

Opinion

www.pioneerlocal.com

WE SAY

So long — it's been good knowing you

This is farewell.

Today, Pioneer Press stops publishing 12 papers, including the **Algonquin Countryside, Arlington Heights Post, Cary-Grove Countryside, Des Plaines Times, Elk Grove Times, Hoffman Estates Review, Mount Prospect Times, Palatine Countryside, Rolling Meadows Review, Schaumburg Review, Wauconda Courier** and **Wheeling Countryside**.

We have diligently covered many communities in the northwest suburbs for almost 40 years, and many of these papers have roots in the old Barrington Press.

However, the downturn in the economy, the acceleration of communication technology and the change in consumer habits have radically changed the newspaper market.

Over the years, we had an interesting ride together over the years.

We helped you try to make sense of such horrid events as the fatal train crash in Fox River Grove in 1995 and the Brown's Chicken murders in Palatine in 1993.

We brought you sports stories about hometown heroes made good, including Rolling Meadows' Aaron Williams' rise to the NBA, Jarrett Payton's climb from St. Viator soccer star to NFL running back, Fremd's Todd Hundley and Hoffman Estates' Sal Fasano's journey to the big leagues and others who have gone on to bigger and better things. But our bread and butter is

high school sports, we treat schools like the dailies treat the Bears, Bulls, Sox and Cubs. We have written about the evolution of high school girls sports and Schaumburg's stunning upset of Thornton in the 2001 Class AA basketball title game.

We told your stories too: from your children's births to their academic honors, from your wedding to the loss of a loved one.

Our local columnists diligently wrote about your achievements — both great and small. We appreciate their dedication and service through the years.

We were your watchdog, covering village and school meetings, questioning your elected officials and reporting criminal activities in your neighborhood.

Our investigative reports have been hailed by our readers and colleagues alike as among the best journalism has to offer.

We've enjoyed the ride.

Thank you to the many sources and friends who have helped us along the way — village and school officials and their secretaries, those who have pitched us ideas for stories, those who compliment and those who are critical. We've heard you. We'll miss you.

Most of all, thank you to our dear readers.

Your faith in our product week after week is better than anything money can buy.

Comment: pioneerlocal.com

1000 WORDS



Good night and good luck



CHERYL O'DONOVAN
VAN MOM STRIKES AGAIN

Oh, newspaper, do not go gently into that good night.

Everyone knows newspaper circulations have dwindled over the past 30 years, including the major dailies, the Goliaths. Even Apple visionary Steven Jobs was recently quoted as saying Americans no longer read. Content is "blips," really, texted in LOLs or OMGs.

All kinds of indicators confirm that we're not as literate as we used to be. Magazines like "Us" with captions under celebrity photographs are beginning to resemble coloring books. Online, it's a Wild West of incivility. There are millions of bloggers

"with no editorial oversight." Self-promotion, controversy and profane language thrive. Network and cable news blend sound bites with celebrity inanity and pundits arguing. There sure is a lot of opinion out there, but not a lot of insight.

Thoughtful writing and objective, comprehensive reporting seem doomed to extinction.

Humor, too, has gone from being clever to cruel, evolving from the Marx Brothers, Carol Burnett, Bob Newhart, Erma Bombeck, Dave Barry and Bill Cosby to putdowns, shock antics and crude one-liners.

Given such a cultural climate, I wasn't sure about my odds. In spring 2007, in a Starbucks, I sat across from my future editor, Jennifer Clark, to discuss writing a humor column for the **Schaumburg Review**. I was stunned, thrilled and scared. What if I ran out of jokes? Could my husband sue me for libel?

The first column ran on March 22, 2007. Soon, people were stopping me in the halls of my sons' grade school. A retired teacher and other moms greeted me with a hearty "Hello, Van Mom!" I even got a few warm hugs.

A woman walking her Chow in my neighborhood said she shared the column with coworkers. So did my dental hygienist, Diane, in Palatine. One woman who never read newspapers e-mailed me about a column — her friend who was a subscriber had given a clipping to her. Marge, my neighbor, saved extra issues for me.

All wonderful, yet fleeting. I bid you adieu, the 12 northwest suburban community newspapers that are closing this week. Thank you, Jennifer and the northwest Pioneer Press staff, for this opportunity.

Most of all, dearest reader, I thank you.

Comment: pioneerlocal.com

YOU SAY

Give adoptees access

On a frigid December day, Santa's elves delivered over 80 letters to Illinois Vital Records, asking that adult adoptee access to birth records be restored.

Adult adoptees are treated differently. In Illinois, it's \$15 for your birth certificate, unless you're adopted. The legal avenues available to us work on paper, but not in practice. We can ask for our birth certificates, only to be given an amended version. We can petition the court, but are usually told no, even in life-threatening cases. We can sign up for the Illinois Registry, which has a mere 13 percent match rate through March 2008. Or we can apply for the Confidential Intermediary Program, hope we're accepted (not all are), and pray we can afford several hundred dollars in fees. The program has no jurisdiction outside Illinois, so it may be of limited use. And none of these attempted solutions addresses the civil rights of adult adoptees.

It's not about searching for our birth families. Current laws brand all adoptees as made-for-TV stalkers even though our birth mothers overwhelmingly support access. There are existing anti-harassment laws, and adoptees are no more likely to need them than anyone else. The state should not throw badly-needed money at ineffective experiments in adoption records access when the solution is to restore equality as Maine and other states have done.

Triona Guidry
Midwest Coordinator
Green Ribbon Campaign
For Open Records
Cary