



Unsupervised Youth in Anchorage

Description

Anchorage Daily News on the Brink

Originally posted on September 14, 2017 in Echo Alaska, titled: Extra! Extra! Read All About It: Donn Liston Remembers the ADN

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This story of reflection and hope was written in September of 2017. We all now know the **Anchorage Daily News** has not gotten any better and is simply a cheerleader for status-quo decline of Alaska institutions incapable of quality outcomes.

Once Anchorage was a two-newspaper town; we had three television stations delivering supplemental news in black and white, with color highlights during the early 1960s.

As a kid carrying the lightweight *Anchorage Daily News* along the length of 5th Avenue from *Alaska Sales & Service* to Airport Heights Road, I had it easier than the *Anchorage Times* carriers with all that paper's advertising bulk.

Today the re-purposed *Alaska Dispatch News* looks to be heading toward liquidation under Chapter 7 bankruptcy—instead of reorganization under Chapter 11—as the latest publisher had hoped. If so, this is a tragedy nobody could have predicted might happen after it had come so close to this in the 1970s.

As of Monday, September 11, 2017 however the *Daily News* has been purchased by the **Binkley Family of Fairbanks**. Upon being asked if that move was rational, the Binkley representative said: *I'm representing three irrational Fairbanksans who thinking they're doing the right thing*. He confessed that the Binkleys might be doing the same as **Alice Rogoff** once did, but he was confident they could do it better and make it work.

Ryan (Binkley) had a simpler explanation: *We're riverboat gamblers, he said.*

[Binkleys buy ADN](#)

Norman Brown had started the *Daily News* in 1949 as a knee-jerk reaction to the powerful interests of **Robert Atwood**, one of the leading promoters of Alaska statehood. The *Times* was the newspaper of record and a predominant voice of Alaska commerce and politics.

Daily Newspapers for my delivery arrived each afternoon in bundles tied with string. I loaded them into front and back carrier bags over my shoulders, so I could pump my heavy bike with balloon tires from the Martin Arms Apartment complex—where I lived at 3rd Ave. and Unga St.—all around the route. No matter the weather, year-round after school or during summer break, that was my job. The people who hung around flight operation businesses along *Merrill Field* sometimes made fun of my puny papers, but no carriers of the *Times* independently purchased 10 extra subscriptions of their paper and sold them individually at bush carrier waiting areas, to gain pockets full of silver dimes.

I was pushy and people bought MY papers.

The *Daily News* has its roots as an underdog newspaper, and while I was politically oblivious as a youth to why the *Times* was a bigger paper, the money was good for a 13-year-old with little parental supervision.

Larry and Kay Fanning purchased the *Daily News* from the retiring Browns in 1967. He was formerly managing editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and later, editor at the *Chicago Daily News*, where he worked for Kay's ex-husband, **Marshall Field IV**. Marshall had died shortly after divorcing Kay and she brought her three kids north from Chicago on their *Alaska Adventure*, where she had landed a job writing for the *Daily News*. With her inherited money and shared ambition to further this "alternative voice," the enterprise began building in journalistic stature.

Tragedy struck again for Kay in 1971 with the death of Larry from a heart attack at his editor's desk at age 57. She was a widow for the second time and endeavored to make her financially strapped paper Alaska's version of Katharine Graham's *Washington Post*.

I remember as a reporter for the *Daily News* in the mid-1970s headlines from the Watergate Scandal ((https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watergate_scandal)) coming across the teletype machines with shrill stories from the *Washington Post*. Richard Nixon may have won the presidency in a landslide in 1972, ((1972 Presidential Election https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1972_United_States_presidential_election)) but all it took was a bunch of bumbling burglars at the Watergate complex of the National Democratic Party headquarters to bring Tricky Dick down.

((<https://craigmedred.news/2017/09/01/lost-in-weeds/>))

U.S. Pres. Richard M. Nixon (left) and Charles Wendell Colson—a close political aide (1969–73) of Nixon’s and the reputed mastermind behind the campaign of “dirty tricks” which led to Watergate—in the Oval Office.

We all knew Alaska was destined for great wealth after the discovery of oil at **Prudhoe Bay**—and the Billion Dollar Lease Sale of 1969—but many institutions such as *Alaska Methodist University* and the *Daily News* were on the brink of bankruptcy. The Fannings had recruited a cadre of young reporters for their Journalism crusade and the *Methodist Church* was looking for ways to make its valuable Alaska university investment appealing to parents with means who were not necessarily Methodist. This was the breach I bolted into as a young man—ultimately getting a bachelor degree from AMU and simultaneously working as a full reporter at the *Daily News* upon graduation from what is now *Alaska Pacific University*.

Those were interesting times for Alaska following the settlement of the *Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971* and construction of the *Trans-Alaska Pipeline*. Although the *Daily News* was able to publish hyperbolic dramatizations of changes occurring in Alaska with natural resource development, a series about the *Teamsters Union* finally brought a coveted *Pulitzer Prize* to the paper in 1979. By then I had left to start my own publishing and public relations business, but the war with the *Times* had caused the two factions to form a joint printing agreement to try and keep Anchorage as a two-newspaper town. In the face of continuing dire financial straits, Fanning sold the *Daily News* to the California-based *McClatchy Newspapers* to ultimately win the newspaper war—and turn Anchorage into a one-newspaper town. She remained as publisher of the *Daily News*. Circulation reached 50,000 in 1982. In 1983 Fanning moved to Boston to work at the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Kay Fanning's Alaska Adventure was finally completed.

Many of us who have had time in harness at the *Daily News* have watched over recent years as this once aspiring enterprise, dedicated to training promising journalists to record the epic events of the 49th State, has become the plaything of a billionaire's estranged wife. Alice Rogoff purchased the *Daily News* from McClatchly for some \$30 Million and sold it in bankruptcy to see it continue down the same road of decline serving special interests..

According to recent documentation by another former ADN Reporter, *Craig Medred*: "Overall, the *Dispatch News*' accounting of assets and liabilities filed this week paints a picture of a company deep under water.

It has debts totaling almost \$21.5 million and assets of only about \$11.9 million – some of which appear inflated. The company claims to own about \$2.5 million worth of office furniture, fixtures, computer equipment, communications equipment, and software, plus \$4.5 million in "construction in progress."

Additionally: "The *Dispatch News* is on track to lose a record \$8 million this year, and remains deeply in debt to *Northrim Bank*. Northrim helped Rogoff swing the \$34 million deal to buy the News. She paid McClatchy about half of what the *Boston Globe*, a newspaper seven times bigger than the *Daily News*, sold for a year earlier," according to Medred.

[Lost in weeds](#)

Large newspapers everywhere are failing as financial requirements to print and distribute information for eager readers become unmanageable at such scale. Small regional papers are sprouting up all over with positive community promotion and sharing of ideas easily accessed in digital formats. I have endeavored to launch this blog to fill the gap left by high-handed journalistic platforms like the *Anchorage Daily News*. I am hanging my hat on quality content in hopes that the technical raz-a-ma-taz will follow.

How the Raz-a-ma-taz has developed here since then:

[My Cyber-Crisis Solution: Peterson & Associates Inc.](#)

In watching collapse of the *Daily News*, I marvel at the arrogance on full display with each legal discovery.

Alaskans deserve better.

Category

1. Los Anchorage
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Author

donn