

Straight news lead

From the Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) An explosion rocked an offshore oil drilling platform, sending a column of fire into the sky and touching off a frantic search at sea Wednesday for 11 missing workers.

Feature leads

From The Washington Post

That February morning in 2008 found Barack Obama decidedly out of sorts.

He was locked in one battle with Hillary Rodham Clinton for the Democratic nomination that showed no signs of ending — and another with a vicious cold that felt the same way.

As he rode the service elevator in the backway of a convention hotel here, the snowy-haired African American operating it turned suddenly. He held out a black-and-gold bit of fabric embroidered with a screaming eagle.

“Senator Obama, I have something I want to give you,” the man said. “I’ve carried this military patch with me every day for 40 years, and I want you to carry it, and it will keep you safe in your journey.” Obama tried to refuse, but the older man persisted.

Big endeavors can find their meaning in small moments.

Summary lead — news

From The Washington Post

District health workers and 150 volunteers will sweep through many of the city’s homeless shelters tonight to test residents for tuberculosis in a novel, high-stakes strategy to control the resurgent disease in one of its main breeding grounds.

Summary lead — press release

From BP

BP Onshore Preparations for Gulf Coast Oil Spill (4/30/2010)

BP today continued to ramp up its response to the oil spill in the US Gulf of Mexico. Over 2,500 personnel are now involved in the response effort and well-advanced preparations are being made for a major

protection and cleaning effort on the shorelines of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. A fourth onshore command centre, in Mobile, Alabama, opened yesterday.

Blind lead — ad

From Carter’s

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Gza-yfENn_4)



I was born on a cold September Sunday. When you brought me home it was a whole new world. That first night was a doozy, but you got the hang of it, and so did I. And together, we grew and grew and grew. Some days were fussy, but others were all smiles. And even now, many moons later, when you hold my hand, I hold it right back. Because the day I became yours, you became mine. From the first night home, to the first day of school, and every first in between, count on Carter’s.

Wrap lead — news

From the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

A tornado raked southwestern Waukesha County on Monday night, flattening six houses in Eagle, damaging others and causing at least minor injuries.

Wrap lead — public relations

From the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, Wis. — The Cranberry Marketing Committee, in conjunction with the USDA, today announced Wisconsin is projected to yield 4.9 million barrels of cranberries during the 2013 fall harvest — an increase of 5 percent

over the 2012 crop. Based on the projections and with cooperation from Mother Nature during the next four to six weeks, Wisconsin will be the country's top cranberry-producing state for the 19th consecutive year.

Anecdotal lead — news

From the Wall Street Journal

ARVADA, Colo.—It's not easy being Santa. Especially during the off-season.

While the winter gig requires Kringles to plop crying tots on their laps for as many as 50 straight days, the most dedicated Nicks hone their craft year-round. Pressure to be the best jolly old elf has spawned an array of Santa summer conferences—from Denver to Denmark—as well as schools offering instruction and inspiration.

"There are so many wannabe Santas out there," says James Heichelbech, a retired health-care executive who has portrayed Santa for 57 years. "A professional Santa is altogether different."

Serious Santas maintain a full, woolly beard, stay in chimney-hopping shape and are generally mindful of their alter-ego at all times. They must learn to be comfortable cruising the local beauty-supply store. And above all, they need to adhere to Santa-esque etiquette. That means being nice, not naughty, lest unflattering images of them appear online.

Anecdotal lead — press release

From UW-Madison

Bridget Zinn always wanted to be a published novelist. Her dream is finally coming true — nearly two years after the UW-Madison alum died of colon cancer.

"This is something really good coming out of something really bad," says her husband and fellow UW grad Barrett Dowell.

It was a long journey to publication for Zinn, who earned both her undergraduate degree in theatre and drama and a master's degree in library and information studies at UW-Madison. But she didn't give up.

"She even celebrated rejection," Barrett says. "That meant someone read her work."

"Poison," a young adult novel, was recently released by Disney Hyperion, almost four years to the day after her diagnosis.

Character lead — news

From On Wisconsin magazine

When Luke Matthews looked out on the students in his anthropology class, JD Stier stood out. He radiated intelligence and asked interesting questions. He was also obviously high.

