pernod and draft beer causes projectile vomiting in most adults.

Upon completion of the course and after passing a state licensing exam, on their 21st birthday the student would be issued a drinking license.

With a such a curriculum in place, it might make more sense to reverse the age requirements, allowing 16-year-olds to drink and 21-year-olds to drive. After all it is more dangerous to give a 16 year old 3,000 pounds of steel capable of traveling at 90 mph or a can of cold beer.

Or perhaps a choice would be offered to those 16 to 21 years old. They could go to driver training and get a driver's license or drinking training and get a drinking license, but not both. It could give designated driver a whole new meaning.



Who Won the 25th Annual Rhinoceros Open Golf Tournament?

Officially the team of Ridenhour & Co. won the Annual Rhinoceros Open Golf Tournament held at Greensboro Country Club Sunday with the remarkable score of 32. They claimed to be a full 40 strokes under par and their scorecard was accepted as official. In fact it was not even questioned by the authorities.

However, other cards were thrown in for minor infractions of the rules. The card of Hammer, Hammer, Hammer and Brooks is a case in point. HHH&B played a memorable round of golf, but were disqualified because of a reported hole-in-one on the 11th hole, a 568-yard par five.

It's true that none of the golfers saw Greg Brooks' drive go in the hole. They did, however, see it hit a tree and take two tremendous bounces on the cart path before disappearing in the general direction of the green.

As was brought up later by BGA (Bar Golf Association) official Chuck "you've got to be kidding" White, it's also true that Brooks said he hit a white T-shirt 3 and the ball the team found in the hole was an orange Slazenger that read "I love it when you hit me." But who can be certain that a golf ball hit that hard would not change color. Quibbling over incidents such as this has no place in tournament golf.

The team that should have been disqualified was the B team made up of Bennett, Bennett, Burgess and Brown. After having five pured on three of the front nine holes, this team brought in well-known professional putter John Rudy to help them out on the back nine. The excuse of the B team was that Bobby Brown broke his elbow. Sunday evening and his arm was in a cast, making him unable to play. There are a couple of obvious problems with this theory. One is that it doesn't take two arms to swing a golf club. If one arm was in a cast, what was wrong with the other arm? Secondly, none of reliable witnesses saw Brown in the Rhinoceros after said accident in which he broke his elbow and must report that he was not in a cast. Other more reliable witnesses report that even his arm was not in a cast.

Rumors that animal rights activists would be at the course to protect the flock of Canada Geese on the back nine from known goose hater and infamous News & Record sports writer Helen Ross, turned out to be slightly inaccurate. The flock of geese and Helen were both present, but the animal rights activists were not. Preliminary reports indicate that other than some looking on both sides Helen and the geese were able to get along somewhat amiably on this occasion.

RUMORS CONTINUED

The Thug made it through another week without a single arrest or citation.

Rhino dollar day is constantly growing in popularity. But it doesn't have far to go with the crew from Bert's Seafood. Its probably not true, but one customer who was lingering over his seventh cup of after dinner coffee at Bert's on a recent Tuesday night swears he was asked if he'd lock the door on the way out.

Lisa Miles, remembered as a doormaness trained in the Hammer-Clay tradition and a tad-hour bartender has returned to Greensboro for bigger and better things. Lisa has left the respectable and high paying world of bartending for the world of jobs, criminals and lawyers. Lisa completed her education at Oxford on Buies Creek, recently passed the bar and -following in the footsteps of other world famous Rhinos-she is now an attorney in the Public Defenders Office.

Mr. John Rudy, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhinoceros Clubs International, S.A., claims that new Rhino sweatshirts will arrive before winter is over. According to the press release, these are all new sweatshirts nothing like them has ever been made in the U.S. in this or any other century. (Sounds strangely like sweatshirts with no neck holes or three sleeve. We'll have to wait and see.)



Upcoming Events at The Rhinoceros Club

Saturday, October 26
The Annual Halloween Party
(members and guests welcome)

Sunday November 10
Wine Tasting Party

The Rhinoceros Times is a weekly publication of the Rhinoceros Club located at 315 S. Greene St., Greensboro, NC 27401

Halloween Party Coming up Right Around October 31st (Saturday, October 26, 1991, to be more exact)

Halloween, the night of trick or treating, can be disappointing for those who are slightly too old to dress up and go door-to-door with a grocery bag collecting an obscene amount of candy. In light of this, many establishments such as The Rhinoceros Club International sponsor parties for these slightly-older youngsters providing them with somewhere to go. How much fun is it to put on the world's best Halloween costume and sit at home alone and watch Wheel of Fortune?

In keeping with long standing tradition The Rhinoceros Free Clinic will sponsor a Halloween Costume contest in which prizes are given for the best costumes and for those that don't have such good costumes but have spent a considerable amount of money at the bar



in the last year. Those interested in winning the contest should either start working on their costumes 24 hours a day or start running up enormous bar tabs nightly. (I recommend the bar tab route, but that is just one man's opinion.)

January 1, 1993

A Brief History Of A Small Newspaper

In looking at old issues to write something about the past 20 years I found I had written a perfectly good history of *The Rhino* that ran Jan. 1, 1993, slightly 14 months after the paper was founded on Oct. 18, 1991.

Like contemporaneous notes, it's far more accurate than anything I could come up with today, so we thought we'd run it almost as it ran, but our copy editing has gotten much better in the past 19 years, so we did correct the misspelled words and added some punctuation.



BY JOHN HAMMER
EDITOR

For those that joined us recently and for those that have been with us for a while but haven't figured it out yet, we will try to answer the question, "What is *The Rhinoceros Times*?"

This is a question that I am asked frequently, and during the holidays it seems that I am asked this very question about every 30 seconds.

What is *The Rhino Times*?

The Rhino Times is a weekly newspaper in transition. We started out in September of 1991 as a two-page newsletter for the Rhinoceros Club on Greene Street in downtown Greensboro. Since January of 1992 *The Rhino Times* has been an independent publication, not associated with the infamous Rhino Club, except in spirit.

The history of *The Rhino Times* really goes back a few years more. From 1982 to 1986 *The Rhinoceros Times* was a monthly newsletter mailed to all the members of the Rhinoceros Club. At that time John Rudy, the toast of Greensboro's cafe society and the owner of the Rhinoceros Club wanted a vehicle to advertise band night. With some experience in journalism and in desperate need of cash, Mr. Rudy offered me a page to do with as I saw fit. We had great fun with that publication and it was popular, acquiring subscribers in all 50 states and several foreign countries.

When the Rhino quit having bands, the original *Rhino Times* died a natural death. All of which is only to say that we had some idea what we were doing when *The Rhino Times* was reborn last fall.

The goal this time was quite different and the results have been also.

Instead of a club newsletter, the plan was to offer a way for independent businesses, particularly restaurants and bars, to advertise to an extremely targeted audience – to those that actually go out to bars and restaurants.

The Rhino Times doesn't venture out of Greensboro. We don't care much about Winston-Salem, High Point, Burlington or any of the other municipalities in the 11 county triad area. (We don't even believe in the triad.) We focus our attention on Greensboro, and really on a small part of Greensboro.

We are mainly interested in folks that go out in Greensboro, either out to eat or just out to have fun. We write more about this group than any other group including the City Council (but more on that later).

We give our advertisers a chance to reach people that are interested in what's going on at night and interested in what's going on in Greensboro.

We will continue to expand our coverage of events in Greensboro, and will continue to reach a bigger share of the market. In one year we have grown from two pages to 16 pages. In the next year we plan to grow to 32.

To do this we plan to expand our news coverage, add some more features, like the new cartoon we added today, and expand our circulation.

Our coverage of the Greensboro City Council is already the most complete to be found anywhere. We give the news coverage of the City Council all the room it deserves.

