

Best Feature Photo

Division 3

2016 Better Newspaper Contest

By Sean Heavey, Glasgow Courier



Titled: Mud Bogs and Sand Drags Make for Good, Clean Fun

This photograph depicts a moment where the driver realized he had lost some tire lug nuts on a previous run. He is quickly trying to replace the missing pieces while friends and family look on. His turn has been announced and if he doesn't remedy the issue in a short amount of time his run will be disqualified. I find the scene interesting because the driver is the only one working frantically and everyone else is just watching, offering no help, because there was a sense that he didn't need any and everything was under control. The driver completed the repairs in time and ended up winning his class and the overall grand prize.

1/200sec @ f4

24mm lens ISO 50

MNA Calendar

November

24 - 25 MNA office closed for the Thanksgiving holiday

December

- 1 Montana Newspaper Foundation 2017 Internship Grant Program application deadline
- 8 Montana Newspaper Foundation 2017 Internship Grant Program winners announced
- 9 Deadline to submit articles for the December Press Pass
- 9 Member Educational Opportunity: Online Media Campus: How to Manage Your Time and Territory. Register at <http://www.onlinemediacampus.com/webinars/>
- 15 Member Educational Opportunity: Online Media Campus: Clean Up Your Copy. Register at <http://www.onlinemediacampus.com/webinars/>
- 26 MNA office closed for the Christmas holiday

January

- 2 MNA office closed for the New Year holiday
- 3 2017 Better Newspaper Contest open for entries. Rules and category descriptions available at: <http://www.mtnewspapers.com/better-newspaper-contest-2/>
- 4 2017 Montana Legislative Session begins. Covering the Legislature: A Reporter's Guide: <http://leg.mt.gov/css/Publications/News%20Releases/covering%20legislature.asp>
- 20 Deadline to submit articles for the January Press Pass
- 20 MNA and MNAS Board of Directors' meeting in Helena

February

- 1 Begin accepting nominations for the 2017 Newspaper Hall of Fame and Master Editor/Publisher Awards
- 14 2017 Better Newspaper Contest is closed to entries at 10:00 pm
- 17 Deadline to submit articles for the February Press Pass



Happy
Thanksgiving

At this time of Thanksgiving celebration our thoughts turn gratefully to our members, clients and friends with warm appreciation.

*Your MNA team,
Jim, Stacy and Ryan*



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OUR MISSION:

To advance and sustain the news publishing industry in Montana.

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Stacy Wirtz, Business Development Director | stacy@mtnewspapers.com
Ryan Stavnes, Member Relations & Client Services | member@mtnewspapers.com
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MEMBER PROFILE

DARRYL L. FLOWERS

Owner/Publisher - Fairfield Sun Times

BORN, YEAR & PLACE:

1957, Memphis, Tennessee

FAMILY:

Only myself in Montana, sister in Connecticut, and I still have a few cousins, nieces and nephews in Tennessee.

EDUCATION:

Two years of college, focusing on systems analysis and design on mainframe computers; later earned certification as a machinist.

FIRST NEWSPAPER JOB:

Pulling corks out of newsprint rolls, at about eight years old.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND DIVERSIONS:

My diversions include the increasingly-rare ride on my Harley and, during the cold winters in Fairfield, digitizing old newspaper bound books and film negatives.

HOW DID YOUR CAREER LEAD YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE NOW?

I grew up in the pressroom of a mid-size Tennessee daily. After graduating high school, I went to work for CompuScan in Teterboro, New Jersey, in 1975, working on one of the first non-mainframe-based "front end" systems. Then I "gypsy" printed across the US, installing presses, training crews and cleaning up production disasters across the country. By the mid-2000s, I was working as a regional production manager for about a dozen papers in North Carolina. Wanting to get away from the crowded Eastern Seaboard, I left that job and searched for work at a small daily in the southwestern US.

Instead of a job offer in the desert Southwest, the owners of the Sun Times contacted me about purchasing their newspaper. I came to Montana to look the Sun Times over and fell in love with the state, the community, and the Sun Times. On January 1, 2008, I acquired the paper.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED ALONG THE WAY THAT PREPARED YOU FOR YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

Two things, actually.

