

# Hark The Herald Angels Sink

A PEEKSKILL NEWSPAPER'S OBITUARY

**Special farewell issue**

Peekskill + Cortlandt

# HERALD

**Paramount tribute to Lampmann**  
Page 4

Always  
Local, One  
Last Time

December 25, 2000

Goodbye and thank you from the Herald staff

Vol. 15, No. 34

75 cents

**End of the line**

This week's newspaper, which marks the Herald's final edition, offers a sampler of our back issues, from 1986 to 2000, via headlines (page 11) and photos (pages 12, 13, 14) culled from the archives. Also, fond farewells and personal reminiscences of Herald staffers can be found throughout.

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**▼ Find Mr. Peek**

**MURPHY WINS CONTEST**

Nancy Murphy of Peekskill is the final winner in the Herald's Mr. Peek Contest. She found Mr. Peek on page 13 in the August 1986 edition of the Herald.

Nancy wins a \$100 gift certificate to Crystal Bay Restaurant in Peekskill.

Congratulations, Nancy, and thanks to all our readers who have participated in our contests.

**'Spin Doctor':  
Where was the mayor?**

By Susan Chitwood

PEEKSKILL — Anyone awaiting a City Court appearance by Mayor John Kelly, or enlightenment on the mess that is Paraco was disappointed Monday as the trial of a protester was postponed until October and questions on procedure clouded an already murky situation.

Kelly, and other city officials had been issued subpoenas by defense attorney Jonathan Lovett, who is representing Jorge Yajure in the criminal trial.

Yajure, his wife Eileen and two other Peekskill residents were arrested following their attempt to protect the historic Main Street building from the wrecking ball on April 22. The four have pleaded not guilty to charges of trespass and disorderly conduct, violations that could earn them 15 days in jail and fines of \$250.

Lovett said Wednesday that the mayor left City Hall just before the trial and that the "witnesses had no intention of appearing" in court despite the subpoenas. Besides Kelly, subpoenas had been issued to Common Council members John Testa and Cathy Pisani, Police Chief Eugene Tumolo, Peekskill Building Inspector Brian Havranek and others.

"Somebody told them there was no need for them to be there," Lovett said, adding he would ask Kelly about his absence if the matter goes to Federal Court. The White Plains attorney plans to file a federal lawsuit in two weeks. He said he will argue that he will sue Kelly and others for punitive damages for violation of his clients' civil rights.

Kelly said Wednesday that he was confident the city would win a federal case, and promised to recoup legal expenses.

**Paraco defense attorney vows to see Kelly in Federal Court**

Lovett is representing the Yajures as well as local builder-realtors John and Suzanne Macci. The Maccis had expressed interest in purchasing the Paraco building for preservation and allege the mayor told them it would not come down on Easter weekend. The building was demolished Holy Saturday.

Referring to Lovett as "a good spin doctor" who "likes to throw a lot of bombs," the mayor said he and others who had received subpoenas were not permitted in the courtroom prior to testifying.

In addition, he said he and the others had their cell phones on and would have been notified by the city manager had they been called to appear. "We decided to continue our business," Kelly said, referring to his presence at a ribbon cutting Monday on Washington Street and a press conference by Governor Pataki at Amnville Circle.

Prosecutor Michael Borelli, an assistant district attorney, said in court Monday that the defendants — Valerie Cragg, Nick Mottern and the Yajures — should have sought appropriate legal remedy rather than cross police lines and trespass on city property. "Why not go through proper legal channels," Borelli said.

But Lovett said, on Wednesday that no other legal recourse

See Paraco, page B1

**PEEKSKILL HERALD**

Peekskill '86

## Downtown, Housing, Jobs on Year's Agenda

— See p. 3



Singing on Street Corners

Joseph Doty, Sterling Stokes, James Morabito, and Thomas Dabbs (left to right), had been entertaining Peekskill crowds for 20 years when the above photo graced the Herald's premier issue on Jan. 9, 1986.