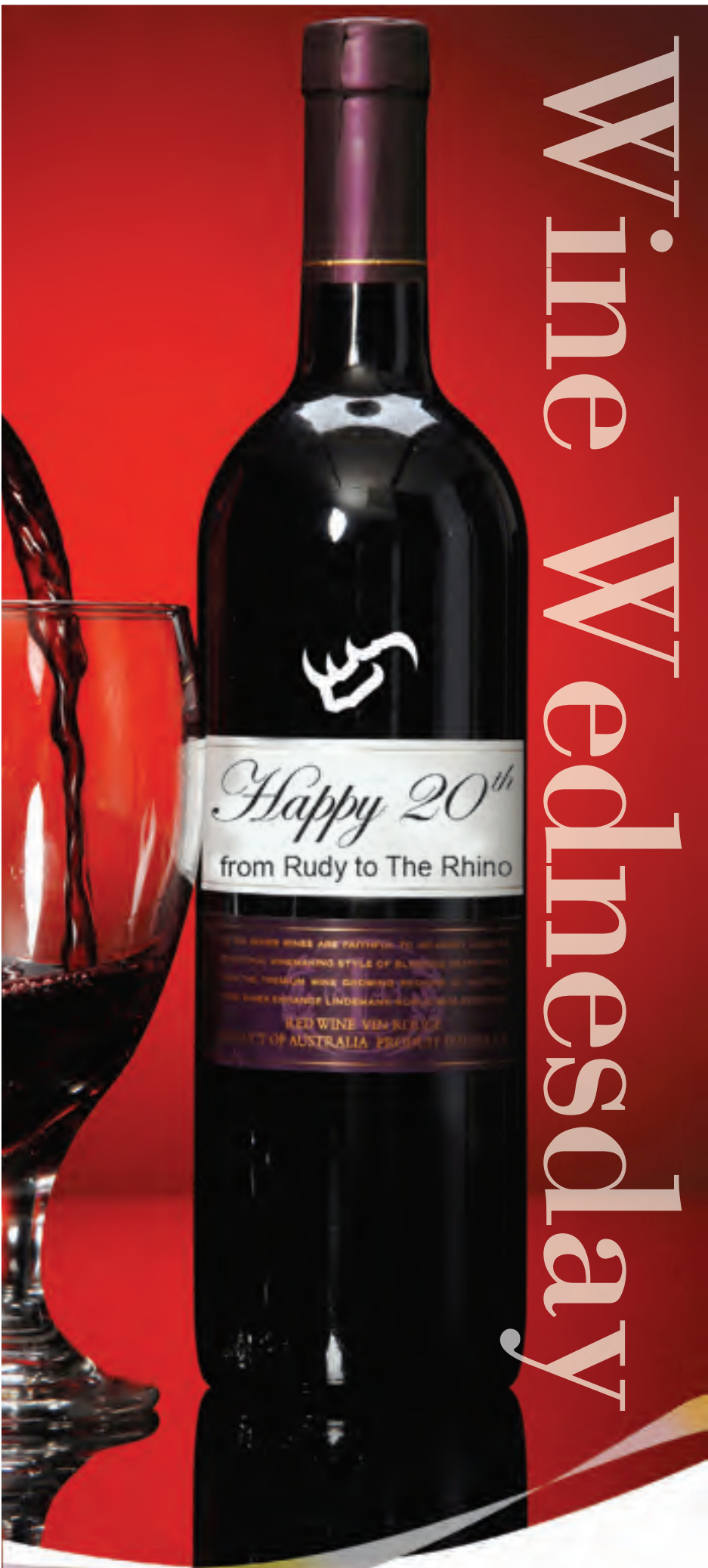
Our coverage of news will continue to be irreverent at best and scandalous at worst. But if you can't laugh at politicians you have to cry at all the money they spend, and we plan to keep laughing.

Circulation, I forgot all about circulation. In the beginning, *The Rhino Times* was only available at the Rhinoceros Club.

Currently it is available at over 50 locations around town. Each week we add a couple of spots. We are now printing and distributing 3,000 copies of *The Rhino Times* each week.

If you like *The Rhino Times*, please, frequent our advertisers and tell them you read *The Rhino Times*. The paper is totally supported by ad sales, and every little bit helps.

That's where we stand as 1992 is coming to an end.



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Bledsoe Set World Record At The Rhino

BY JERRY BLEDSOE



When *The Rhinoceros Times* was founded in the fall of 1991, I was leaving the newspaper business for good, or so I thought. I wasn't even aware that it had begun publication. I couldn't have conceived that it would become the most important news source in Greensboro and eventually pull me back into work that I loved.

I was fascinated with newspapers from the time I started hanging out at age 9 in the back shop of the *Thomasville Tribune* with its ancient and cranky flat-bed press, hoping for a paper route. It took me six months to get that route, which I delivered on foot every Tuesday and Thursday, lugging the heavy papers in a canvas sack that I switched constantly from aching bony shoulder to bony shoulder. You can't imagine my relief when at Christmas nearly a year later I got my first bike. It was just a J.C. Higgins from Sears & Roebuck, but it had a wire basket for my paper sack on the handlebars and I couldn't have been prouder of it.

I moved on to delivering daily papers from nearby cities and did it until I was nearly 16, although at 14 I had taken an additional job at Murphy's Grocery. I was so good at getting new subscribers that when I was 13 I got to go to the White House for National Newspaper Boy Day. A photo of me with the full-size replica of the Liberty Bell at the US Treasury appeared on the front page of the *Twin-City Sentinel*, the newspaper I was delivering at the time.

I loved everything about newspapers and when I got my first newsroom job at the *Daily Independent* in Kannapolis in the summer of 1964, I knew I was where I was supposed to be. I started out writing obituaries and copying police reports. I moved on to covering crime, courts and county and city government matters. But what I enjoyed most was writing feature stories about interesting people and odd situations that I encountered. They were always welcome by my editors, and one of those stories about a mule in court made it onto the Associated Press national wire and was picked up by CBS News with Douglas Edwards. I felt that I'd made the big time.

I had bigger times ahead, though. After nearly a year and a half at Kannapolis, I was hired to be the High Point bureau chief for the *Greensboro Daily News*, a paper I once had delivered. Within two years I was feature columnist and soon would be writing for national magazines. Twice I left, once for the *Louisville Times*, later for a much longer period at the *Charlotte Observer*, but each time I came back of my own accord.

Of the 27 years I spent in the newspaper business (two of which were on unpaid leave) more than 20 were at the *Daily News*, which became the *News & Record*, after my return from Charlotte. I deeply loved that newspaper and treasured the opportunities it gave me. I thought I would be there until I retired or died. That was not to be.

In my later years at the *News & Record*, it, like many other newspapers, changed radically. It became thoroughly corporatized. Instead of the great editors of my early years, creative people who not only were dedicated to quality journalism but cared deeply about the readers, we began to get bureaucrats as editors. These leaders depended on guidance from hack consultants, faceless focus groups, and whatever cockamamie management fad was current at the moment. They embraced political correctness, frequently at the expense of truth, saw mediocrity as excellence and often held their readers in contempt.

When I returned from my two-year leave, the paper was about to undergo yet another redesign in an endless chain of repugnant redesigns. Readers who once had welcomed

(Continued on page 22)

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My Rhinoceros Life



BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

When we first moved to Greensboro in March of 1983, I was a 31-year-old father of two. My wife was pregnant with our third child. We came because in the inflation and high interest rates of the time, book advances had dried up, and I had to get an honest job.

That honest job was as book editor for *Compute! Magazine*, a Greensboro start-up in the era of type-in programs for tiny computers like the VIC and Commodore 64, the Atari 800, the Apple and the TRS-80. That era ended almost as soon as I moved here, with the advent of the IBM PC and Apple's Macintosh.

But for nine months I worked the 9-, 10- and 11-hour workdays of a writer, editor and computer programmer, for my job required that I be at least competent at all three tasks.

In two rented houses on Courtfield and Penn Wynne, I barely saw my family and came to know the City of Greensboro only as a route to work and a place where I ate lunch. Financially, it was a disaster – we returned our house in South Bend, Indiana, to the bank, and rejoined the ranks of permanent renters for eight long years.

The hard times officially ended, however, when publishers started offering advances again. On the strength of a new contract for my Alvin Maker series and for a novel version of my short story “Ender’s Game,” I quit my job at *Compute!* and once again worked for myself as a freelance writer.

I saw very little more of the city I was living in than I had before. With no job to go to, and with the streets as miserably unsafe as they were and are for a dedicated bicyclist as I then was, I became something of a hermit. There were days on end when I never left the house at all.

Being a Mormon, I was able – indeed, almost encouraged – to lead an insular life. Mormonism is a uniquely involving religion. While we hold down regular jobs and live dispersed in ordinary neighborhoods, we serve together in a lay ministry in which every church member is expected to hold offices (“callings”) in our local congregation (“ward”) or diocese (“stake”).

Most of the hours that non-Mormons spend in their neighborhood or work communities, Mormons spend at church, teaching classes, leading organizations or serving as clerks, youth ministers and many other offices. Most Mormons spend between six and 20 hours a week in church attendance and service.

For me, with no outside job, my entire local social life was spent with other Mormons, who were about evenly divided between North Carolina natives and transplants from other parts of the country – mostly Utah, Idaho and California, where I had grown up.

As my work friendships at *Compute!* faded away, my strongest local acquaintanceships were commercial – with the people who framed art for us, with the owners of an ice cream parlor, with the dry cleaner, and most of all with Steve and his crew at Steve’s Friendly BP (originally Mike’s Friendly Amoco).

The only local non-Mormon I spent time with socially was my dentist. I doubt that any of these people realized that our contacts were the entirety of my connection with the city where I lived!

(As a writer, of course, I have many non-Mormon friends, including some very close ones, from my work in the publishing, teaching and film worlds. But few of them have ever lived in Greensboro.)

(Continued on page 9)



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Card

(Continued from page 8)

This is the life I was leading, into which *The Rhinoceros Times* came soon after it first launched. I had no idea it was new; I did know it was unusual. It was a free weekly that actually had serious content – not a common thing at all. Not only that, but in a culture increasingly dominated by strongly biased journalism that covered the news as if liberal dogmas were universally received truth, *The Rhino* was openly conservative.