When I was a paperboy in Jackson, I recall the monthly collecting rounds. I had a large route, which included some very nice homes, as well as a couple of houses with dirt floors. I will never forget that the families with dirt floors always paid me on time. Sometimes, it took a few minutes for them to find the change. And at Christmas, they always had a card or small gift for me. But, I also recall that when I knocked on the door at the "nicer" homes, I would often hear footsteps as they ran from the door to avoid paying their monthly \$1.75 subscription.

From that experience I learned that loyalty often comes from the most unexpected places.

Second, Mark Palmer, the publisher at The Columbia (TN) Daily Herald, always told me that when everyone else is being cautious, that is the time to be bold, to expand.

WHAT ASPECT OF THE JOB DO YOU FIND THE MOST REWARDING?

Finding those stories that no one else sees. A case in point: A lady calls from Ohio and asks us to research an obituary from our Augusta News archives. We took that simple request and turned it into "The Soldier Boy from Stearns," about a WWI soldier who was one of, if not the first, Montanan to die during the war. He died during a pneumonia epidemic while stationed in Massachusetts.

Of course, I also enjoy talking with our subscribers who stop by and visit when they pay their bills. We even get an occasional \$5 "tip" with our renewals!

I think just about anyone that runs a weekly understands that sometimes we wonder if we're having an impact on the community, then that one reader says "thank you," and we're good for another five or six editions.



Darryl L. Flowers - 1965



Darryl L. Flowers

WHAT ASPECT OF THE JOB DO YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

Trying to make the best use of my time. About half our revenue comes from commercial printing, so holding to a schedule that works is tough. Having abandoned any personal life years ago does help, though.

Our other challenge is the future of print in our region. We're tied to the dailies with their production facilities, but I worry that, long term, the dailies are headed toward strictly an online presence. For the past two years, our little bit of circulation growth has been driven by the fact that we are primarily a print newspaper.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ENHANCE THE BRAND OF YOUR NEWSPAPER IN YOUR AREA?

Shortly after taking over the Sun Times, I launched our website. Later, we added Facebook and Twitter, so we push the brand in the digital realm. Locally, we always try to engage the community by taking part in fundraisers, offering free subscriptions for silent auctions, for instance. The community benefits, and we often end up with a new subscriber.

WHAT IS YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY RIGHT NOW?

When we went online at fairfieldsuntimes.com, our approach was cautious, and if we had seen a decline in our print numbers, we would have abandoned digital. Instead, we saw growth in our circulation numbers as people who had moved away reconnected to the community by subscribing.

Now that our print numbers have grown and now are holding steady, we have just begun to "test the water" on adopting a new website that will give us complete design control while offering a much cleaner look. If the new website design works, it will also cut our online costs dramatically.

We consider our online version as a "value added" to our newspaper.

WHAT IS YOUR PRINT STRATEGY RIGHT NOW?

I am committed to print. I have seen the high priests of media foretell the death of the printed word over and over. In the 70s, the Newspaper Systems Design Group offered me a job working on developing an electronic news product.

I turned the offer down. I'm still here, still printing. NSDG is long gone.

A newspaper does need to have some online presence, even if it's nothing but a page on Facebook.

As for those who are in a rush to go paperless, how well did that work for the Rocky Mountain News?

Simply put, are you dictating to your readers, or are you listening to your customers?

HOW DOES THE MNA SERVE YOU AND YOUR NEWSPAPER?

Primarily, the networking. The MNA makes it easy to connect with colleagues when we have a question or want to bounce an idea around. It's also comforting to know that there is an organization representing our interests in Helena and with the Post Office. Especially for the weekly publishers, the MNA is a vital resource.

PEOPLEandPAPERS

2017 Better Newspaper Contest

Now is the time to start collecting and selecting your best work from 2016.

Our 2017 Better Newspaper Contest (BNC) will open for your entries on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. Access to the contest entry digital platform will close on Tuesday, February 14, 2017.

BNC Committee Chair Darla Downs made recommendations on new circulation divisions and contest categories. The MNA Board of Directors approved the recommendations at its September 16, 2016, meeting.