"And then one day, he just disappeared," says Matthews '95.

It was 1998, and Stier '04 was taking classes at Madison Area Technical College as he awaited sentencing for possessing and dealing marijuana. Stier was, he explains, "thinking foolishly that if I was back in school, doing all the right stuff, that somehow they wouldn't send me to prison."

It didn't work.

Soon after Stier's disappearance, Matthews's wife came home and asked, "Do you know a guy named JD?" As a psychiatrist who conducted intake interviews with state prison inmates, she had talked with Stier that day. Armed with an address and prisoner number, Matthews wrote Stier a letter. It was the start of correspondence that continued throughout Stier's two years behind bars and nurtured the longest of long-shot dreams: getting a UW-Madison degree.

Scene-setter lead — news

From the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Horse sleighs are likely to be grounded this weekend at a rally in Ashland, and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve's Winter Festival will probably ax sled dog races and cross-country skiing.

Even the Jack Frost Fest in Spooner on Saturday will probably strike snow shoeing from its activity list. Snowmobiles will stay parked in sheds throughout most of the state and it's hit or miss for cross-country skiers anxious to head out into the woods.

Remember the big storm that dumped a foot or more of snow throughout much of southern Wisconsin a few days before Christmas? You should have taken a picture.

A warm front pushing into Wisconsin on Thursday is expected to send the mercury soaring into the 40s and 50s in southern Wisconsin through the weekend. Add rain - which might be heavy at times Thursday night - and much of the state's snow cover could vanish.

From the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Hot shell casings cartwheeled around Pvt. Steven Drees as he stood in the gunner's turret firing hundreds of rounds from his M240 machine gun.

It was a sunny June afternoon in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley, and Drees had just grabbed his fifth box of ammunition from the platoon medic when he was hit.

With bullets raining down like hail on the armored vehicle filled with American soldiers, a single bullet clipped the edge of the turret before smashing into Drees' right cheek, taking out his right eye and pushing through his brain.

Medic Luke Spangler caught the Wisconsin teenager as he fell into the vehicle, quickly checked his injuries and worked feverishly to stop the bleeding. He cradled Drees as the vehicle raced to an aid station.

It was the first stop of a final journey that would end four days later in Germany.

As his mother, father and twin brother traveled from Peshtigo to say goodbye, somewhere in Europe - most likely elsewhere in Germany - a 62-year-old man was about to receive a life-changing organ donation.

The man would never know Drees' name, and Drees' family would never know his identity. But the two men will forever be linked by a sniper's bullet and the selfless act of a soldier killed less than a month after leaving for Afghanistan on his 19th birthday.

Significant detail lead — news

From Rolling Stone
Day 68. That's all the sign says on the wall of the Starfish Restaurant in Grand Isle, Louisiana. Everyone knows what it means: 68 days since the blowout, 68 days of oil gushing out at the rate of 30,000, 40,000, 60,000 barrels a day. Who knows for sure? Nobody trusts BP's numbers. When it comes to the spill, Grand Isle is ground zero. Everyone here has seen the live pictures of the gushing wellhead, the hellish brown geyser a mile deep out in the Gulf. They have smelled the oil, touched it, walked in it, and they know more is out there, coming in with a shift of the wind and tides, killing the shrimp, coating the birds, scaring away tourists. The days tick by, the oil keeps coming. *Day 68.* On the Louisiana coast, the Deepwater Horizon blowout was the environmental equivalent of September 11th, an event so significant that it rearranges time itself.

Significant detail lead — ad

From Allstate
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtP-S9OS0o0>



I'm a teenage girl. My BFF Becky texted and said she she's kissed Johnny. Well, that's a problem, because I like Johnny. Now I'm emotionally compromised and — whoopsies — CRASH! - I'm all OMG, Becky's not even hot. And if you've got cut-rate insurance, you could paying for this yourself. Get all state and you get better protected from mayhem like me. Dollar for dollar, nobody protects you from mayhem like Allstate.

