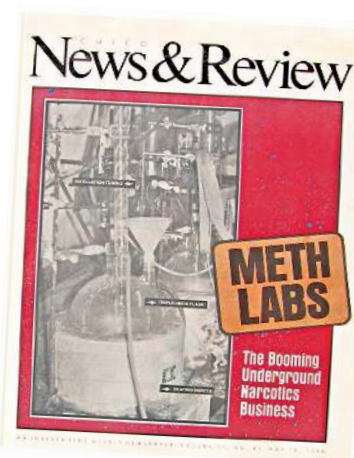


person. His assistant was Miss Marilyn, his aging French poodle. He was clearly gay.

Speer liked Henri and said that he thought the voice would last a lot longer. "Can you do one every other week?" he asked. Thus was born a 12-year series of "Chow" columns. I wrote something like 250 of them.

So I was among the many, many Chicoans hugely saddened by the news that the paper had fallen victim to COVID in 2020, though I was thrilled when Jason Cassidy and the tiny new crew rallied from their tiny new office and managed to continue with regular online editions and a monthly print edition. I kept contributing, not only financially but with long online essays and articles.

And now I'm even more saddened to learn that this is the final print edition. I'm thinking about how much the paper's meant to my writing career over the years, and about how it's shaped my Chico experience—the always-thoughtful election analysis, the gutsy investi-



May 19, 1988

gative pieces on local politics.

But I'm also thinking of all the amazing people who have helped make the paper such a bright beacon in often-dark times—some of whom I've been lucky enough to cross paths with and whose work I'm humbled to have been included with in these pages: Fowler, Speer, Cassidy, K. Patrick Conner, Juan-Carlos Selznick, Joe Kane, Larry Tripp, Anthony Peyton Porter,

Tom Gascoyne, Bryce Conrad, George Thurlow, Kim Weir, Evan Tuchinsky, Melissa Daugherty, Kevin Jeys, Ken Smith, Mark McKinnon, Tina Flynn, Mark Thalman, Tom Angel, Josh Indar, Joe Martin, Danielle Toussaint, Carey Wilson. Giants all. Thank you.

Melissa Daugherty

Special projects editor; news editor and managing editor (2007-2013); editor-in-chief (2013-2020); editor-at-large (2020-2024)

I was interviewed by the TV news when I became the CN&R's editor-in-chief. In addition to simply covering the changing of the guard—me succeeding Robert Speer—the reporter asked what it meant to be the first woman to lead the paper.

It didn't dawn on me then that I also was the first one to lead any professional newspaper in Chico.

I told the reporter I didn't see my promotion as particularly groundbreaking. After all, this was 2013.

How naive.

I realized it was a big deal for

Butte County when I got a death threat early into my tenure. It was scribbled on an editorial I'd written regarding a police shooting I viewed as unjustified, an opinion validated a few years later when the city of Chico settled a wrongful death lawsuit with a nearly million-dollar payout.

At the time, I asked Speer how many death threats he'd received in his 40 years of journalism. The answer: none. I was shocked, but shouldn't have been.

The threat was telling. The writer called me a slut and a whore, among other things not fit for print. It was the first of several such notes. That's on top of the woman-hating voicemails and emails—too many to count.

But for every vile message from an incel or male supremacist, I received hundreds of others from supportive readers, men and women.

At first, it changed me a little. Instead of shrinking, I swung harder. Too hard on occasion, I'll admit.

In truth, it took me years to find my footing as editor. But when I did, I was more excited than ever about journalism in Chico. Over the years, I assembled the best team of journalists, reporters who left other outlets to be challenged by this paper's higher standards, the type of reporting that makes a difference, bringing awareness to issues that ordinarily wouldn't reach the public consciousness, and in many cases actually affecting change.

There are too many examples to list, but the one closest to my heart is the Chico Police Department making it policy to announce when a deceased person is found in a public right of way, something a former police chief agreed to do solely at my unrelenting urging. You know, because homeless people are human beings and the public needs to discuss what it means about society, our community, when so many are dying on the streets.

Sadly, no other organization has

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