Our Contest Circulation Divisions:

| Division | Description | Distribution | |
|----------|-------------------|--------------|---------|
| | | From | To |
| 1 | Weekly | - | 1,250 |
| 2 | Weekly | 1,251 | 2,000 |
| 3 | Weekly | 2,001 | 4,500 |
| 4 | Weekly & Daily | 4,501 | or more |
| 5 | Daily (6 & 7 day) | | |

Our Contest Categories:

| Category | Category Name | |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| Editorial | Best News Story | |
| Editorial | Best Breaking News Story | (new category) |
| Editorial | Best Sports Story | |
| Editorial | Best Feature Story | |
| Editorial | Best Sports Feature Story | (new category) |
| Editorial | Best Lifestyles Coverage | |
| Editorial | Best Education Coverage | (new category) |
| Editorial | Best Continuing News Coverage | (new category) |
| Editorial | Mark Henckel Outdoor Writing Award | |
| Editorial | Best Enterprise Journalism | |
| Editorial | Best Column Writing | |
| Editorial | Best Sports Column Writing | (new category) |
| Editorial | Best Editorial | |
| Editorial | Best Headline Writing | |
| Design | Best Front Page | |
| Design | Best Page Layout and Design | |
| Design | Best Sports Page Layout and Design | (new category) |
| Photojournalism | Best News Photo | |
| Photojournalism | Best Sports Photo | |
| Photojournalism | Best Feature Photo | |
| Photojournalism | Best Lifestyles Photo | |
| Advertising | Best Combination Print and Online Ad | |
| Advertising | Best Ad to Sell or Promote Merchandise - black and white only | (new category) |
| Advertising | Best Ad to Sell or Promote Merchandise - color | |
| Advertising | Best Image Building Ad - black and white only | (new category) |
| Advertising | Best Image Building Ad - color | |
| Advertising | Best Ad to Sell or Promote Services - black and white only | (new category) |
| Advertising | Best Ad to Sell or Promote Services - color | |
| Advertising | Best Sponsor Page | (new category) |
| Advertising | Best Newspaper Promotional Ad | |
| Digital | Best Overall Website | |
| Digital | Best Video | (new category) |
| Digital | Best Use of Social Media | (new category) |
| General | Best Newspaper Special Section | |
| General | Best Niche Publication | |

A complete list of rules, category descriptions and online entry instructions can be found at:

<http://www.mtnewspapers.com/better-newspaper-contest-2/>

PEOPLE and PAPERS

Education assistance grants to strengthen media reporting on Montana jobs and economy

The Greater Montana Foundation is now offering new education assistance grants to individual Montana news media professionals and journalism students to strengthen their ability to report more effectively on issues of jobs and the economy. The \$500 per person grants are for any course related to these issues, whether on-line or in-person, at any of the state's post-secondary institutions.

A recent media survey undertaken by GMF indicated that jobs and the economy are the top concern for Montanans, said Chair Dr. Bill Whitsitt. "It is our goal to respond to this concern by providing financial assistance to working journalists and journalism students to improve their knowledge and skills."

The new grant program was announced at a GMF-sponsored seminar on Jobs, Business and the Economy held at the University of Montana. It was taught by School of Business Administration and School of Journalism faculty, as well as practitioners from media and business.

The grants are being publicized at this time so that working journalists, journalism students and others in related fields can plan to apply in advance of the Spring 2017 semester. Information and application packets are available at the Greater Montana Foundation's website, www.greatermontana.org.

Dr. Whitsitt said that GMF partners with all types of media organizations, with emphasis on commercial and non-commercial broadcasters, as well as independent producers and organizations, in a competitive grants process.

The grant awards include documentaries, political debates, topical news and public affairs programming, videos and webinars. GMF also funds training for future broadcasters and internships at radio and TV stations awarded through the state's university system.

Founded by pioneer broadcaster Ed Craney in 1958, the Greater Montana Foundation's mission is to encourage communication, with an emphasis on electronic media, on issues, trends and values of importance to present and future generations of Montanans.

2017 Montana Newspaper Foundation Internship Grant Program

What is the internship program?

