

In Students' Hands

One Student Media Historian's project to empower KSUSM through accurate storytelling

KSU History

The history of the KSU Sentinel is inextricably linked to the history of KSU and the history of KSU is largely regional. Therefore, to understand the beginnings of the Sentinel, one must first know a little about this region of the South. Grown out of a pledge from Gov. Carl Sanders to put a community college in commuting distance of virtually every person in the state, the humble beginnings for Kennesaw Junior College campus, and subsequently the Sentinel, was full of optimism for the future. The land that the Kennesaw State University campus sits on now was purchased in 1946 by Marietta Grocer J. Steve Frey Sr. who ran a cotton gin in downtown Kennesaw and had a tenant grow the cotton. He sold all of the land that would eventually become KSU's campus by 1964 before controversy surrounding the land grab was dismissed by a Cobb County grand jury. By the time the Board of Regents had asked Dr. Sturgis to be the college's first president there was cattle still grazing in the fields. Strikes delayed construction projects for months, but the college opened anyway sharing space with Southern Tech.

The birth of a publication

The journey for KSU Student Media's flagship publication, the Sentinel, began when interested students met with Dr. Sturgis and Dean Meadows in early August, 1966. On August 23 Dr. Sturgis revealed plans for The Marietta Daily Journal to set the type for the paper and Cox Printing Company to be the printer. Then on September 15, the editor of the MDJ, Mr. Carol Dadisman, currently a board member for the Red and Black and a highly decorated media professional, delivered a speech to the staffs of the Sentinel and annual yearbook Montage reported in the Sentinel as, "The Opportunities of a Journalistic Career*." The Sentinel noted that Dr. Sturgis urged the Sentinel and Montage to reflect "the philosophy of a new college which holds quality of academic instruction of prime importance," during the September 15 meeting with Mr. Dadisman. The Sentinel had come together in a matter of weeks to become the authoritative campus voice that it is today, 47 years later.

The first issue to now

A comparative quantitative analysis

"The Sentinel hopes to supply students and administration with an informative and entertaining account of the opinions, events, and activities at Kennesaw Junior College"

The headline on the front page of Vol. 1 No. 1 published on October 3, 1966 read, "First Week Brings 1,000 Students: Staff Numbers 37 For Opening." Out of those roughly 1,000 students six students were responsible for delivering the paper's first issue with one typist as well as two media advisers. According to the 2011-2012 KSU Fact Book enrollment at KSU has increased by 4,500 in the past five years and because of the rapid growth, the six Sentinel staffers out of every 1,000 students ratio has fallen to around maybe four out of every 1,000 students according to the FAQ's in the ksusentinel.com's website which report just about 100 active student participants. The rapid pace of change for the university could account for the decrease in KSUSM participant to student density ratio, but as the University has grown so has the rest of KSUSM. With four publications, KSUSM is more active than ever. Plus, the Sentinel is now a completely independent student organization, bootstrapped by advertising and underwriting profits.

The Name

"Wisdom in being a responsible college publication, justice in covering all phases of school life, and moderation in our daily lives."

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a "sentry" is an "armed soldier or marine posted at a specified point to keep guard and to prevent the passing of an unauthorized person... prevent a surprise attack and challenge all comers," therefore to "stand sentinel" is to be an active wall or blockade simultaneously being a passive agent of defense and offense. For example, in chess an idle piece on the board may have no other specific strategic purpose other than protecting the Queen or in other words, a standing sentinel. Vocabulary lesson aside, as an English major and contributor to the Sentinel I felt abashed not knowing anything about the word other than the less than welcoming flying robot-squids in the Matrix called sentinels and the Marvel comic book character Sentinel, the latter of which I had to Google to find. As the Student Media Historian, I have dusted off the Sentinel archives which are actually relatively dust free and unearthed some of the best kept secrets that have been standing sentinel between the Sentinel's past and you the reader to give you answers like, "Where did the Sentinel get it's name?" and more (ah, see what I did there? Clever SM Historian).

