

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Listening to feedback on new Rocky

February 3, 2007

*By John Temple*

*Rocky Mountain News*

We’re well into our redesign of the Rocky Mountain News and the series “The Crossing” has gotten its legs, too. So I thought you might be interested in hearing a bit of this and that related to both projects.   
  
First, today you’ll notice that a few things have moved in the Saturday paper. This is the first Saturday all copies of the Rocky will be printed on our new presses. This gives us more flexibility in organizing the newspaper.   
  
We’re trying to make the paper feel as much like the daily paper as possible. So the Editorial and Opinion section is now at the back of the News section (actually two consecutive sections), with Rocky Talk inside the back page, just the way it is on weekdays.   
  
Rocky Mountain Adventure content will move to Tuesday and will run there throughout the year. We think it’s more likely you’ll plan your outdoor activity earlier in the week.   
  
As for “The Crossing,” I’m gratified to tell you that our series on the 1961 school bus- train accident is the No. 1 story on our Web site. By far. And people are spending a long time looking at it, far longer than on typical visits to RockyMountainNews.com, which means they’re watching the videos and checking out the other special online features.   
  
A few have criticized us for doing the story to “sell papers.” Let me tell you, if all we wanted to do was sell papers there are far easier ways than going back 45 years to write about the deaths of 20 children. Others questioned whether “young” people would be interested, as if young people don’t appreciate good storytelling. We’ve heard of half a dozen teachers who are using the series in their classrooms every day.   
  
One Evergreen reader wrote reporter Kevin Vaughan to ask, “Why would you dredge up such a gory subject? Have you thought about how the families of the victims might feel when seeing this in the paper?”   
  
Vaughan wrote back: “I am sorry that you feel the way you do about the series. I wanted to tell you that it would not have been possible without the tremendous courage, cooperation and support of the families who lived through this tragedy. If they did not want this story told, it would not have been told. I have been speaking with those families as the series has been running. Parents who lost children that awful day have thanked me for remembering their children.”   
  
He included a few excerpts from their letters, including this one from a woman who lost her brother in the accident.   
  
“Thank you for writing the story. It will be healing for all of us who have been left behind. For better or worse, the event of Dec. 14, 1961, formed who I am today.”   
  
As for the Rocky redesign, the complaints we hear most often are that the print is harder to read and the new weather page is too cramped. However we’re also getting hundreds of calls and e-mails praising the new direction of the paper, which is not something I’m used to.   
  
We’ve already made minor adjustments. For example, we moved the crossword puzzle to the outside of the page on weekdays at the request of readers.   
  
Another came because I was sorry to read Mary Winter’s column in Home Front last Saturday about how dissatisfied she was with her new “mug shot.” I agreed it didn’t do her justice. Her boss, City Editor Tonia Twichell, said she thought it was Denver Post gossip columnist Bill Husted when she first saw the picture.   
  
Our staff photographer Ellen Jaskol did an incredible job creating a family of pictures of the staff of the Rocky, no easy task I can tell you. Ellen is a true professional. Any assignment you give her comes out roses. I asked Mary and Ellen to go back through the pictures and pick a different one. You’ll find it today in Home Front. I hope Mary will be happier. This one does capture her “inner Uma.”   
  
I also hope you’re enjoying our new approach. Please do let me know.   
  
*Edition: Final  
Section: News  
Page: 2NEWS*

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