So conservative, in fact, that I often found myself wishing that editorial positions on the Clinton administration had been toned down a little. Yet as time passed, I found myself looking forward to each week’s installment of John Hammer’s “Clinton Watch” column, if only as an antidote to the obvious Clinton loyalism of the supposed “news” stories on

(Continued on page 16)



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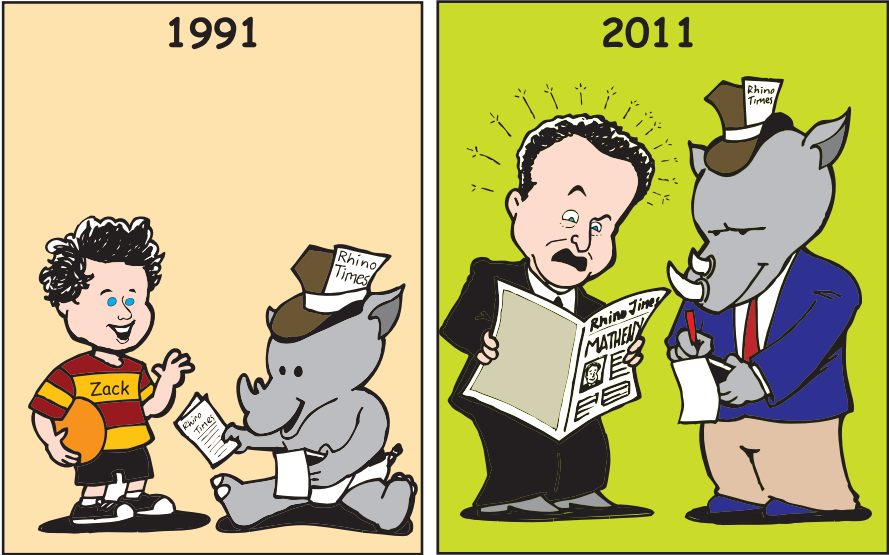


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Yost Finds Rhino As
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BY SCOTT D. YOST
COUNTY EDITOR

What a long strange trip it's been.
— Jerry Garcia

I feel kind of bad because it's *The Rhinoceros Times*' 20th anniversary and I didn't get it anything. If that happened with your wife, you'd be in a whole lot of trouble. (I mean, you know – if you hadn't already been divorced by then.)

But, actually, I've only been here nine years: I arrived in early December 2002, and this is really the first anniversary *The Rhino* has ever celebrated since I've been here; and the first anniversary is paper – so this column, which will be on paper, can count as my anniversary gift.

The Rhinoceros Times is a publication like no other, and, looking back now over the past decade, it's funny to remember how I got here: Namely, I was dragged here *kicking and screaming*.

Before I worked here, I used to write for the now defunct *Triad Business News*, which was run by the *High Point Enterprise*. At the *Business News*, I was relegated to writing stodgy business stories, and, if I ever tried to do anything creative, management stomped down mightily and immediately on me the moment I suggested anything interesting. They did so in order to make absolutely certain that nothing remotely creative ever snuck into their paper.

While at the *Business News*, I would periodically get calls from *The Rhino* asking if I wanted to come in for an interview to see about coming to work here.

Then, on Halloween morning, 2002, *High Point Enterprise* management called all dozen or so *Business News* employees into a meeting and told us the publication had been bought by a competitor, and they said the only thing the new owner wanted to keep was our list of subscribers. We were all terminated and we had to clean out our desks as soon as the meeting was over because the security code to the *Enterprise* building would be changed at 5:30 that day. They told us the last issue of the paper was on the stands – oh, and please don't let the door hit us on the way out.

Well, some of the sales women in the meeting were openly sobbing and others just had looks of disgust, and the people conducting the mass-firing started handing out a bunch of forms for us to fill out, but I just got up and walked out of the meeting. I walked straight to my car and I realized I really wanted to go to Chapel Hill that night to celebrate Halloween on Franklin Street with my friends – and now there was certainly nothing in the world stopping me.

It took about 20 minutes to drive home. On the way, I called Justin Catanoso at *The Business Journal* and – in a conversation that I feel certain he still to this day kicks himself about – he told me they didn't have any openings.

Then, while still in the car, I remembered that *The Rhino Times* had shown a great interest in hiring me, and I called and asked to speak to John Hammer, and the conversation went something very close to this:

Me: Mr. Hammer, they just shut down *Triad Business News* and fired everyone including me.

John: Well, why don't you come work for us?

Me: OK.

He told me to come in sometime the next week and we would work out the details. The word that *Triad Business News* was shutting down was already spreading, and, as

(Continued on page 22)

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20th
ANNIVERSARY

Some Folks Who've Helped Us Along



BY JOHN HAMMER
EDITOR

This week we are publishing our 1,037th paper. The first is dated Oct. 18, 1991. The mathematicians among you are saying 20 years of 52 papers, shouldn't it be 1,040? And they are right, it should be.

But in 1991, at Christmas, the fellow who developed our film took it home with him for the holidays, so there was no way we could finish the paper. The summer of 1992, the Muse talked me into going on vacation for a week, and when I saw how much money I saved by not producing a paper we stayed two weeks. So our first year we missed three papers, but since then we haven't missed one, which is a pretty good record.

When I sat down and looked at back issues of *The Rhino Times* to try and figure out how to write a history of the paper, I flipped through looking for big stories like I do every December to write a wrap-up of the year, and I took notes.

Then I realized that this is not supposed to be a history of Greensboro during the past 20 years but a history of *The Rhino Times*. They are certainly intertwined, but different.

History can be told in a lot of ways. One way would be to list in order major accomplishments, like adding a sales department, or the first year we did over \$1 million in sales, starting the Charlotte Rhino Times in 2002, or closing it in 2008. But I decided that it would be more fun to write about the people who have made it all possible.

So there is some history in this history but mainly stories about people who have helped *The Rhino* make it 20 years. I've decided not to write about the associate publisher in Charlotte or the associate publisher in Greensboro, who we discovered were embezzling from us. In fact, since we didn't prosecute either one it is probably best they remain unnamed, as will most of the employees who we have had over the years, not because they didn't contribute but because I only have so much room and both sales and reporting are positions where turnover tends to be high.

One year my brother Willy and I sat down with the names of all the people who had worked for us in one year and tried to remember something about them all, and we did it, but not without some work.

Although I would like to take credit for it, *The Rhino Times*, at least in the beginning, was the brainchild of **John Rudy**, who at that time owned the Rhinoceros Club and now owns Cafe Europa. I'm not sure he'd take credit for everything that it has become, but he thought it up.

From 1982 to 1986 I had done a newsletter for the now defunct Rhinoceros Club on South Greene Street that was called *The Rhinoceros Times*. The most notable thing about the newsletter is that I went to the 1984 Democratic National Convention credentialed as a writer for *The Rhinoceros Times* and was the only correspondent at the convention for a monthly bar newsletter. In 1986 I moved to Lisbon, Portugal, and the newsletter died a natural death. I later moved to Washington, DC, for four years, went to grad school, worked for a magazine and a consulting group, learned how to do layout on a Macintosh, finally got the Muse to marry me and moved back to Greensboro in July 1991.

I couldn't find a job, so Rudy suggested that I revive *The Rhinoceros Times* and this time sell advertising, so I did. It may seem odd, but for months I was confused about the ownership of the paper. I thought Rudy and I were partners, and then one day I was trying to get Rudy's help making a decision and said something about the fact that Rudy should show more interest in a business he owned. Rudy informed me that he had just been helping me out and that he had never had any interest in owning, much less operating, a newspaper. He had his hands full with a bar.

Which is how I found myself the sole proprietor of a fledgling newspaper.


The paper started out being mostly entertainment with some editorial thrown in, but in the first few months I realized that you can only write about the new menu at Southern Lights so many times, and I started covering the Greensboro City Council.

In the beginning I did everything: I wrote the articles, took the photos, sold the ads, created the ads, laid out the paper, took it to the printer, picked it up from the printer and then delivered it around town. Rudy helped me deliver the paper for the first six months, which is one reason I thought he must own the paper. Why else would he do all that work? I can remember saying to Rudy on more than one occasion, "We're up to eight pages this week. There is no way I can do any more." The next week it would be, "We are up to 12 pages this week. That's my limit." But the paper kept growing and it turned out I could do more.

Early on I outsourced the ad creation to **Rick Sanderford**, who was a big help, and he also reviewed bands for a while.

(Continued on page 13)

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Hammer

(Continued from page 12)

One of the smartest things I did in the fall of 1992 was to call on **Carter Allen** at Laredo's Neon Cactus in the Irving Park Plaza Shopping Center where Moe's Southwest Grill is today. It was actually in half that space. Carter asked me how much for a full-page ad, and since I had never sold a full page I had to come up with a price. A couple of weeks later he would ask me how much to add a second page for Christmas and I gave him a great price, which stood for years.

In one way it was way too cheap, but it was enough to pay my print bill every week, so it made my life much easier.

Once again, lots of people gave me credit for coming up with the whole Laredo's idea of putting in lots of photos, but it was Carter's idea. He said he wanted to increase his late night business and he thought photos of lots of young people having a good time after midnight might do the trick. So for years my Saturday night was spent at Laredo's taking photos after midnight.

My brother Willy eventually took over the duty of taking photos at Laredo's. I think it might have had to do with the fact that at the time he was young and single.

Which brings me to an even smarter thing I did in starting the paper, and that was talking my brother **Willy** into becoming my partner. Willy is far more organized than I am and had started a company after graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering from Duke that imported decorative ceramic tile from all over the world. So he suggested that in order to figure out if this would work he take a vacation from his company and come work at *The Rhino* for a couple of weeks. His two-week vacation stretched into six weeks and then he had to go back and tie up loose ends at his soon to be old company.