Word play lead — news

From Edna Buchanan, Miami Herald

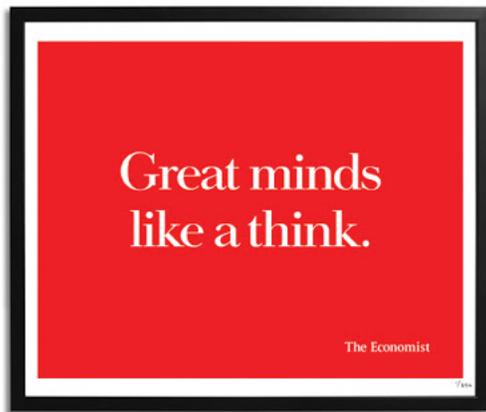
Gary Robinson died hungry.

He had a taste for Church's fried chicken. He wanted the three-piece box for \$2.19, plus tax.

Instead he got three bullets.

Word play lead — ad

From The Economist



From Expedia UK



Emblem lead — news

From the Wall Street Journal

Before Nancy Corson Schwartz put her 10-year-old son, Harry, on a bus bound for sleep-away camp in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, she gave him a warning: "If you don't give me the thumbs-up, I'm never going to sleep."

At 3 a.m. ever since, Ms. Corson Schwartz has rolled over in her bed in Franklin Lakes, N.J., logged into the camp's photo gallery on her laptop and started scrolling through the day's feed of 800 pictures. Her reward? Photos of Harry hanging with his bunkmates, playing roller hockey and bouncing on a floating trampoline—all with his thumb in the air.

"That thumb has to be so tired, it's up there in every picture," said Ms. Corson Schwartz. "I told him, 'You want a phone? You want a TV in your room? It is priceless what you've done for me this summer.'"

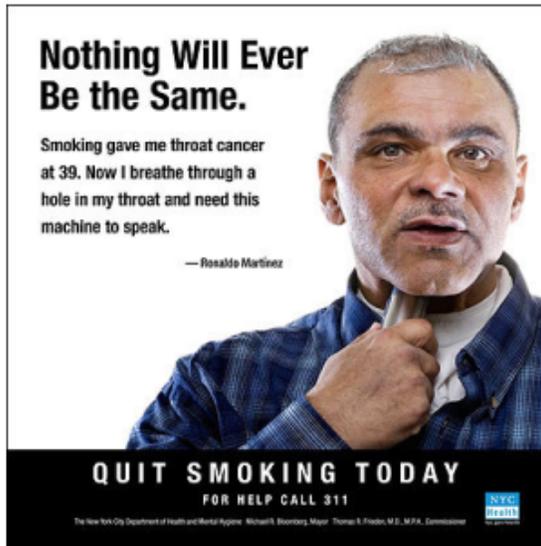
From the Washington Post

Juliana heard about it from her brother. Marina found out during a class discussion in second grade. Arkilah saw it on TV.

It's hard to forget when you first learned that you were born on the day of the worst terrorist attacks in U.S. history — September 11, 2001. On that day, 19 hijackers took control of four planes. Two crashed into skyscrapers in New York City; a third hit the Pentagon in Arlington. The fourth plane crashed in a Pennsylvania field. In all, nearly 3,000 people died.

"I felt a little alone, to be honest," the District's Marina Pariser said about finding out she was born on such a tragic day.

Emblem lead — ad
From NYC Health



What does that tell me about the case?
Nothing. The simple fact that they heard the case isn't newsworthy — but the meat of the case is.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court Tuesday heard testimony in a case that could mean privately owned beachfront property would have to be opened for public access.

Things that don't work in leads:

Questions

Use this technique sparingly. It's lazy and it tells a reader you don't have the answer either. You should be the authority, so tell your readers like it is.

Quotations

It's tempting to serve up a really juicy quote right off the bat, but resist that urge. Your readers will have no understanding of the context or who is even talking, let alone knowing why they should care. Save a quote for the third or fourth paragraph, but set it up first. (See the Wall Street Journal camp photo example above.)

Not reporting the news

Make sure you aren't just telling a reader that something happened, but not the **what** of what happened.

Here's an example:

The Wisconsin Supreme Court heard testimony Tuesday in a case about public access to privately owned beachfront property in Wisconsin.