

By Timothy Linscott

Managing Editor

There is a difference between reading and being read.

When I first entered this profession I wanted to be read. I wanted to convey the news in a manner that people found entertaining and enlightening. Being a young pup to the business I basically wanted to show off.

I wanted to let people know how smart I was with my 50 cent words and long, drawn out stories, taking on all assignments with bravado.

I was given a responsibility and took it as being given a power. There was a swagger to my writing and my column, originally called, 'Off the Top of my Head,' which was no different. It was a self-indulgent weekly piece that dealt with my personal view of the world and usually included a goofy story from my youth. Looking back, I have to admit, it was full of sophomoric humor, bad shtick and stories to which only a few people on the planet could relate.

My publisher at the time, Fred Arnold, said, 'I've read 100 of these styles of columns in college papers all over the U.S. You are an adult now.'

A reader once wrote a long letter to Fred about all of the things wrong with the paper and added that my column was like 'watching paint dry.'

The next week I wrote a column about watching paint dry....the responsibility had become a power.

About a year later I took an intentional shot in my column at K-State, which, after a big win over Nebraska in football, left the Wildcats 15-77-2 lifetime against the Huskers.

'Only 63 more wins to be able to talk trash now Kitties,' or something to that effect baited a Kansas columnist in getting into a war of words with me. For several weeks we bantered back and forth in the paper about the rivalry and the newspaper I worked for sold many issues. I thought I was doing something great, selling papers, getting people involved and reading. Once again, the responsibility turned to me wielding a power.

When I moved to Wilber and began 'running the show' on a daily basis, my ideals changed. People were reading what I was writing. I did not understand the impact of what I was writing had on the public.

I thought I was just a reporter, someone doing a job. Putting words on newsprint every week paid the rent. Once I arrived in Wilber a strange thing happened. I was told I was taking my place in the community.

A woman named Sheryl Kastanek explained to me the first week I arrived, "You have the local banker, the local doctor, the mayor, the police chief and the newspaper guy. That's you, the newspaper guy."

The weight of those words settled in as I realized that in every rural community there is a place for people. I was 'the newspaper guy.'

The community looked to me to guide the paper, which was a mirror of the community. I had the responsibility to not only inform but guide the community through the newspaper.

I was being read before, people glanced at my stuff and tossed it to the side of their easy chair. People were now reading and taking to heart my editorials, columns and features. I was having an impact on the community.

Former senator from Wilber, Joe Vosoba, told me a good community had three things: a strong chamber of commerce, a good bank and a good newspaper.

In a smaller community the newspaper is a lifeline to itself. I have the chance to have a bigger impact on the community, the lives of people and future generations. I accept this responsibility and am humbled that I have been given the chance to come to Perkins County and guide that responsibility, not wield that power.