The reason I wanted a partner was because I was working myself to death and the business side of the paper had grown beyond my limited abilities. So when Willy, who is well organized and a great salesman, came to work for six weeks he got a rudimentary accounting system going,

sold a bunch of ads and really increased the number of pages in the paper. I had been struggling to put out a 16- or 20-page paper every week. There was no way I could put out a 32- or 36-page paper. Or so I thought. I managed to survive the six months it took Willy to get back, but just barely. I thought I was working hard before he came for a visit, but it turned out I didn't know what hard work was until he left.

A note about newspapers for the 99 percent who are not in the business. The number of pages in a newspaper is determined, not by the amount of news on a given day but by the amount of advertising that has been sold. Most newspapers have a ratio of news to ads that is high on the ad side. We try to keep *The Rhino Times* around 50 percent news and 50 percent ads, which is an unusually high ratio for news. But, hey, the editor owns half the newspaper so shouldn't he get half the space?

Willy came back in the fall of 1993 and turned *The Rhino Times* into a real business. He ran the show for 18 years, and running this show makes herding cats look like a breeze. Last March Willy took an extended leave of absence and this fall decided to officially resign as publisher.

Since March I have discovered what a thankless job it is to be publisher. At least in this economy you almost never get to announce big bonuses for everyone, but instead have to find new and innovative places to cut expenses.

In 1993 I had started covering the Guilford County Board of Commissioners along with the Greensboro City Council. I started covering the commissioners because **Della Gray** of Gray Television, who I knew from Rhino Club days, insisted that I watch some meetings. In the beginning I couldn't attend the meetings but would get the videotape from Gray Television, watch it and then take it to the cablevision station in time for it to be broadcast on TV. I think if then Chairman of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners Wally Harrelson had known that I was delivering the tapes for Gray Television that they would not have had that contract another minute.

Della was right, there was way too

much going on to ignore the Board of Commissioners. This was right after the board was increased to 11 by the Democrats and Skip Alston, Steve Arnold, Robert Moores, Joe Wood and Joe Bostic, to name a few, were all commissioners. At some point I started attending the meetings and for years I attended the meetings of the Greensboro City Council and the Guilford County Board of Commissioners. On any number of city-county issues I was the unofficial liaison between the two, and sometimes managed to get some things done.

Back to 1992. Not long after I started the paper, when it was still being published out of the spare bedroom of our apartment, my friend **Greg Brooks** told me that his brother was a cartoonist and asked me to talk to him. One thing you learn early on in this business is everyone has a relative who is a great but undiscovered writer, photographer or graphic artist. It's easy to write it all off as wishful thinking, but the reason you have to be careful is that sometimes they really do.

In this case, I met **Geof**, looked at some of his cartoons, liked them and we have been printing Geof's cartoons in some form or another ever since. It is a rare paper in the last 20 years that doesn't have at least one cartoon from Geof. In the beginning we were so excited about having our own cartoonist we printed a bunch of political cartoons on the front page. Yahoo Revue and Riff Raff were early one-panel cartoons. We have also published some of his strips. Nick Bravo PI, about a detective, and Roadkill Ranger, about a squirrel that rescues animals from death by automobile. Tradin' Paint was a cartoon Geof did about stock car racing that was nationally syndicated. Geof gave it up after realizing how much time it took and how little money he made. You have to be in a whale of a lot of newspapers to make any money with a cartoon strip.

An early subject of Geof's political cartoons was Guilford County Manager Hector Rivera. Editorially we went after Hector nearly every week because we thought he was a terrible county manager, and the cartoons reflected that. So most

people were surprised to walk in the manager's office and see framed originals of Geof's cartoons on the walls. Hector, for all his faults, did have a sense of humor and an ego. He loved being the subject of a cartoon so much he didn't mind that it wasn't complimentary.

Geof has also covered the schools as a reporter, sold ads and is now overseeing circulation. Even when he lived in Detroit, Geof got his cartoons in every week.

Our very first columnist who started in 1992 was **Annemarie Bogar**. At that time she worked for the Internal Revenue Service, something that she did not want anyone to know for pretty obvious reasons.

She passed the "I want to be a columnist test with flying colors." The test is to turn in four columns. Lots of people have a column in them and they can come up with two or three in a pinch, but that fourth one is a real bear. Annemarie had no trouble with that and wrote columns for us for years until she got promoted and her paying job became too demanding. Writing a column is tough. It takes far more time than it should, and to do it right takes even more. Annemarie had some wonderful, funny columns and I hope she has found a outlet for all that talent.

It's funny, but in the early 1990s when we ran Tony Kornheiser's syndicated column he wasn't so well known around here that people knew it was syndicated and we'd get calls for Tony.

We also ran News of the Weird starting in 1992, when we went to regular newsprint and I suddenly had more pages I had to fill. People thought we compiled that also.

Which brings up a point that I find fascinating. Some people thought that all of these people were up at *The Rhino Times* working every day, while other people would ask me what I did for a living, convinced that *The Rhino Times* was a hobby.

Right now we have 15 full time employees and probably 15 part time employees. So it is a small business, but those 15 get paychecks and have insurance and 401Ks just like it was a real job.

(Continued on page 14)



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All Day Every Day • Dine-In or Take Out

ALL TRIAD LOCATIONS



Libby Hill
SEAFOOD

Hammer

(Continued from page 12)

Ed Cone was a columnist for *The Rhino Times* in 1994 before he was a columnist for the *News & Record*. The best part of having Ed write a column was not the column itself, although Ed writes well and can be extremely funny, but it was discussing politics with Ed when he dropped his column off. This was the mid 1990s and Ed was cutting edge, so I believe he brought his column in on a floppy disk. It's good to have to defend what you believe and Ed kept me on my toes. I'm not sure either one of us moved an inch in our discussions, but they were long and sometimes loud.

We finally had a falling out over the politics in his column which I had to remind him was supposed to – but was not going to – run in my paper. Ed, of course, turned that into a paying gig with the *News & Record*, which lasted up until this year.

The late **Vic Nussbaum** gave us our first exclusive and a ton of credibility when he was mayor of Greensboro in 1993 and announced that he would not run for reelection. Nussbaum had just forced the *News & Record* to print the most apologetic retraction and apology that anyone in the newspaper business had ever seen. The retraction made national news. The *News & Record* had accused him of behaving inappropriately on a land deal and *The Rhino Times* had actually done the research and found that everything was

handled above board, in a fair and open manner, which we reported while the *News & Record* stuck to its story that was based on fantasy not fact. We got it right and in appreciation Nussbaum gave us the story and let the *News & Record* find out from *The Rhino* that he wasn't running.

That gave us a lot of credibility right out of the gate.

Danny Kelly, who runs the snack shop in the Old Guilford County Court House, used to provide a good many tips about what was really going on. But the service that he provided that made a huge difference was when he complained about not being able to read the paper.

Danny is legally blind. So having someone who is blind complain about not being able to read the paper might not make sense. But Danny has some vision and has special glasses that allow him to read, and he is a big reader. He said there was something wrong with our type and I thought that he might be losing more of his vision. But I passed the complaint along to Willy and Jim Garrison, who was in charge of commercial print at the *High Point Enterprise* where we were printing, and we all looked at the type. Danny was right. It was a printer problem that we should have caught but hadn't. It took months to track down the actual source of the problem and get it fixed, but we did and it made a huge difference in the paper. Looking back over those papers today, I wonder how we could

have missed it and why it took a blind man to get us to fix our printing problem.

Gena Morris, who joined us in 1994, and **Sybil Stokes**, who came on board in 1995, were two salespeople who stuck it out and made a difference. Although Scott Yost writes often about hiring Panthers cheerleaders and the like, both Gina and Sybil were grandmothers before they left our employment.

Sybil likes to say that in her 16th year she got married, lost her virginity and had a baby, and did it in the proper order.

They were both experienced and aggressive saleswomen. Gina had worked for the *Thrifty Nickel*, and every Christmas would say, I don't see why we don't just put out the same paper two weeks in a row, that's what we used to do at the *Thrifty Nickel* and nobody every complained. It was senseless to argue that people would certainly complain if we printed the same paper twice, although with the dearth of news between Christmas and New Year's it was tempting.

Dividing up sales accounts is always a problem, whether you do actual territories, lists, types of business or alphabetical order, there are always arguments. When it was just Gina and Sybil the city was divided in half. One had everything north of West Market and the other had everything south. Still, I remember one famous high volume argument about account stealing. There were a lot of tears but Willy didn't shed any of them. I remember sitting in my office next door thankful that I was not the publisher.

Jim "Squirrel" Garrison, salesman extraordinaire, had a long association with *The Rhino Times*. We were printing the paper in Roxboro until I got a call one day from some guy with a name I didn't recognize who started talking to me like he was a good friend. I had no idea who he was until he realized my confusion and said, "Hammer, this is Squirrel." I said, why didn't you say so in the first place and he said he was doing commercial print at the *High Point Enterprise* and they would love to print *The Rhino Times*. I said give me a week or two and we'll start printing with you. We printed there for seven years, which meant Willy and I spent every Wednesday evening with Uncle Jimmy in High Point. We long ago forgot why we started calling him Uncle Jimmy, but some of the employees at the *Enterprise* still think we're his nephews.

When Uncle Jimmy left the *High Point Enterprise* he tried some other jobs before coming to work at *The Rhino*, but when he came to work with us in January 2003 it was clear he was home. Jim Garrison died in December 2010 after a long battle with cancer. Sometimes he was too sick to work, but if he was on his feet he was at work saying things like, "Up your ads."