**City Assessor Retires After Nine Years**

— See p. 2

"Can This Newspaper Be Saved?" The Peekskill Herald posed that question to residents of its hometown in April 1997. The headline, which sprawled across the cover of the weekly paper, galvanized many readers to respond with bake sales, car washes and personal donations. Despite the flurry

of help, however, undercapitalization proved to be both the epigraph and the end to the story of the Peekskill Herald. The presses stopped this past August.

"We call this the second most famous 'I have a dream' story," quipped Kathy Daley. In January 1986 she and two partners, Regina O'Leary and Richard Zahradnick, launched the newspaper with \$7,000

drawn from Mr. Zahradnick's credit cards. The amount covered the purchase of a Mac 512K computer, the bill for printing the first issue of 8,600 copies, and the libel insurance.

Although the Herald was to be a weekly, in the beginning the trio could manage to publish only twice a month. "We knew that we couldn't afford to do it

## Our Towns

Written by SAXON HENRY



Photographs by Brett C Vermilyea

Kathy Daley, left, and Regina O'Leary in Peekskill.

every week, because we didn't have any cash," explained Ms. O'Leary. "So one week we would sell ads, and the next week we'd write stories." Ms. Daley added: "This was usually on little sleep. We were riding on enthusiasm."

Of all the editions that the two produced, the Oct. 8, 1992, issue stands above the rest as the most exciting. "We couldn't figure out what to put on Page One," remarked Ms. Daley. "A young girl threw her baby out of a seventh-story window. We had a meteorite fall through a car in Peekskill, drawing international attention. We had a kayaker from Italy who had kayaked across the Atlantic Ocean and wound up in Peekskill. And Archbishop Desmond Tutu came that same week." Ms. O'Leary added: "It was also Chris-

*'The pressure on the local papers is to keep people out there and keep news coming in, and it's not cheap and it's not easy.'*

topher Columbus's 500th celebration. It was...the wild week that was!"

Six years later, however, the partners were forced to sell the paper to keep it going. The buyer was Cecil J. (Mike) North Jr., owner of Guide Communications, which publishes community telephone books for Westchester and Putnam counties. Kathy Daley stayed on as editor and Regina Clarkin O'Leary went back to raising a young child.

Mike North says he was somewhat motivated by "idealistic" notions, as he has a fascination for the newspaper business and wanted to help Ms. Daley and Ms. O'Leary, whose efforts he admired. He had hoped to give the newspaper three to five years but, citing the absence of a retail base in Peekskill and expenses that were increasing more rapidly than advertising revenues, he chose to cease production after less than two years, rather than to compromise the quality of the paper. "I feel very proud of the product that we turned out in Peekskill," he comments, "and I'm sorry that we had to close it down."

Both Kathy Daley and Regina O'Leary had worked at the Peekskill Herald's predecessor, the Peekskill Evening Star. Founded in 1920, the Evening Star was one of 13 newspapers that have been printed in Peekskill, beginning with the Westchester Gazette and Peekskill Advertiser in 1808. Gannett bought the Peekskill Evening Star and in 1985 folded it into the operations of its flagship Westchester newspaper, the Journal News. The company then brought out a nominally new publication targeted to Peekskill, the Star. The Peekskill Herald found itself competing against a second "local" publication—with national cash reserves and advertisers.

There are those who might use the demise of the Peekskill Herald as an opportunity to resuscitate Ted Turner's 1983 prediction that "newspapers as we know them today will be dead within the next 10 years." Yet there is contradictory evidence. While the readership for daily and Sunday newspapers has been declining—figures compiled by the Newspaper Association of America show that weekday readership fell from 77.6 percent in 1970 to 56.9 percent in 1999, and ► 54

