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DAVE BARRY

Papers try to serve Wall Street better

On behalf of the newspaper industry (new, cost-cutting motto: "All the News That") I wish to announce some changes we're making to serve you better. When I say "serve you better," I mean "increase our profits." We newspapers are very big on profits these days. We're a business, just like any other business, except that we employ English majors.

To help you better understand our current situation, let's review the history of newspaper finances:

The earliest known newspaper, published in 59 B.C. in Rome, was called "Acta Diurna" (literally, "The Portland Oregonian"). The first issue offered coverage of Roman politics ("Strom Thurmond Elected To Senate"); science news ("Study Shows Thunder Is Actually God's Bumping"); and an early episode of the comic strip "Nancy," in which Sluggo tries to avoid paying admission to the Colosseum by pecking through a knothole, and, to the amusement of Nancy and Aunt Fritz, gets a spear right through the eyeball. Unfortunately, "Acta Diurna" was not profitable, because every copy had to be entirely hand-written by slaves (called "reporters"); if a major story broke, a huge hairy man (the "editor") would yell "Stop the presses!" and whack them with a club.

The first important financial advance for newspapers came in 1451 when Johann Gutenberg (literally, "Joe Goodberg") invented the printing press, which made it possible for a newspaper to cheaply and accurately reproduce every single error thousands of times. But the real financial turning point came in 1609, when the publisher of the German newspaper "Der Posten-zeitennewsregisterentribune" (literally, "Grit") invented the "Presidents Day sale," which made modern newspaper advertising possible, and which is still in use today, although nobody has any idea who the "presidents" are.

The newspaper industry then spread to America, where, by the 20th century, virtually every city, no matter how small, had a locally owned newspaper with a name like "The Chronic Prevaricator" or the "Register-Sphincter," which kept the community abreast of local politics ("City Council Attacked By Pig") as well as national issues ("Strom Thurmond Still Alive"). These papers were family operations run by people who were less concerned about making large profits than about keeping their body parts out of the press.

But in the past few decades, all of these newspapers were purchased by large corporations, which were in turn purchased by larger corporations, and so on, so that today the entire American newspaper industry has been glommed together into one giant media conglomerate owned by Wall Street, which frankly does not care what your city council did. What Wall Street cares about is profits. Here at the newspaper, we get hourly phone calls from Wall Street.

"Send more profits!" Wall Street shouts, then slams down the receiver. We must comply, because otherwise Wall Street would shut down the newspaper, and we would starve to death, because, as English majors, we have no useful skills.

So the "bottom line" is that we've had to cut costs. Here are some of the ways we're doing this:

■ RECYCLING STORIES: Rather
BARRY, page D3

"It's been really fun and interesting. When I tell people what I do, most of them say I've got to be kidding."

Dennis Glavin, the only milkman still working in Clark County



Dashing with the dairy: Dennis Glavin usually works his route in double time, jogging from van to doorstep to speed up his deliveries.

The last milkman



Full service: Milkman Glavin delivers various products, including eggs, yogurt and butter. He also collects payments.

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
Columbian staff writer

Even Dennis Glavin didn't know Clark County had any milkmen left when he spotted a three-line classified ad in the newspaper looking for someone with "residential delivery experience and a professional appearance." Glavin, a real estate agent for the past 10 years, wanted a second job to smooth out his income spikes, so he applied for the position a few months ago. After learning the routes and rituals, Glavin now serves as the lone milkman for the last local company to offer home delivery of such dairy products.

As if transported from the past, like the profession, the clean-cut 38-year-old dresses in a pressed, white uniform, jogs from van to doorstep and completes each delivery by wiping off the plastic milk jugs with a small white towel that he tucks into his pants between uses.

At some stops, he'll take the milk all of the way through the house to the refrigerator. At others, he spends a few minutes chatting with customers up early to greet him at the porch. At a day-care center on his route, the kids get a thrill out of his every appearance, waving and yelling his job description, "Milkman," treating him like a superhero.

"It's been really fun and interesting," Glavin said. "When I tell people what I do, most of them say I've got to be kidding. Most of them don't know that there is such a service any more. Some of them can't believe that (milk delivery to the door) still happens."

Such a business probably wouldn't exist in

One man in white remains, delivering dairy products right to your door

MILKMAN, page D3



Obstacles of the road: Most mornings on the route include close encounters with animals, such as dogs, cats and even squirrels.

Putting the milk in the drinks: Meadowcharm's largest commercial accounts are various espresso stands around town, including Bunny's drive-through in the Heights, owned and operated by Bonnie Carson.



Photos by
Troy Wayrynen
of The Columbian

Milkman

County used to have hundreds of dairies and many milkmen

From page D1

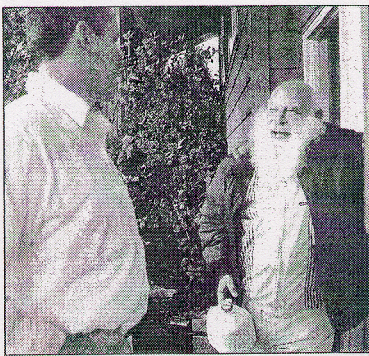
Clark County if it weren't for the dogged desire of Dave and Christine Harvey to carry on the family farm, at least in some form. Dave's parents, Mike and Betty Harvey, ran one of this area's strongest small dairies, Meadowcham Farm, for about 40 years until last June, when environmental regulations and land prices, among other factors, forced them to close.