Jim's work ethic was so strong that his bosses had to keep telling him to slow down and take it easy, and sometimes try without much success to send him home to rest.

Karen Sands, who joined us in 2008,

may not be trying to fill Jim's shoes, but is certainly working hard to pick up the slack.

In 20 years we have hired and lost more sales people than we can count. Most don't last very long and some don't make it through the first day.

Sales people have to be persistent to be any good. **Sherry Stevenson**, who joined us in July of 1999, has been our top salesperson for years, and no one would ever accuse Sherry of not being persistent.

Sherry says when she was little her mother asked her if she knew what "no" meant, and Sherry responded, "It means maybe." In the intervening years her attitude hasn't changed. Sherry is the only person I know who actually talked the people at the North Carolina Drivers' License Bureau into retaking the picture for her driver's license because the first one wasn't a good one. It's hard to imagine a bad picture of Sherry, but she claims most of them are, and as we quickly learned up here you don't run a picture of her unless you get her approval. Usually when we do run a picture of Sherry in the paper we get calls to The Sound of the Beep thanking us for the photo of Sherry "Va-va-voom" Stevenson.

For a while Sherry was a part of a sales team with **Johnny Smith**. It seemed unlikely to me but Willy said it would work and it did. They were extremely successful, but what a Mutt and Jeff team. Sherry is extremely fashion conscious and always well dressed. If Johnny came to work and was cold he would walk around the corner to the Bargain Box and buy a sweater or a sport coat.

Sherry also finds herself as the ad hoc publisher of Rhino Real Estate, the real estate insert that runs in *The Rhino* every week. Willy had the idea for Rhino Real Estate but Johnny and Sherry were the ones that got it going, and Sherry is the one who has kept it going.

This office has plenty of loud mouths and prima donnas, so it is good to have someone who just comes in and does her job. That would be **Melissa Smith**, who has been selling classified ads for us since 2005. Some days I am surprised to find that Melissa is here because she has been sitting quietly at her desk working, which may be normal some places but it is not normal *Rhino* behavior.

We've been blessed with a number of really good office managers, and at least one really bad one. But the gold standard for office managers at *The Rhino* is **Judi Hunter**, who retired in July 2010. Judi came to work for *The Rhino* in September 2000, and after being here for a year or so said that she planned to retire from *The Rhino*, which seemed like a distant idea, but Judi almost always did what she said she was going to do and she retired July 2010. One of the reasons that Jim was able to work through his illness was that Judi filled in the gaps when he was having chemo or in the hospital.

In 2004 we moved from the Southeastern
(Continued on page 23)

happy 20th ★
anniversary
to the rhino ★



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But we corrected it the next week.

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Card

(Continued from page 9)

television and in the local daily paper.

Democrat though I was (and remain), I had found Clinton loathsome from the first moment he emerged in the 1992 presidential campaign. “I feel your pain” indeed – was this laughably obvious hypocrite really going to be taken seriously by the normally skeptical media? Apparently so. A former news junkie, I found myself avoiding television news just so I wouldn’t have to see his pasty, lying face. How could such a clown be the head of the party of Daniel Patrick Moynihan?

Only John Hammer’s *Rhino* column served as an antidote for the Clinton partisanship of the time. Meanwhile, my wife (a Republican) and I both became devotees of *The Rhino*’s coverage of local news. We soon realized that the local daily was incompetent, uninterested or biased on local news stories, while *The Rhino* assiduously provided absolutely reliable coverage.

Yes, *The Rhino* had an attitude, but it still covered both sides of every story, unlike its competition, which ignored most stories entirely until *The Rhino* forced them to take notice, and then weighed in with coverage so hopelessly one-sided that I marveled at the ability of some of its writers to call themselves journalists with a straight face. Clinton-style hypocrisy seemed to be the rule.

The Rhino displayed its attitude openly, instead of pretending to be dispassionate; yet it fearlessly presented the views of those it opposed, so that in reading *The Rhino* I saw both sides. I could make up my own mind, which I did, sometimes reaching quite different conclusions from Hammer’s – yet relying entirely on his coverage of events, partly because he was so scrupulously honest and thorough, and partly because in Greensboro there was usually no other source for local news at all.

Then an odd thing happened. We started getting *The Rhino* in the mail.

My wife and I asked each other how such a thing had happened. *The Rhino* offered no subscriptions that we had noticed – after all, it’s distributed for free! Neither of us had contacted *The Rhino*, asking for such a service. We were baffled.

My wife jokingly suggested, “Maybe they want you to write for them.” I laughed.

After all, if they wanted me to write for them, they had only to ask. But what would I write? I was no journalist.

Yet as time passed, the idea of writing for *The Rhino* began to occur to me more and more often. For one thing, at book signings or other events I occasionally ran into John or Elaine Hammer (never both at once – they divided their efforts in order to cover more ground), who would take a picture and then chat for a few minutes.

I found both of them very likable and intelligent – it was a pleasure to converse. I think they had no idea that by conversing with me once a year or so, they had moved into the forefront of my social contacts with non-Mormons in Greensboro!

They mentioned that I ought to write something for them, but they were very vague about what I should write. That is, they would say, “Oh, anything,” but I can’t write about “anything.” I have to write about *something*, and I didn’t see how anything I might write would fit into *The Rhino*’s format.

Besides, they never mentioned payment, which clearly implied that they had no budget. I support my family from my writing; as Samuel Johnson famously said, “No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money.”

Samuel Johnson quotations are an excellent guide in a writer’s life: “He who praises everybody, praises nobody.” “He who waits to do a great deal of good at once will never do anything.” “I never desire to converse with a man who has written more than he has read.”

And the most valuable quotation of all, which my father quoted to me all my life: “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than open one’s mouth and remove all doubt.”

The trouble is that I have never mastered this one, for I have given preference to a couple of other maxims, which as far as I know, I wrote myself:

“What good is it to know the truth, if you don’t tell anybody?”

“The best way to find out whether an idea is either true or useful is to speak it publicly and then pay attention to the answers you receive from people who know more than you.”

So even though *The Rhino* was not

(Continued on page 18)



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Card

(Continued from page 16)

offering money, I had a lot of ideas for which I had no forum. In my fiction, I almost never insert my own opinions, since I feel that my first obligation is to present the beliefs and opinions of my characters, which almost never coincide completely with my own, and often contradict my views quite sharply.

And most of my opinions simply wouldn't fit in novels at all. How many times can I have characters pop into real restaurants so I can review them? How interesting is it to have characters discuss recent books or movies?

The fact is, I thought then and think now that excellence is only maintained when it is encouraged by positive public mention, or when its absence is publicly decried. Everything should be subject to review, on every relevant criterion. *Consumer Reports*, *Zagat Guide* and book and movie reviewers offer a valuable service, but they all seem so limited in scope.

Our culture consists of many things besides commercial products, and everything is worthy of comment, even foolish comment, if it induces wiser responses.

So from time to time I'd mention to my wife, "I wonder if *The Rhino* would want a column in which I review absolutely anything that people use or experience – soap, toilet paper, airports, local TV stations, the weather, schools, magazines, anything."

But I never mentioned this thought to anyone at *The Rhino*. Not until the fall of 2001.

It was in the aftermath of the attack on America by Muslim extremists – there, I said it, we were attacked by Muslims in the name of Islam, regardless of whether there are also Muslims who are not attacking us – that I decided I really wanted to be part of the public discussion of a war that had been forced on us (by one view) or invited by our pusillanimous foreign policy (by another).

So, after years of knowing the Hammers and receiving *The Rhino* by mail, I actually did the unthinkable. I picked up a phone and asked whether they'd be interested in, not one, but two weekly columns from me, one called "War Watch" (in imitation of Hammer's old "Clinton Watch" column) and another called "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything."

To my surprise, they readily agreed, and by January of 2002 I was writing two columns a week.

"War Watch" quickly broadened its reach, incarnating itself as "World Watch" and "Civilization Watch" depending on the topic. But there were many weeks when I had nothing useful or intelligent to say, and in some of those weeks, following Johnson's admonition, I actually said nothing.

But "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything" never lacked for material. Indeed, though the column quickly grew to 2,000 or 3,000 words a week, I have never written about even half of the things that came to mind. And I found I simply enjoyed writing UORE much more than the Watch columns.

Then Obama was elected, and I stopped writing Watch columns almost entirely. Partly this came from despair – if a man this ignorant of world affairs and this ideologically skewed could be passed off as mainstream by our leftist media and elected president, what good did my writing actually do?

Mostly, though, I didn't want to be one of those partisans who doesn't give a person a chance to prove who he is. So what if he didn't know that Russia had a veto on the UN Security Council? He might learn. And indeed, Obama began reversing many of his stupidest campaign pledges – Guantanamo remained open, the war continued to be prosecuted.

So why not give the man a chance, without putting all his actions in the worst possible light, the way Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity seemed determined to do?

Eventually I began writing the occasional Watch column again – and *The Rhino* always received them eagerly, since I think John Hammer believes they are more valuable than my reviews of often trivial things. Nobody ever picks up my review column to reprint it nationally, while every now and then a Watch column attracts some national attention.

I write enough words in *The Rhino* each year to make a book or two. But I still have to give priority to writing for which I'm paid, or my employees won't get their salaries and I will have to give up my restaurant habit.