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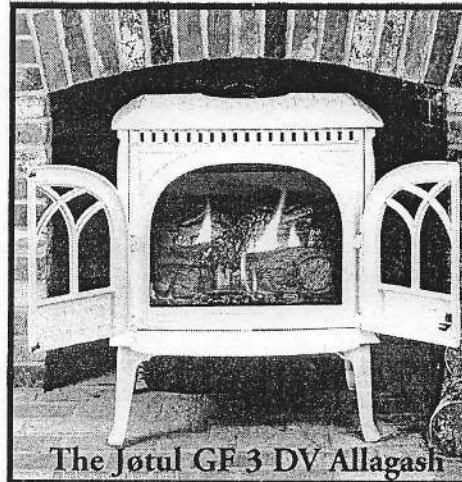
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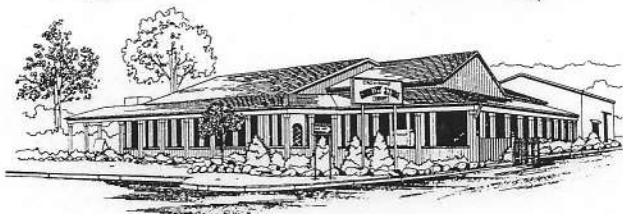
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## FAREWELL TO THE HERALD



Debbie Malone and Mike North Jr. in Brewster.

◀ 53 Sunday readership from 72.3 percent to 66.9 percent—there has been substantial growth in the circulation of weekly newspapers. In 1965, 8,061 weekly newspapers had a total weekly circulation of 25,036,031. In 1999, the total weekly circulation of the 8,138 weekly newspapers in operation was 74,457,621.

Even Mike North claims he's optimistic that weeklies can be profitable. "You can't talk to anybody who's had a worse experience in weekly newspapers than me," he said. "I think it's just a matter of making sure that you've got the right retail base in the town to support the newspaper. I think that a good weekly newspaper has a major advantage over a daily in that...a weekly [can] pull together the important news and present it in an interesting form."

During the past year, the Gannett Company's Journal News has launched three weekly newspapers in an attempt to appropriate the readership—and names—of local papers now departed: The Star, which serves Peekskill; the Item, which serves Rye, Rye Brook and



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Port Chester, and the Review Press, which serves Tuckahoe and Bronxville. Last year the Journal News bought the Patent Trader, which covers Somers, North Salem, Pound Ridge, Mt. Kisco and other towns in northern Westchester. None of these publications can really be said to be local. All are published out of Gannett's headquarters in White Plains—and all rely on staff and copy from the Journal News.

John Kimball, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of the Newspaper Association of America, says the trend of dailies adding weeklies to their markets is not unique to Westchester County. "Newspapers around the country are seeing the value of the brand equity that they can build with strong weekly newspapers," he said.

Of the weeklies published by the Journal News, Dan Rodriguez, the company's director of public relations, said: "The main reason that these weeklies have been introduced is to provide our readers with much more parochial news about what's happening in their own backyards with regards to board of education and town board meetings and high school sporting events. No story is too small for the weekly publications. Basically, we call it the little celebrations of life."

The county's few remaining independent weeklies find themselves competing for readership and advertising revenues. Rick Pezzullo, editor of the North County News in Yorktown Heights, remarks, "I wasn't really threatened when I heard that Gannett was coming out with a paper once I heard that their slant, so to speak, was to only do 'feel good' news. I think people want the whole gamut—whether it's bad news, good news, in-between news. They don't want a newspaper to censor the news."

May Tierny, editor of the Gazette, which serves Ossining, Briarcliff Manor and Scarborough, thinks the added competition is good for everyone, because it discourages laziness. "I think here, people really ▶ 56

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Currently handling the day-to-day business operations are fourth generation family members Robert Wolf and Jonathan Lilian. Any day of the week, customers can actually see the owners working on the showroom floor, maintaining and upgrading the quality levels of a.i. myers. These men also pride themselves on their involvement within the community - sponsorship of the Jesse Collier Baseball League, annual donations to the Food Patch Organization as well as local school systems. Recently, Robert Wolf and Jonathan Lilian were honored with an Award Certificate of Merit from the President of The Hundred Year Association of New York, Mr. Richard Cook.

