



The 2007 staff of The Nevada Sagebrush poses in front of their old Sierra Street office. Sagebrush operations have moved to the new Joe Crowley Student Union.

from school in 1972 when he printed an advertisement for a pornographic device.

War stories of editors under fire and resilient independence are embedded in the culture of the *Sagebrush*. Editors since 2000 now tell new stories of building the newspaper's reputation. Toward that goal Newman changed the paper's name in 2004 from just *The Sagebrush* to *The Nevada Sagebrush*, to give a sense of place and identity. Editors who came before Newman and long-time University administrators talk about seeing a growth in the *Sagebrush* in the past decade.

"I have just been very pleased with where the *Sagebrush* has gone because I saw where it came from," said Rita Laden '96Ed.D. (educational leadership) former associate vice president for Student Life Services and a University administrator for 27 years.

Building the quality of the newspaper is an endeavor editors and staffs have sometimes taken on without consistent professional

editorial guidance.

An adviser overseeing production is not a part of *Sagebrush* tradition, even though it is a trend at many college newspapers around the country.

While *The Nevada Sagebrush* does have an adviser within ASUN's structure, even she does not see her role as an editorial one.

"I am a strong believer in student-run things and self governance," said Amy Koeckes, ASUN's Coordinator for Clubs and Organizations and Publications since 2001. "I really think that it is a classroom and that it is one of the best learning tools students going into the industry can have."

The journalism school has also traditionally abstained from an official advisory role with the *Sagebrush*.

"We have taken the view that the students should be able to run

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their own paper and make their own mistakes and take responsibility,” said Pulitzer Prize winner, journalism school professor and former *Sagebrush* editor Warren Lerude '61 (journalism). “We are their friends, not their advisors.”

With friends, or sometimes alone, each editor and his or her staff fought for legitimacy by addressing different challenges.

Larson modernized the paper's production by taking it digital in 2001. Before the change, he described a chaotic environment where the paper, then published twice a week, was often not produced until 7 a.m.

“It was horribly inefficient, it took them forever to do this monumental job,” Larson said.

Larson also took the paper from a twice weekly publication to a once a week.

“We came to the conclusion that in lieu of putting out two marginal papers we wanted to put out a quality paper once a week,” Larson said. It was a huge change for the *Sagebrush*, which had been published twice a week for almost 40 years.

It was also during 2001 to 2002 that the newspaper experienced a major shift in funding. The amount of student fees it received dropped by more than 60 percent, and the newspaper's overall budget decreased by nearly 30 percent.

It was time to do more with less.

The following year, Shaver remembers trying to bring the paper back to fiscal solvency as managing editor.

“We sat down and said, ‘If we brought in \$2,700 in ads, let's not print a paper that costs more than \$2,700,’” Shaver said. “It was shocking that the paper was on budget.”

During his 2003 to 2004 editorship, Shaver said he focused on keeping the paper on budget and creating a more professional environment.

Newman built on that ambition, and solidified a culture of professionalism within the newspaper offices.

“Every time you tell a story the right way someone remembers it and you build on that,” Newman said. “You win the battle one person and one story at a time.”

She led her campaign with barely more money than her predecessors, most of it from advertising revenue.

It was a moment of affirmation for herself and her staff when the newspaper won a regional best of show award at a San Francisco college journalism conference.

It was the first of many awards to come.

After Newman, the paper went on to win two national best of show awards from the Associated Collegiate Press and was nominated twice for the organization's Pacemaker award, which measures excellence in college journalism. *The Nevada Sagebrush* also took first place for overall design and for its Web site in 2007 from the Student Society for News Design.

Current editor Brian Duggan said winning the most recent national best of show award at an Associated Collegiate Press conference in Washington, D.C. was the result of a talented staff.

“We're working hard and we appreciate any kind of recognition we get,” Duggan said.



Current *Sagebrush* editor Brian Duggan and former editor and article author Annie Flanzraich '07.

The paper's transition has been visible to University administrators and *Sagebrush* alumni.

“The modern *Sagebrush* is a more professional *Sagebrush* than I have seen in a long time,” Lerude said.


Each award and step forward is the result of a staff working toward a better product.

“I wanted what I had done to serve as the springboard for the next few years of people who would come in and run the paper to make it even better,” Larson said.

As editor in 2005, I did one major piece of redecorating. I hung the desk drawer signed by every *Sagebrush* editor since 1937 on a wall where I could see it every day.

I remember nights after a rough deadline when the office was quiet and my patience and nerves were waning.

I remember running my hands over the cold gnarled wood of the editor's desk and studying its drawer signed by my predecessors.

And I would remember that the job wasn't about me—it was about those who would sign the drawer next. 

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Martarano Scholarship boosts Sagebrush editors

By Annie Flanzraich '07

Ask a former Nevada Sagebrush editor-in-chief for a retrospective on their tenure and you might get a response like “It was probably the best job I would never, ever do again.”

As a two-term editor, I know the stress of making daily decisions for the 114-year-old publication. I can remember my pulse rising every time an angry phone call came in, demanding answers and justification. Absence from classes, sleep and friends was a regular occurrence in my life from 2005 to 2007.

Which is why I was grateful and surprised when former Sagebrush editor Steve Martarano '79 (journalism) called one day in 2006 to tell me he was creating a scholarship for the Sagebrush editor, and that I would be the first recipient.

“It was always a tough road for the editor; I felt like they could use that push,” said Martarano, who was editor from 1978 to 1979.

Being the editor of *The Nevada Sagebrush* is a unique privilege in University of Nevada, Reno's history, according to former Sagebrush editor, Pulitzer Prize winner and journalism professor Warren Lerude '61 (journalism). He remembers signing the Sagebrush editor's desk drawer, a tradition since 1937.

“You see some legendary names in there,” Lerude said, referring to names like Frank McCulloch '41 (journalism), Paul Finch '56 (journalism) and Sig Rogich '67 (journalism). “To be able to sign your name where those kind of names are makes you humble. It doesn't make you arrogant.”

Signing the drawer and being an editor-in-chief left an impression on Martarano that continues to this day. “The Sagebrush is the one thing that stood out in my college career,” Martarano said.

Another former Sagebrush editor-in-chief, Guy Clifton '85 (journalism) mirrored his remarks. “It means more the farther you get away from it,” Clifton, editor from 1985 to 1986, said. “You make some of the best friends of your life and you have more freedom than you will have ever again in your news career.”

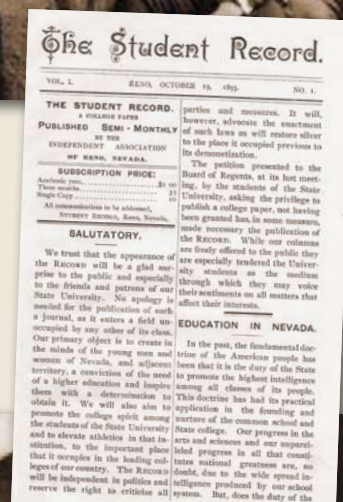
Annie Flanzraich '07 (journalism) is currently the news editor at the North Lake Tahoe Bonanza.



TOP: The editorial staff of The Student Record, 1896-1897. Back row, fifth from left is Sam Doten. Following his graduation in 1898, he worked for the University until 1946, serving at one point as Director of the Agricultural Station. RIGHT: The very first issue of The Student Record, precursor of The Sagebrush, published on Oct. 19, 1893.



A final check of The Sagebrush as it comes off the press, which survived the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1905.



Photos courtesy of University Archives

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