But all writing, paid or not, is work. And in my ongoing program of trying to make my writing worth reading, I can't just sit down and spew. I have to think things out,

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Card

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read constantly and revise my opinions as I gain more knowledge.

We live in an era of widespread and highly promoted deception and ignorance – this is an anti-science age that pretends it is science-based, an ahistorical culture that pretends to learn from history. I don’t want to subtract from the current low level of intelligence and information. If I can’t add to the sum of human knowledge or wisdom, to the best of my ability, then I would do better to keep my mouth shut.

The result, to the chagrin of *The Rhino’s* staff, is that I am almost invariably late, holding my columns until the last possible moment. This is never my plan – I usually have my column outlined and “ready to be written” by the Friday before. Yet often I only work up the heart to write it mere hours before the last possible moment it can be submitted.

Perhaps this is a sign that I should quit doing it. But I know myself well enough to know that if I ever stop, I will soon wish I were writing it again.

In an odd way, I actually live my life for that review column. I get out of the house and do things, try things, go places, talk to people with the thought in mind that I might be able to write about it in UORE in *The Rhino*.

I never buy a book or see a movie solely in order to review it. When it’s obvious that a movie or book or TV show is one that I’m going to detest, then in all likelihood my review of it would be worthless. I’m

a firm believer that no book can survive a hostile reading, and the same applies to all the other arts.

In a way, John Hammer reinforced this attitude when he asked me *not* to write negative reviews of local restaurants I found disastrously bad. Speaking practically, as an editor and publisher, he had to think of all restaurants as potential advertisers; a bad review loses a potential buyer of column inches.

But it’s more than that. I’m no fan of Southern cooking; so how could I possibly review a barbecue restaurant? What would I say that was worth reading? Likewise, how could I review a book by Bill or Hillary Clinton, since I start from the assumption that they are both crooks and liars? I would be wasting my time and yours.

Of course, there are those who think that all my writing is a waste of time – but those people are obviously not in my audience, so I don’t have the slightest concern about them. I’m not speaking to them, and they would be fools to waste a moment on my writings.

My concern is that I not waste the time of people who *do* enjoy my columns. If I don’t provide accurate information and well-thought-out opinions, then I’m betraying their trust. So why write about things that I would never have liked?

When something is nationally released by big companies or famous artists, and is potentially harmful or ridiculously bad, then I will call attention to it and indulge

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Card

(Continued from page 19)

all my penchant for savage evisceration of pretentious twaddle.

But local companies or less-well-known artists get a complete pass from me. In such cases, silence is the cruelest negative review. I spend my time providing information that I think might be useful or entertaining, and calling attention to wonderful experiences that my readers might otherwise miss.

The result is that since I started writing for *The Rhino*, while my Watch columns became intermittent, I have never missed a week of "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything." Surely people in *The Rhino* office have been frustrated or downright angry at my late deliveries. But I (and they, I think) fear that if I ever have a week in which *no* column of mine appears, then such weeks will become more frequent and eventually my writing for *The Rhino* will disappear altogether.

Yes, I know, there are those who would find that to be a relief (please, *Rhino* staffers, don't all raise your hands at once!). But for good or ill, there is a certain percentage of *The Rhino* audience that would mourn a little if my work weren't there. And since *The Rhino* is in the commercial business of selling readers' attention to advertisers, my column presumably contributes some small amount to *The Rhino*'s revenues.

But I would be the one who lost most if my columns ceased entirely, because to my great surprise, writing "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything" has given me an enormous gift: I now feel like a citizen of

Greensboro.

Until I wrote the column, I dwelt in Greensboro, yes – but I really lived within my Mormon ward, touching Greensboro only across the counter at various stores.

Now, though, I don't just shop in stores, I review them – positively. No, it doesn't mean they give me free stuff. I'd refuse it if I did, for two reasons: It would compromise my integrity to get, in effect, valuable rewards for good reviews, and – perhaps more important to me – I want good companies to stay in business, and so it's important that they continue to make a fair profit from my business.

I move through my life in Greensboro as a participant in the city's life. Because I write about anything that happens, I'm *part* of what happens. I'm still a Mormon – I'll never write about bars because I don't go in them; I can't review coffee because I don't drink it, and so on.

But I'm now part of Greensboro in a way I never was and never could be before I started writing about it. Most of you are part of the city because you work here, you derive your salary from what you do in the city. But I don't – my income derives overwhelmingly from sales of my work in other cities and overseas.

It's the unpaid work I do, published in *The Rhino*, that makes me a citizen of this city.

I loved living here from the start. After all, as a freelance writer I could live anywhere, and Greensboro is far from the least expensive place I could go. (It's way

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Card

(Continued from page 20)

more expensive to live here than it ever was or could be in South Bend, Indiana, the last place we lived before moving here.)

When I was offered that job at *Compute!*, I was also offered a better-paying job at Coleco in Hartford, Connecticut. New England is a beautiful place. But when my wife and I visited Greensboro, we fell in love, not with the scenery (lovely as it is), but with the town.

We had moved out of Orem, Utah, precisely so that our children would not grow up in a monoculture, where nearly everybody was Mormon and white. We were bitterly disappointed in South Bend, Indiana, in that life there was almost completely racially segregated – the only time a white guy like me met a black person was across a counter.

In Greensboro, we saw at once that whites and blacks, however they might complain about each other, actually *talked*. Our children would grow up knowing different races, and would spend time in school with people who were not Mormon.

In short, Greensboro fit exactly with our goals as parents, to make sure our children were of the post-racist generation of Americans, and to make sure that they knew what it meant to be Mormon because they had actually met people who were not.

We have lived here almost 29 years, and our youngest living child is in her last year of high school. I can tell you that Greensboro has been everything we hoped it would be


in the raising of our children. Along the way we have picked up many friends and, since I started writing for *The Rhino*, we have actually acquired some non-Mormon friends for ourselves, including some of the people we love best in the world.

So even though my columns for *The Rhino* go up on the web, I still remain a local writer. If my out-of-town readers don't care to read about a local high school play or a gelato or chocolate shop in Greensboro, they're free to skip those reviews, because I think those are the most important reviews I write.

Indeed, that's the most important thing about *The Rhino* – the fact that it is local, local, local. If you're reading *The Rhino*, you know what's happening in town, in the government and in the culture. The things a Mormon like me will never write about, Scott Yost covers with delight.

And you can bet that even though the editors at the local paper grind their teeth over what John Hammer writes in *The Rhino*, they read it every week. They have to – it's how they find out the local news, so that after a few weeks or months they can cover the same stories that Hammer and Yost wrote about when they were still new.

And guess what? I've now written something even longer than my usual column. I think what the Hammers asked me to write about in this special 20th anniversary section of *The Rhino* was "a few paragraphs." So ... they're always free to cut it into sections and run it in installments, with one segment appearing every 20 years.



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Yost

(Continued from page 10)

I pulled in my driveway in Greensboro, my phone rang. It was former *News & Record* reporter Carla Bagley. She said, “Scott, I’m so sorry to hear what happened,” and I said, “Oh, it’s OK; I just got another job.” And she was like, “What?”

I’ve been about 30 times happier at *The Rhino* than I ever was at that sad place that, to this day, reminds me of some sort of twisted combination of the work place in *Office Space* and the office Tom Hanks works in at the start of *Joe Versus the Volcano*.

My concern is that, after 20 years of being around, people might take *The Rhino* for granted and forget how rare and special *The Rhino Times* is. If you think about it, it is utterly astonishing that there’s a weekly family-owned free newspaper you can pick up anywhere in town and, every week, you get, at zero cost, writing by world-renowned writers like Orson Scott Card, who in many fan circles is an almost mythical literary figure, and Jerry Bledsoe, who wrote two of the great American crime books: *Bitter Blood* and *Blood Games*.

And I’d also say that the reporting of John Hammer and Paul Clark, in terms of

interest, depth and news worthiness, is of a caliber that’s highly unusual anywhere in the country.

Other cities don’t have a *Rhino Times*, and the citizens there don’t know what government and school officials are up to, and there’s greater corruption and injustice in those places because of that void in the news.

People tell me the same thing all the time: “Thank God for *The Rhino Times*.” And I always know what they’re about to say next, but I always ask them what they mean anyway because I like hearing it. That’s when they say: “If it weren’t for *The Rhino*, we’d have no idea what was going on.”

I always say that everyone reads *The Rhino*. One time I wrote a column about how the word “gullible” wasn’t in the dictionary and I got 400 responses.

The Rhino Times sent me to Hawaii, has let me write extensively about penguins, and it let me post the commissioners pictures on Am I Hot.com and write about it. And my bosses were pleased, rather than alarmed, when I made it past federal-level security agents and crashed an illegal closed meeting held by District 13 Rep. Brad Miller. And I

could go on and on ...

Also, at *The Rhino*, ties are looked down upon, and we virtually never have meetings.

At the *Business News*, you were always expected to wear a tie and be in your cubicle, but, when I arrived at *The Rhino*, there was a pool table in the lobby and, if you got tired of writing, you could go play some pool with one of the very hot sales women.

At the *Business News*, the employee handbook actually said – among many other amazing things – that falling asleep at the office was “cause for termination.”

At *The Rhino*, there’s no employee handbook and, if you were sleepy, we had a couch for that very purpose. If you laid down for a nap, our office rule was that everyone in the office from the bosses on down had to be very, very quiet so as not to wake you.