The Montana Newspaper Foundation (MNF) Internship Grant Program helps train tomorrow's professionals by providing grants to member newspapers.

How much is the grant and how many are awarded?

\$1,500 will be awarded to three successful newspapers.

When can I use the internship grant?

The grant can be used (and the money will be awarded) in 2017. We encourage successful applicants to begin the intern recruitment process early.

What is the application deadline?

December 1, 2016. The application is available at: <http://www.mtnewspapers.com/2017-montana-newspaper-foundation-internship-grant-program/>

When will grants be announced by the MNF?

December 8, 2016

What is the obligation of my newspaper?

Each newspaper selected for the grant must agree to at least match the \$1,500 award by the MNF for the intern's compensation. In addition to compensation, interns may receive institutional credit, if their school allows it. Interns are to be considered an employee of the newspaper.

Interns must be students enrolled in an accredited post-secondary academic, professional or vocational program. In-state schools, especially students of the U of M School of Journalism, should be given first preference. A profile and photo of the intern is required to be provided by the newspaper. Awarding grants to relatives of a selected newspaper's owners or employees is prohibited.

What is the newspaper selection process?

Please email your completed application to Jim Rickman: jim@mtnewspapers.com on or before the application deadline of December 1, 2016.

PEOPLE and PAPERS

New Sidney Herald publisher named



Stephanie Spiess

Wick Communications has named a newspaper industry veteran as the next publisher of The Sidney Herald.

Stephanie Spiess started her duties in Sidney full-time in early October.

Working first in Portsmouth, then London, Ohio, for Civitas Media properties, Spiess served as an advertising representative from 2008 to 2010; as regional online sales manager from 2010 to 2014, and as general manager from 2014 to 2016.

“I am excited to start this new challenge with The Herald and feel that the newspaper is the heart of a community,” she said. “My goal is to build up the relationship between the local community and the newspaper, and for the Sidney Herald to continue to be the first place that Sidney turns to when they want to know what’s going on in Richland County.”

Spiess also hopes to leverage her digital expertise to expand the news organization’s online presence.

“Wick Communications is excited to have Stephanie Spiess join the Sidney Herald media operation family. Spiess will bring her print and digital experience to the newspaper and will become part of those community organizations that work to make Sidney a better place to live,” said Francis Wick, CEO of Wick Communications.

Spiess and her husband, Tony, have four sons: Devon, Eli, Ian and Lane. She enjoys sports and spending time with family.

MNA welcomes Stacy Wirtz



Stacy Wirtz

Stacy Wirtz joined the MNA in October as our Business Development Director. Her focus is on the growth of our advertising programs, membership, MT News Tracker reading service and Montana Newspaper Foundation fundraising.

Stacy brings an extensive background in sales, marketing and event planning for small and large businesses with clients across Montana. She was born in Billings and makes her home in Helena with husband Dan and daughters Isabella and Madelyn.

Stacy can be reached at (406) 443-2850 and stacy@mtnewspapers.com

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ADVICE from the EXPERTS

What if the newspaper industry made a colossal mistake? *By Jack Shafer*

What if almost the entire newspaper industry got it wrong?

What if, in the mad dash two decades ago to repurpose and extend editorial content onto the Web, editors and publishers made a colossal business blunder that wasted hundreds of millions of dollars? What if the industry should have stuck with its strengths—the print editions where the vast majority of their readers still reside and where the overwhelming majority of advertising and subscription revenue come from—instead of chasing the online chimera?

That's the contrarian conclusion I drew from a new paper written by H. Iris Chyi and Ori Tenenboim of the University of Texas and published this summer in *Journalism Practice*. Buttressed by copious mounds of data and a rigorous, sustained argument, the paper cracks open the watchworks of the newspaper industry to make a convincing case that the tech-heavy Web strategy pursued by most papers has been a bust. The key to the newspaper future might reside in its past and not in smartphones, iPads and VR. "Digital first," the authors claim, has been a losing proposition for most newspapers.

These findings matter because conventional newspapers, for all their shortcomings, remain the best source of information about the workings of our government, of industry, and of the major institutions that dominate our lives. They still publish a disproportionate amount of the accountability journalism available, a function that's not being fully replaced by online newcomers or the nonprofit entities that have popped up. If we give up the print newspaper for dead, accepting its demise without a fight, we stand to lose one of the vital bulwarks that protect and sustain our culture.

