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Guest commentary: Federal Glover: Pittsburg News is a welcome change of pace harking back to earlier times

By Federal Glover
For the Contra Costa Times
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In our hyper-overloaded-with-information world, there is so much information for us to digest that it is difficult to separate facts from fiction, truth from lies.

It is the price we pay for the high-tech, user-driven technology that gives each of us the ability to broadcast ourselves to the faceless netherworld of the Web.

It's too much!

That's why the advent of the Pittsburg News by the Bay Area News Group, owner of the Contra Costa Times, is a welcome change of pace that allows us to focus on our little corner of the world in Pittsburg.

It is a throwback to simpler times when the Big Little Game between Antioch and Pittsburg made the front page; when a fundraiser by the historical society was more pressing than the contributions of corporations to political campaigns; when straight-A students were listed in the newspaper; when what happened down the street was more important than what happened in world capitals.

The economics of today won't bring us back to the days of the Pittsburg Post or the Pittsburg Post-Dispatch, local newspapers that newcomers probably never heard of. There won't be a complete staff of feature writers, editorial writers and reporters covering the events of town. That's too expensive for the big, corporate news operations of today.

The days of the iconic green boxes where the Oakland Tribune used to drop off their stacks of newspapers for their delivery boys to bundle and drop off at the

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doorsteps of subscribers are long gone. Newspaper delivery boys, sadly, are no longer used. That was the first paying job for many kids seeking to earn some extra money to see the Saturday matinee at the Vogue, or to purchase that brand new fat-tired Schwinn. Now newspapers are delivered very early in the morning -- not a good fit for children.

The newspaper, some say, is a thing of the past, a dinosaur whose day has come and gone. But there is something to be said about a local newspaper that still hasn't been duplicated by the electronic world of iPads and smart phones.

It wasn't a relationship driven to the extremes of love-hate. It was more like a cozy, personal tet-a-tet between the printed words and the reader. It provided a dialogue between readers and the editors of the newspaper. It was the common language among neighbors that created a bond through which we could communicate with each other.

It was the social glue that held our community together because you could safely assume that everybody read it. Many conversations among residents began with, "Hey, did you read about ..." or, "I saw your name in the newspaper ..." People actually talking to each other, face-to-face: What a novel concept.

No emailing with "emoticons" to replace the shrug or the smirk on friends' faces. No blogging by Joe Anybody and who thinks his wit takes precedence over truth. No texting - the bane of English teachers everywhere -- to the person sitting next to you.

Don't get me wrong. There are advantages to the digital advances we've made and I'm told that much of the material in the Pittsburg News will be transferred online. But there's something to be said about reading a newspaper that imprints an image or a story in one's brain, to be stored there until the opportunity arises to draw it forth.

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One of the things local newspapers did was to create an interaction between its readers and its staff. That will be the challenge to the editors and writers of the Pittsburg News. How responsive will they be to the community they cover? Will they see people instead of subscribers? Will they work to help struggling mom-and-pops or continue to seek out the big money in corporate advertisers? Will they contribute to the conversation of the issues facing the city and take a stand instead of resorting to the easy "he said, she said?" Will they dig deep or skim the surface? Will they be constructive in their observations instead of taking potshots at those who willing to stand up?

Challenges also face the readers, Pittsburg residents and city government, as well. A conversation is a back-and forth and it involves a speaking and -- just as important -- listening. Don't be afraid to express your opinions. Use the newspaper to promote your event or fundraiser, remind the editors what you think is important. Write letters to the editor, but be respectful. We don't need more shouting. Don't just allow the news to be spoon-fed to you.

The relationship between reader and writer won't be easy. It will require effort from all of us.

We harbor no illusions that the Pittsburg News will be as responsive as the old Pittsburg Post-Dispatch. (Remember when an issue was written about in the Dispatch, you could just pick up the phone and call the reporter or editor directly at their home because they lived in town?) The newspaper can be a mirror, a tool and a conscience.

Maybe we can't go home again, but perhaps the Pittsburg News can help us get to know our neighbors again, allow us to make us informed decisions about local issues and take part in the public dialogue that allows us to take the step beyond being mere residents and become better citizens.

I wish the Pittsburg News success in its experiment to provide a local news outlet. The Bay Area News Group has taken a risk by taking a step toward us. Like a spurned suitor that's been burned several times, the next move is ours.

Federal Glover is the county supervisor for District 5. Reach him at district5@bos.cccounty.us.

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Sumit Bedi · Top Commenter · Works at Investors Clinic
 we all appreciate Big Boss Decision for PM.....as well as PB.....now Celebrate with your Daughter....her B'day.....amazing to watch today the Sky too.....! LUV U.....BIG BOSS....
 Reply · 2 · Like · Follow Post · November 26, 2011 at 10:06am

Amrita Chatterjee · Top Commenter · Jamshedpur Women's College
 No Sumit u r wrong she didnt get the votes thats y she is out... there is nothing to do with her daughter's b'day n In PB case its nt BiggBoss decision its public decesion...
 Reply · 5 · Like · November 27, 2011 at 11:09pm

Ishrat Tazeen · Top Commenter · Bangalore, India
 Amrita Chatterjee absolutely right... usko votes nai diye hamne.. simple baat hai.. she s so full of herself she wants to believe that we liked her.. wat a joke..
 Reply · 2 · Like · December 3, 2011 at 7:51pm

Rahim Khaja · Top Commenter
 Bigg Boss is outstanding.....superb voice.
 Reply · 3 · Like · Follow Post · October 28, 2011 at 3:48pm

Aamer Hamid · Top Commenter
 this AKASH n SID is worst then LAXMI....they are the real HIJRAS....don't know how to behave with girls....auraton ko kamzor dikhana chahta hain....freaking ASS HOLES.
 Reply · 2 · Like · Follow Post · November 7, 2011 at 11:19am

Ishrat Tazeen · Top Commenter · Bangalore, India
 akash and sid are ass holes but laxmi was a beautiful person.. she really changed my perspective of hijras.. dont say hijra as if you are saying a gali.. hijras are so disrespected they r not given jobs.. enough discrimination against them... respect them please.
 Reply · Like · December 3, 2011 at 7:53pm

Rahim Khaja · Top Commenter
 bade malik mausam paanch.....hahahah BIGG boss Season 5.
 Reply · 2 · Like · Follow Post · October 28, 2011 at 3:50pm

Tajinder Khan · Top Commenter · Owner of Own business

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 Edi Birsan recommends this.

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 Kris Hunt recommends this.

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 Maureen Gibe, Nicole Adler Impagliazzo and 6 others recommend this.

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