And my bosses have always backed me up when I’ve had to explain Scott’s Night Out to the IRS, and when I’ve had to explain in the IRS audit why buying shots for a cheerleader at a rooftop bar at 1:30 a.m. is a perfectly legitimate business expense.

So anyway, *that’s* the place where I

want to work.

There’s no other publication in the country like *The Rhino Times* and you can thank John and William Hammer for it.

The first week I began work here, John took me and a few other employees to lunch at Cafe Europa, and, nine years later, I still remember what he said our mission was: “to try and make this small corner of the world a better place.”

For this strange, wonderful and very important publication, that’s been bringing you the news and fighting injustice and corruption for two decades, all the credit should go to John and William Hammer, and I say that for two reasons: (1) because it’s true and they deserve the recognition at this 20-year-milestone, and, (2) in hopes that making that statement in print will keep me from being named as a plaintiff in the many ongoing current and future lawsuits against the publication.

Happy anniversary, *Rhino Times*. God bless *The Rhino*; may the Good Lord shine His light down upon it and may *The Rhinoceros Times* keep shining its light upon the community – and may the run continue for, at the very least, another 20 years.

Bledsoe

(Continued from page 6)

the paper as a warm and reliable friend no longer knew what odd but almost certain to be boring creature might show up at their door on any given morning.

Under this latest redesign, I learned, the paper would amount to nothing more than brief news summaries and big, gaudy space-filling graphics. No article could be more than 15 column inches. None could jump from one page to another. People just didn’t have time or interest to read more than that, I was told.

I knew better. Only a few years earlier, I had written an eight-part series called *Bitter Blood*, probably the longest articles ever to appear in that newspaper. It had avid readership. News rack sales increased dramatically and the press run had to be upped every a day. When all of the articles were re-published in a tabloid, readers lined the sidewalk to get free copies.

Under the new rules, at least for the time

being, nothing like that could happen again, and serious journalism wasn’t possible. There clearly was no longer a place for me at the newspaper I had loved so deeply. I quit.

I never saw the first edition of *The Rhinoceros Times*, and I can’t remember when I became aware of the paper. Years earlier I had met the founder and editor, John Hammer, at the Rhino Club, a bar where newspaper folks hung out. We had mutual friends but I don’t recall having a conversation of any length with him at the time.

To the best of my knowledge, my name didn’t appear in the paper until three years later when Ed Cone, then a *Rhino* columnist, interviewed me about one of my crime books, *Before He Wakes*.

Four years later, I returned from a book tour to discover that the *News & Record* had created quite a commotion in my home county. One of its reporters had written an article claiming that an adult outreach course on the Civil War at Randolph Community

College was teaching that slaves were happy. That attracted international attention and condemnation. Although the reporting was being disputed, it caused the course to be shut down.

My long concern for free speech prompted me to go to the library and read all of the articles, editorials and responses that I’d missed. I found the reporting to be dubious at best. I wrote a lengthy analysis of it and sent it to every media outlet in the triad. It was ignored by all but one – *The Rhino*, which published it in full, the first time my writing appeared in the paper.

That caused the instructor of the course, Jack Perdue, an amateur historian and preservationist, to call me. He believed that the *News & Record* was using contrived information to portray him, his fellow instructors, students and college officials as racist for no greater reason than sensationalism.

This controversy, filled with

vindictiveness, grew for weeks, and during the course of it, Perdue died of a heart attack. His family believed it was brought on by the stress he had endured. His death prompted me to write a book about the situation. When it came out three years later John Hammer wrote favorably about it and allowed me to publish a series of columns in response to the *News & Record’s* reaction to the book.

That was when I began to get to know John. By that time I had been a regular reader of *The Rhino* for a good while. It was a newspaper with personality, and I had realized that if you wanted to know about politics and government in Guilford County you had to read *The Rhino*. It was the only source for knowledgeable and in-depth information and the work done by its small but gifted staff was remarkable.

I had no idea then that I later would form a much deeper relationship with *The Rhino*.

(Continued on page 24)

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(Continued from page 14)

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At one point Scott was spending a lot

We had another who got up at one of

It seems that every black cloud does
(Continued on page 24)

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Bledsoe

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The beginnings of that came in June 2005, when the *News & Record* reported that a “secret police” unit inside the Greensboro Police Department was targeting black officers because of race. More frenetic articles followed, all high on sensationalism and short on evidence.

I was as dubious of these reports as I had been of the unfounded claims about the Civil War course in my county. I did nothing about it, however, until City Manager Mitch Johnson forced Police Chief David Wray to resign in January 2006, and began making wild, false claims about a “black book,” creating even more outrageous reporting and stirring hatred. A poster that I saw on West Market Street prompted me to action. It showed Wray with a Hitler mustache and proclaimed him to be grand dragon of the KKK.

A friend told me he had spoken with Wray and I asked him to pass along word that I’d like to talk with him. At some point

I called John Hammer. If I could get Wray’s story would he be willing to publish it?

“Sure,” he said.

Neither of us had any idea what we were getting into.

The result was a series called *Cops in Black & White*. It began in August 2006, and continued until the end of January 2010. It could be the longest series on a single topic in American journalism history, although I doubt that records exist to prove it.

During the course of this series I got to know John Hammer well. I found him to be a person of character, caring and great humor. Working with him was like working with the great editors I had in my early days of newspaper and magazine writing, and some of them were among the best in the business. John has the one important attribute that was missing in the bureaucratic editors I’ve encountered: courage to seek the truth and stand by it. The people of Guilford County are blessed to have him and *The Rhino* serving them.

Hammer

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have a silver lining, because if the economy were not in such lousy shape and the daily newspaper business were not collapsing we could never afford a writer of Paul’s experience and ability.

Paul has the enviable position of writing about High Point, something that I know nothing about. They do things differently in High Point, which is something I learn about nearly every week.

Paul will go to the ends of the earth to track down that one piece of information he needs to make a story. It is amazing what he finally gets out of people.

It’s also amazing how we have hired people. Scott we hired while he was on his way home from being fired. Paul we hired because he waited on the Muse in a retail store, and **Lisa Bouchey**, our managing editor, we hired in 2005 because the Muse was going on vacation and somebody had to do her job. It’s interesting – there are always three or four people around here who can do my job, but the Muse needs someone who really knows what they are

doing to fill in for her.

I remember when Lisa applied for a job. I told Willy that she was way too qualified for the job and too experienced and talented to be working for us. Lisa is the reason that the paper actually gets printed every week. Somebody has to be the adult, and in our office it is Lisa, because the boss is probably the cause of the problem.

We do something that I think is unique at *The Rhino*, and that is the editorial team writes the headlines as a group. We sit around at the end of the day with Lisa at the computer and come up with headlines. The best ones we often can’t print, but if Lisa has a few minutes she will often come up with a trial headline better than the rest of us working together can do.

On the editorial side, Lisa can do everyone else’s job including, of course, mine. Lisa is another example of the bad economy being good for us.

No history of *The Rhino* would be complete without the story of **Anthony Council**, who has now worked with us for

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Hammer

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14 years. In 1997 we had hired a talented outgoing A&T student, **David Gaines**, as our graphic artist, meaning he created ads and did some layout of the paper. David did a pretty good job, but after a while he started bringing a friend with him to work named Anthony. We started noticing that Anthony was usually working at the computer and David spent his time sitting on the couch reading magazines. Willy and I talked about it because we weren't paying Anthony a dime, but he was doing most of our graphic design work, which was good for us because he was both better and faster than David.

Then the Muse and I went on vacation to the Azores. I was talking on the phone to Willy, back when you could still find pay phones, at a little beach bar looking out at the scenery, which was notable and at the ocean. We had hired Anthony to do the Muse's job while she was gone and Willy was telling me that Anthony was so good that the only smart thing to do was to hire Anthony and fire the Muse.

So we did and it was one of the best moves we ever made. Anthony is incredibly talented, hardworking, and also very important in the newspaper business he is so well organized that he rarely makes mistakes. He is the main reason the newspaper looks as good as it does. The reason the paper today doesn't look better is because Anthony's boss is an iconoclast who would actually like to print on a hot lead press only in black and white.

Without Anthony *The Rhino Times* wouldn't be what it is today and wouldn't look anything like it does.

Although we did fire the Muse, my wife **Elaine**, to hire Anthony, she didn't stay fired. It did give her a break from working for a family business. Working for your husband and brother-in-law is not stress free.

Elaine is currently the copy editor and the editor of Rhino Real Estate, but she has done every job you can do at a newspaper.

Elaine was our first outside sales person when we couldn't afford to pay anyone to sell ads. As with everything, she did the job well but she said the pressure of supporting *The Rhino* was too much and wanted to do something where the entire financial future

of the business was not on her shoulders. She has also worked as a graphic artist and did the final layout for years. She takes photographs, writes stories, answers the phone, files, types, makes coffee, takes out the trash and occasionally does a job at *The Rhino* that is usually the exclusive domain of the editor-in-chief – she picks up trash in the parking lot.

But Elaine's biggest contribution to *The Rhino* was in working in a job she hated but that paid enough for her husband to try and do something that is virtually impossible, which is start a newspaper with no capital.

As some point in the first couple of years, when the production team consisted of Willy, Elaine and me, we put out a paper after working seemingly non-stop for days. After we sent it off to be printed, I said, "Why am I so tired?" The Muse pointed out that the three of us had just produced the first 60-page *Rhino Times*, which is a lot of work for three people.