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◀ 55 think of us as their paper. Our focus is very local," she said, adding, "To me a local resident's death is news. It's not a paid advertisement." Ms. Tierny, who describes herself as "just another English major on the loose," shares her "addiction" to the paper with the publisher, her husband, Gary Cahill. Their commitment to the newspaper business is intertwined with their commitment to each other, as the two met and married in the newsroom at the Peekskill Evening Star.

"The pressure on the local papers is to keep people out there and keep news coming in, and it's not cheap and it's not easy," said Ms. Tierny. "The paper fares the way local businesses fare. That's a reality. We don't have the kind of base Gannett has to rely on."

While Ms. Tierny and Mr. Cahill maintain compressed operations and stay locally focused to build staying power, Rick Pezzullo, editor of the North County News in Yorktown Heights, cites another reason for that weekly newspaper's longevity: "The fact that the owner has been willing to support the paper for 34 years is obviously an advantage that we have over some other smaller papers who live on the revenue they produce every week."

May Tierny remarked that they are "in it for the love of the game, for the good of the community, for the adrenaline rush and for the anxiety high." Regina O'Leary claimed it was the overwhelmingly satisfying feeling of being able to hold in her hand the product of her labor that bonded her to the business. But, she explained, it is also about service. "A community news-

paper's job is to give voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless," she said, "and a small community, like Peekskill, desperately needs a locally-based newspaper."

"There has always been a newspaper office in Peekskill," said Kathy Daley, "and the fact that there isn't one now is very sad for me."

"I walk around town these days feeling choked," she continued, "and I have to tell myself to detox because

*'There has always been a newspaper office in Peekskill, and the fact that there isn't one now is very sad....'*

I can't immediately go into starting another paper. People are saying, 'You've got to do something, because we need this thing in town,' and I say, 'You do it, then call me in a year, and I'll come and work for you.'"

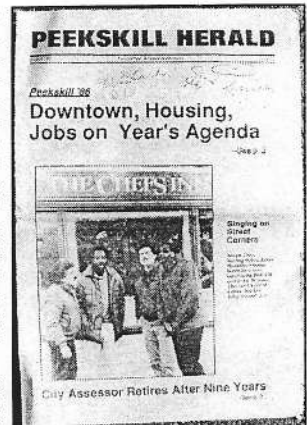
Like the "Can This Paper Be Saved?" campaign, which was originated by Ms. Daley and Ms. O'Leary in Peekskill, Frank Wood launched a campaign to increase the chances of his small Wisconsin daily's survival called "It's Now or Never!" in 1989. His attempts to keep the Green Bay News-Chronicle alive are recounted in Richard McCord's book "The Chain Gang: One Newspaper Versus the Gannett Empire." According to Tom Brooker, current general manager and editor of the Green Bay News-Chronicle, the paper

is still surviving, despite increased competition from Gannett's formidable Press-Gazette. Now a newspaper publisher for more than two decades, Frank Wood explains his dedication in one sentence: "I consider this paper a stewardship."

"It has to be for more than just the money," agreed North County's Rick Pezzullo. "It has to be a labor of love. That's what has always pushed me each week."

May Tierny also concurs that her business inspires a greater-than-average level of commitment. She says that the Gazette is lucky to have offices that are located across from the cemetery, because, "When Gary finally works himself to death, we'll just drag him across the street."

*Saxon Henry lives in Peekskill.*



The cover of the first issue.

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5. May wisdom make-up and never be cut from our list of virtues.
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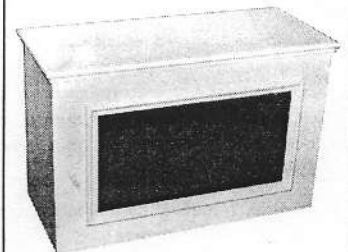
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