Chyi and Tenenboim studied the total in-market (i.e., local) online readership of 51 top U.S. newspapers (excluding the national newspapers—the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*) and found depressing results. Few of them have experienced any growth since 2007, the point at which the online versions had been available for about a decade, making it a mature product. In fact, more than half have lost online readers since 2011, a finding that shocked Chyi, putting mean online readership for the 51 newspapers in the study at about a third that of print.

As she explains, the circulation of the supposedly dying print product may be in decline, but it still reaches many more readers than the supposedly promising digital product in home markets, and this trend holds across all age groups. For all the expense of building, programming and hosting them, online editions haven't added much in the way of revenue, either.

For years, the standard view in the newspaper industry has been that print newspapers will eventually evolve into online editions and reconvene the mass audience newspapers enjoy there. But that's not what's happening. Readers continue to leave print

newspapers, but they're not migrating to the online editions.

From the paper: "While print readership is declining, newspaper readers did not drop print in favor of the same newspaper's online edition. The identified performance gap between newspapers' print and online products challenges the 'digital first' view about the future of newspapers."

Chyi and Tenenboim don't deny the obvious mass migration of news consumers to the Web, but they note that most readers go to news aggregators, like Yahoo News, Google News, CNN.com, MSN and other non-newspaper sites. In a 2012 Pew study, 26 percent of respondents cited Yahoo as a news source they used most often; 17 percent named Google, with 11 percent naming MSN.com. Only 5 percent of poll respondents named the *New York Times* as a top news destination; 3 percent the *Wall Street Journal*; 2 percent *USA Today*; and 2 percent the *Washington Post*.

Not only do news aggregators dominate national news consumption, they dominate local news consumption, too, as Chyi and Tenenboim reported in a 2009 study. Despite the best efforts by local newspapers: "Among the top 67 local newspapers in the United States (with circulation of 100,000 or above), only 13 were the number 1 online news destination in their local market."

The financial performance of online newspapers is "underwhelming," they declare, with total newspaper industry digital advertising revenue increasing from \$3 billion to only \$3.5 billion from 2010 to 2014. Yes, total newspaper print revenues have plunged from \$22.8 billion to \$16.4 billion over the same period, but they still represent 82 percent of total newspaper revenue. Only the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* have succeeded in attracting a mass audience willing to pay for paywalled online editions, but they are national, not local, newspapers.

Despite all the resources thrown at online editions, why are most such a miserable failure? In a 2013 book, Chyi offers her "Ramen Noodle Theory," which states that readers avoid online newspapers because, in comparison to their print versions, they're an inferior good. This theory—as you can guess, if you read my recent valentine to newsprint—makes my bunnies hop. Online editions offer a "less-than-satisfactory" reading experience, she writes, cluttered with intrusive ads and hampered by poor design. Also, online editions tend to be perceived as inferior to the paid-for print product because they're free, plus the "tangible" nature of newsprint gives it an edge in readers' minds over the pixel product. One 2012 survey found that 66 percent of users prefer the print version of their daily over the Web edition. Even a majority of young readers prefer print, the Chyi-Tenenboim study reports. All this may explain why visits to the 51 major newspaper websites don't last long—about two minutes for the *Chicago Tribune*, for example. Only two newspapers of the bunch—the *Austin American-Statesman* and the *Washington*

ADVICE from the EXPERTS

Mistake *Continued from Page 7*

Post—have ever exceeded 20 percent of local residents with their online versions. The 2015 industry average is 10 percent of local residents.

What, then, should newspapers do? In her book, Chyi counsels press barons to accept that few of them can possibly pursue a successful online strategy and adjust their distribution battle plans accordingly. Accept that the days of 25 percent-35 percent profit margins will never return, and cope with the 5 percent profit margins that are more like the profit margins of the average S&P 500 company. If publishers insist on an online edition, institute some sort of a paywall to convey that the content has value, a signal that might benefit the performance of the print product too. Should they invest more heavily in their online sites to make them attractive? My sense is that would be throwing good money after bad. Nobody is asking me, but if a newspaper company wanted to make a real splash on the Web, it would be better off inventing an original website—the next Business Insider or BuzzFeed—and not remodel its newspaper copy.