After Sept. 11, 2001, **Orson Scott Card** started writing two columns a week for *The Rhino*. He has since cut back to one, but it almost didn't happen at all. The Muse and I are big Orson Scott Card fans. Once, before we knew Scott Card, the Muse saw a car with the license plate ENDER and figured it must be him, so she started following the car. After a few blocks she realized that Orson Scott Card might not want to be stalked and she wondered what she would say if he stopped.

After 9/11 I received an email from Card inquiring about the possibility of writing a column or two. I sat down to write back and froze. Then I wrote my life story, which I then laboriously cut down to two sentences and I didn't like either sentence. So two hours later my work product was two sentences I didn't like.

The Muse wanted to know if I had written Orson Scott Card back and I said I was working on it. So I worked on another way to say, "Yes, we'd love to have you write for us." And once again got trapped by the idea that a writer who had won both the Hugo and Nebula awards two years in a row was going to be reading this email. The fact that Card had already read thousands of words I had written didn't matter. So I didn't respond for days until I believe we either got a phone call or an email asking if

I had gotten the first email. Here you have a world famous author offering to write for free for a local weekly newspaper and he can't get the courtesy of a response. I finally managed to cobble some words together and hit send before I could delete them and Scott, who is a very understanding man, didn't hold it against me.

Card's column, as well as being entertaining and enlightening, has resulted in *The Rhino Times* receiving the kind of national exposure that most papers only dream about. Rush Limbaugh read an entire column by Orson Scott Card on the air in October 2008. (He had quoted one in 2006.) *The Rhino Times* website went down for hours as people tried to read the column. We get hits on our website from all over the world, and the reason is because Card has fans all over the world.

It has been a wonderful addition to the newspaper, and what is amazing is that even when Card suffered a mild stroke earlier this year he didn't miss a week. Now that is dedication.

Card writes so well that even when he is reviewing something that I don't think I'm interested in, like olive oil, I find that I am interested after all, and tidbits from the column seem to crop up in my conversations. Although it is often difficult to work olive oil into a political conversation.

Because we are being sued, both **Jerry Bledsoe** and I have had to testify under oath about how a *New York Times* best-selling author came to write a 92-part series for *The Rhino Times*. But it is amazing in its simplicity. Jerry called me one day and said he was thinking about writing a series based on City Manager Mitch Johnson locking Police Chief David Wray out of his office and then forcing him to resign and would I be interested in publishing it. I said, "Sure." It seems lawyers do not like agreements like that. But to the best of our recollection that is what happened. I think I did add the caveat, being a shrewd editor, that I would like to read it first.

The opposing lawyer couldn't believe that two otherwise responsible people would launch into a long-term project with no contract, written or oral. In truth I have been a huge fan of Jerry Bledsoe as long as I can remember, which won't make Jerry

feel any younger, but I was one of those folks who used to cut his column out and carry it around or keep it in a desk drawer and laugh every time I read it.

I don't want to burden Jerry with having to take the blame for my journalistic career, but one of the reasons I became a writer is because Jerry made it seem like so much fun. Of course, as I would later learn, writing is drudgery. It is having written that is fun. Anyway, to have one of my childhood heroes call me up and ask if he could write something for the paper, there was no hesitation on my part. Although I think if Jerry I had known the series would stretch out over years and hundreds of thousands of words he might have hesitated for a minute or two. He still would have done it, but he would have complained a little first.

I had to go back and read part of the series recently and I was amazed all over again at how it is and at the sad story it tells.

In 1992 **Dusty Dunn** invited me to call in his radio show at WKEW. It wasn't long before I was driving over to the offices on Summit Avenue for our regular weekly show, and we continued that through three radio stations and 16 years, until Dusty retired on May 29, 2008. Many of our most loyal readers were introduced to the paper through the Dusty Dunn Show.

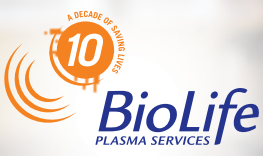
Being interviewed by Dusty was always an experience. You just never knew where he was going to go next, which is what made him so good. One of our all time favorite interviews was in 1995 when Mayor Carolyn Allen was in a very tight race for reelection with Tom Phillips. The WKEW studios were a little cramped. As Dusty liked to say, "We had them on that little love seat cheek to jowl."

In those early years when *The Rhino Times* circulation was limited, being on the Dusty Dunn Show provided us with advertising we never could have afforded.

I learned one of the big differences in radio and newspapers from Dusty at WKEW. At a newspaper you can always add more pages, in radio there is only so much time. One year they oversold the show during the election season and we sat and chatted during the entire show and I don't think I was ever on the air.

Our dad, **Dick Hammer**, retired as the


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Hammer

(Continued from page 25)

retirement benefits officer at Guilford Mills in 1997 when he was 75. Not long after that he moved into a spare office in *The Rhino Times* World Headquarters and it was a joy to have him come in every day. Dad picked up the mail, ran errands, wrote stories about his experiences as a bombardier in World War II, got hit by a truck crossing the road outside our office that he basically walked away from after a short ambulance ride, and gave good advice to anyone who was smart enough to ask.

One thing that always amused us was that because Dad had retired and had an office at *The Rhino Times*, people assumed that he had retired as the publisher of *The Rhino Times* and had turned the paper over to his sons. Sometimes people would try to get around us by going to Dad. He would listen and tell them he would see what he could do. But it wasn't like going to the chairman of the board, which is what people thought they were doing.

Dad came to work right up until the week before he went in the hospital.

At some point in 1992, when we were still printing on fancy paper, my mother, **Hannah Hammer**, asked if she could have a few copies of the newspaper to give to her friends. My mother, when she was working, was a top saleswoman, so she didn't stop with a few papers for friends. She pretty much started carrying papers with her and handing them out wherever she went.

My mother created her own delivery route near her house and is not supposed to deliver more than 500 papers a week. But if we don't watch her, she starts inching it up.

We know a couple of things that will generate telephone calls to *The Rhino*, and one of them is if my mother doesn't deliver her route. We always get three or four calls until the word gets out on the street that Hannah is visiting her daughter or she just has a little cold.

In May of 1999, the Muse and I inherited **Mina**, a half Australian shepherd, half golden retriever mix. The next year she started coming to work with me everyday, and sometimes several times a day. She was consulted on just about every major article or project we undertook. She was a great listener and would quietly let you work things out for yourself without interrupting. Sometimes she was thinking so hard she had to close her eyes and would almost appear to be asleep, but I knew she was mulling over the problem.

The Rhino Times has always been word heavy. We don't have a team of photographers like daily newspapers but depend on our journalists to take some photos. However, we have had some great help in filling the photography void. **NyghtFalcon**, who is a professional photographer with studios in Greensboro, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Savannah, Louisville, and South Beach, is way out of our league, but he agrees to take photos for us when possible. **Sandy Groover** has become the face of *The Rhino* to lots of people because she photographs so many events for us. **Andy Jay** pinch hits once in a while, and **Wade Alexander**

has been taking pictures for us, I think since before we existed. They all have done a great job in a difficult environment, since we are so focused on the written word. It's unfair, but that's the way it goes.

Although he is not an employee, *The Rhino* probably wouldn't be here except for the efforts of our attorney, **Seth Cohen** of Smith, James, Rowlett & Cohen. Seth is an unlikely attorney for a conservative newspaper because he is also an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, but on First Amendment issues we generally see eye to eye and he has worked hard to keep us from getting in more trouble than we can handle.

Seth finally found a solution to a long running battle *The Rhino* had with the Knights of Ku Klux Klan. The KKK would take the free papers out of a rack and then wrap their despicable flyer inside some pages and throw them on people's yards. Whenever that happened we would get a rash of phone calls from people and many of them would start, "I always knew what your real beliefs are. Now I have proof that you're just a bunch of racists."

We would write about the fact that we in no way authorized or condoned the use of our paper to deliver the grotesque, racist propaganda to homes, but we couldn't stop them.

We hired a private detective to see if we could find the person who was actually delivering the paper so we would have someone to sue, but that didn't work.

Seth came up with the plan to sue the Klan for unfair trade practices, arguing that they were trying to damage our reputation and business by linking *The Rhino Times* to the Klan. He said it wasn't the strongest case in the world but it was strong enough to drag them into court.

As with most legal matters, it gets complicated. But we did drag them into court and because of the work of Seth Cohen, *The Rhino Times* is the first newspaper in the country to have a permanent injunction prohibiting the Klan from using *The Rhino Times* in the distribution of material, and they had to pay us \$25,000 to boot.

Although this is a ridiculously long column, it doesn't come close to mentioning all the people who have helped out along the way. Somehow Drew Ruble, one of our first and best reporters, got left out. He did a great job and spoiled us for years because we thought all reporters should be so talented.

Also we don't mention all the advertisers, including those first 10 restaurants and bars that bought ads in a publication that was more of an idea than a reality, and all the other advertisers who paid our bills over the years. We're also grateful to all our delivery people throughout the years. And we failed to mention the loyal readers that we have that makes it all possible and worthwhile. I enjoyed writing the first history and enjoyed looking back and writing this history for our 20th anniversary, but I hope that someone else is in this chair if we do a 40th anniversary special edition.

Thanks.

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