At the industry's peak, in the mid-1950s, Clark County had more than 600 small dairies in operation, and several of those offered home milk delivery. Yet the number of such farms and milkmen has drastically dwindled during the decades since, due to advancements in home refrigeration and the proliferation of grocery stores. Now, Clark County has no more than a dozen dairies and only one milkman.

Coincidentally, Glavin's father, John, served as a milkman here for Mayflower during the glory years, when about 40 percent of homes in Clark County used such delivery.

"I was doing the same thing as my son," he said. "Wearing the white clothes, driving the truck around, running to the porches, working two jobs. ... I didn't realize there was anybody left until he got hired. I was really surprised to hear that someone still was delivering to homes."

Meadowcham Farm at its height had about 30 small customers, but when the elder Harveys turned the business over to



More than just milk: Dennis Glavin delivers customer service as well as dairy products. Here he visits with Don Frost.

Dave and Christine Harvey, there were only about 200 left. During the transition, the Harveys lost another 10 to 20 percent of their customers as they reorganized and molded the company into their vision.

Meadowcham Dairy, as it's now called, is managed by Christine Harvey out of the couple's east Vancouver home, while Dave Harvey works as a computer consultant in Portland. The couple has two young children — Alex, 3, and Anna, 5 months — that keep Christine busy as she tries to build the business around raising the kids. So far, the venture has been break-even at best, even though the service is one of

"We've found that the hardest part so far has been getting the word out. Most people just don't know about us."

Christine Harvey, Meadowcham Dairy

one of its kind in Western Washington north of the Columbia River and south of Tacoma.

No longer the necessity it was, milk delivery has become more about convenience, service and freshness of the products than

needed, Dave Harvey acknowledges. Customers generally get the milk the same day or day after it's bottled.

Glavin usually wakes about 4 a.m. and is loading the refrigerated milk truck, a 1991 Ford van, about an hour later. During the three to four hours that follow each weekday, Glavin visits 70 to 80 customers, ranging as far north as southern Ridgefield and as far east as western Camas.

Primarily, the company serves middle class or higher income homes, plus a few espresso stands. The largest account is one of those stands, taking 80 gallons of milk per week. The smallest are the longtime customers, some supporting Meadowcham for several decades, who might only need a gallon at a time. The company delivers as often as twice a week or as infrequently as once a month. The Harveys hope to add a second driver and routes that cover as far north as Battle Ground and as far east as Washoulog within a year.

"One of the biggest keys to this whole thing working is having that great driver. Dennis does everything we want. He pays attention to details. He knows the city. He's efficient and fast, and he's a real nice, genuine guy."

"He's definitely proven himself," Christine Harvey added. "And the customers just love him."

Bill Marshall, 83, has been having Meadowcham milk delivered

to him for decades. Glavin usually brings the products inside for the wheelchair-bound man, but one day recently Marshall asked Glavin to bring in the newspaper, too. Glavin has been doing that every delivery since. Marshall said such service is worth the few

money, but after dealing with Glavin and Meadowcham for a few weeks decided to continue. "They bring what I need right to me," she said. "I don't have to get it and lug it around. I pay a little bit more, but it's so hard to find people who give great customer service, and these folks do a great job."

Retention hasn't been much of an issue for the Harveys, they say. "The toughest challenge has been getting people to try the service for the first time."

"We've found that the hardest part so far has been getting the word out," Christine Harvey said. "Most people just don't know about us."

"Most people don't even think (milk delivery) is a possibility anymore," Dave Harvey adds. "They don't even consider it. It's a service that seems in the past ... We want to put it back in their consciousness."

"One of the biggest keys to this whole thing working is having that great driver. Dennis does everything we want. He pays attention to details. He knows the city. He's efficient and fast, and he's a real nice, genuine guy."

Dave Harvey, Meadowcham Dairy

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In good times, the reporter gets to leave the office

From page D1

than go to the expense of writing a whole new story, we're re-running earlier ones. For example, every day for the past five years, we've run the same story on fighting in the Middle East

("Middle East Fighting Again"). In fact, Yasser Arafat died in 1998.

STAFF CUTBACKS: The typical newspaper staff has been reduced to one editor, one managing editor, 14 assistant managing editors, 39 deputy assistant managing editors, and one reporter. The editors spend their days holding meetings to think of new ways to cut costs, while the reporter (who, for budgetary reasons, is not allowed to leave the

building) looks out the window, in case news occurs in the parking lot.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT: You're going to see more sentences like this one, from recent a front-page story in The Philadelphia Inquirer: "We are seriously considering the use of nuclear weapons against China," stated President Dush, who then took a long sip from a refreshing, ice-cold Diet

Pepsi."

USING FEWER WORDS: Not need adjectives, adverbs. Nouns, verbs can communicate story gist. ("Middle East fighting.")

WEAKER ENDINGS TO COLUMNIS.

DAVE BARRY is a humor columnist for the Miami Herald. Write to him c/o The Miami Herald, One Herald Plaza, Miami, FL 33132.

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We expect to publish several designs. The top entry will earn its designer a \$100 gift certificate to Survivor Resorts.

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Include your address and a daytime phone number in case we need to reach you.

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cia Jones at The Columbian, 701 W. 8th St., Vancouver, WA 98660. Photos may be sent via e-mail to tricia.jones@columbian.com send as JPEG and no larger than 10 inches. Photographs must be received by 5 p.m. May 31 for doors to be considered. Sorry, but we can't return photos. Be sure to include an address and daytime phone number.

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