Chyi remains bullish on newspapers, rejecting the self-fulfilling prediction that they must die, especially given that surveys show that they remain so beloved. No Luddite, she appreciates the immediacy and convenience of getting news and entertainment (especially entertainment) via computer and phone platforms. But for all of its faults, the newspaper remains a superior format and much would be lost if our neglect caused its premature demise.

In an interview, Chyi offers another analogy to illustrate the current online crisis newspapers are facing.

“Newspaper had been running the equivalent of a very nice high-end steakhouse,” she says. Then McDonald’s moved to

town and started selling untold numbers of cheap hamburgers. Newspaper thought, “Let’s compete with that,” and dropped the steak for hamburger, even though it had no real expertise in producing hamburgers. “What they should have done is improve the steak product.”

I asked Chyi what she thinks of the Washington Post’s strategy, which under new owner Jeff Bezos has continued to serve steak—about 500 staff-written pieces a day—as well as hamburger—another 700 clickbaity pieces drawn from wire services or produced in-house. Last year, this strategy pushed the Post’s total unique numbers above the New York Times’ for the first time.

“In the short term, the Washington Post will have more clicks,” she says, but in the long term, clickbait will “actually hurt the brand.” Most of these new uniques stay on the site for a short time, making it difficult to monetize their visits. “Too many newspapers are focused on short-term results,” she says.

Newspapers need to accept that much of their loss of audience is beyond their control, she adds. There’s the overwhelming competition from other media—sports channels, social media, movie channels, Netflix and other streaming services, and even video games. “For things that are under their control, they should make smart decisions.” Listen to readers, she counsels, and find better ways to serve their readers. Reject the idea that the newspaper is a doomed dinosaur.

“It’s not too late,” she says. “There’s some hope if they rethink their strategies.”

For my sake, at least, I hope Chyi is right.

How to make every word count when writing about people, places & things *By Tom Huang*

If you’d like to bring your story to life in a tight space -- say, 500 words or less -- try traveling back in time to your 3rd or 4th grade classroom. Back then, your teacher most likely instructed you to write short pieces about a memorable person, place or thing.

He or she probably advised you to identify a theme -- and then narrow the scope of your story -- by selecting a character, a setting or an object that was relevant to your theme. Of course, some of these writing steps may not come in that exact order. For example, you may be drawn to a certain character as you write your first draft, only later recognizing the theme of your story because of that character.

With all of that in mind, here are some tips for describing people, places and things in short passages.

Writing about a person

Consider how Pico Iyer, author and essayist, focuses on one person in his New York Times piece about a Lawson convenience

store in Nara, Japan:

The one person who has come to embody for me all the care for detail and solicitude I love in Japan is, in fact, the lady at the cash register in Lawson. Small, short-haired and perpetually harried, Hirata-san races to the back of the store to fetch coupons for me that will give me ten cents off my “Moisture Dessert.” She bows to the local gangster who leaves his Bentley running and comes in the store with his high-heeled moll to claim some litchi-flavored strangeness.

How does Iyer paint a portrait of Mrs. Hirata in a few sentences? Some tips:

Use a few physical details and mannerisms to help the reader see the character. We understand that Mrs. Hirata is “small, short-haired and perpetually harried.” We’re not given much more, but our imaginations fill in the gaps.

Show the character in motion, when he or she is busy and interacting with others. Mrs. Hirata races to help the narrator, and

ADVICE from the EXPERTS

Count

Continued from Page 8

we recognize her thoughtfulness. Mrs. Hirata bows to the gangster, and we recognize her deferential personality, as well as her ability to deal with all sorts of people. What this means for your reporting: Budget some time to be a fly on the wall and observe the person you are writing about.

Writing about a place

Let's turn our attention to describing places. Anthony Bourdain, chef and TV personality, specializes in writing about far-flung locales, many of which are less than romantic. Notice how he describes a hotel room in Pailin, Cambodia, in his 2001 book, "A Cook's Tour":

Picture this: a single swayback bed, a broken TV set that shows only fuzzy images of Thai kick-boxing, a tile floor with tiles halfway up the wall and a drain in the middle – as if the whole room were designed to be quickly and efficiently hosed down. There's one lightbulb, a warped dresser, and a complimentary plastic comb with someone else's hair in it...

About two thirds of the way up one wall, there are what look like bloody footprints and – what do they call it, arterial spray? The wall opposite has equally sinister stains – evidence of a more opaque substance – these suggesting a downward dispersal. Having seen the bathroom, I can't blame the perpetrator for anything.

How does Bourdain use one paragraph to put us in the hotel room? Some tips:

Use details -- the more precise, the better. The writer introduces us not just to the broken TV set, but to what program is on -- Thai kick-boxing; not just to the floor, but one with tiles halfway up the wall. He shows us what look like bloody footprints, arterial spray and other stains. He takes note of the drain in the middle of the room. And then there's the detail that stands out most to me: the plastic comb with someone else's hair in it.

Use all five senses. Bourdain doesn't use all of his senses in this passage. But I'd recommend using sight, sound, smell, touch and taste (well, maybe not taste in the case of the hotel room) to evoke a strong sense of place.

Use different vantage points. Imagine that you're taking photos of the scene. You will want to take wide shots (capturing the whole scene broadly), middle-range shots (capturing major details) and close-ups (there's that plastic comb again).

Writing about a thing

Describing an object is another way to narrow the scope of your story. Let's study a passage written by travel writer and novelist Paul Theroux, who loves trains and railways. Here, he describes a train's sleeping car in his 1975 book, "The Great Railway Bazaar":

The romance associated with the sleeping car derives from its extreme privacy, combining the best features of a cupboard with forward movement. Whatever drama is being enacted in this moving bedroom is heightened by the landscape passing the window: a swell of hills, the surprise of mountains, the loud metal bridge, or the melancholy sight of people standing under yellow

lamps. And the notion of travel as a continuous vision, a grand tour's succession of memorable images across a curved earth -- with none of the distorting emptiness of air or sea -- is possible only on a train.

How does Theroux bring the train's sleeping car to life? A few tips:

Compare the object to something that readers can relate to. Theroux uses two images to help us see the sleeping car: "cupboard" and "moving bedroom." Even if you've never been in a sleeping car, you can begin to visualize what it looks like.

Show the object's relationship to its surrounding environment. Theroux presents the sleeping car as a vehicle of "extreme privacy," but he also shows the passing landscape: "a swell of hills, the surprise of mountains, the loud metal bridge, or the melancholy sight of people standing under yellow lamps..."

Connect the object to the theme of your story. Theroux develops the theme of romance in this passage, and we come to understand this romance through the sleeping car – the "moving bedroom." And notice how Theroux's choice of words resonates with romance and sensuality – "swell," "surprise," "loud," "melancholy."

All of this raises a larger point: As you narrow the scope of your story, make sure the person, place or thing that you focus on is relevant to your story's theme. As you become more economical with your words, you must strengthen your vision of the story.

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Advertising will be the focus of upcoming webinar

The educational webinars are brought to you as a member service of the Montana Newspaper Association, in conjunction with the Iowa Newspaper Foundation.

For more information about each webinar, and to register, go to <http://www.onlinemediacampus.com/webinars/>

An advanced registration of \$35 is required to avoid paying a late fee.

We encourage members to make the webinars a group educational event by gathering around a single monitor or projected image to take advantage of the one registration fee. Please allow a few minutes for discussion after the training.

Advanced registration will allow you to view the webinars at any time after the presentation date.

Friday, December 9 – Selling Strategically: How to Manage Your Time and Territory

The webinar will help you clarify what your territory goals are, as well as your own. Start the goal-setting process from the end to the beginning.

Category: Advertising, Presenter: Tim Smith

Thursday, December 15 – Clean Up Your Copy

AP style – it's the industry standard, and an ever-evolving set of rules that journalists need to understand and follow.

Category: Journalism, Presenter: Amber Krosel, Gatehouse Media