Now, take a close look at the Kennesaw Junior College seal, which has been largely untouched since 1963 except for a few smoothed out edges and a little adjustment to the type font. You will find a military guard, or "sentinel," standing under the arches of the "CONSTITUTION" and the banners of, "WISDOM," "JUSTICE," and "MODERATION." The Sentinel got it's name from the little military guard posted there. Sharing the same symbolism the university and the Sentinel have been inextricably linked since day one. The founding Sentinel staff members printed the seal three times in four pages of the first issue saying, "there could be no more fitting symbol for this newspaper."

Special Issues:

Lynard Skynard plays 420

Nudes Paper

The 25th anniversary issue Silver Jubilee edition

Competitors:

The Spectator - 1996

Online:

Digital switch in 2001 according to the Wayback Machine

KSUSM Alumni reporter fired for personal blog in 2012

Awards:

“The Sentinel staff gives the Campus Community its pledge that wisdom, justice and moderation will always be our aim.”

2005 - Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker print award winner <http://www.studentpress.org/acp/winners/npm05.html>

2005 - Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker online runner up
<http://www.studentpress.org/acp/winners/opm05.html>

2013 - Megan Emory: “Student Media Leader of the Year” National College Media Association
(Eilen Taylor photo award College Media Association’s NYC Convention)

*Note from the SM Historian:

Storytelling is not reporting

It's important to notice - I think - how the title of Mr. Dadisman's speech didn't advocate a career in journalism, necessarily. Without the transcript of that speech, it's hard to tell, though. Nonetheless, read narrowly, my analysis of the speech title suggests that Mr. Dadisman delivered a speech that demonstrated the importance of a career - and life - laden with journalistic values and not simply encouraging students to have rewarding careers in journalism, which could have been the case. I could be completely wrong. But, a journalistic career is democracy in action. It's fact based transparency. Accountability. Hard work. Double, triple, and oh hell, quadruple copy editing and spell checking. Apologizing when mistakes are made. Avoiding making mistakes. Nuancing reality. Redefining authority. Challenging the standards in language. Applying a critical lens. And never taking advantage of trusted sources. This is no complete list, but journalistic values promote professional behavior and allow for opportunities because they reflect a value that our civilization is built around; storytelling. When storytelling becomes truthful, honest, dependable, and selfless it builds citizenship. Therefore Reporters, editors, and publishers play a pivotal role in our society. They find themselves in medias res amidst a torrent of philosophical, ethical, and moral questions and it is their job to sort out our thoughts as human beings and decide, "what goes on page one?" We are still asking ourselves whether wikileaks was constitutional? Does the media have a responsibility to publish media that damages the image of the state, but informs the proletariat of NSA spying or of Patriot Act human rights violations? How about coordinates of a secret military base, endangering military on the front lines? Through these diatribes our media socratically offer the questions to the people and leave it up to them to decide the answers. But, sometimes it's just not that easy. Sometimes our world is better understood through stories. Histories. Like this one.

I won't pretend to be a completely unbiased historian of the Sentinel nor am I an editorializing media critic. As a storyteller with *journalistic* values learned through the experience of student media I will admit that there is a conflict of interest as a member of two of the four active SM organizations. That being said, I will always support the invaluable experience of student media because I have come to the conclusion that the the macro effect of the free press on an informed citizenry directly translates onto a micro level within the university campus and promotes responsible leadership and *journalistic* qualities in the students who chose to participate in those processes. Again, I am not attempting to exhibit all of the qualities of a true historian in this written history, for that you can check out the KSU Archives where there are stacks of every Sentinel ever printed, soon to be online as well. Or look into the KSU Historian, Tom Scott's, archives and his Oral History Project, which I've attempted to duplicate within the SM Historian project. Rather, I would like to give you a story. I won't just fill in the blank and write for you a simple history of the Sentinel. I'd like to tell the story of the Sentinel because it's the stories that get told which write our history and contrariwise it's also the stories that don't get told that sometimes say even more.

Interview #1: .mp3

+Transcription [coming soon]

Interview #2: .mp3

+Transcription [coming soon]

Interview #3: .mp3

+Transcription [coming soon]

Interview #4:

Student Media Historian Interview with Doctor Papp

When you step on this campus 10 years from now, what would you like to see?

I'd like to see 30,000 students all of whom are dedicated to learning and I'd like to see faculty's continuing dedication to achieve excellence in teaching, research, and service. I want to see more buildings than there is now. I'd like to see us as well wired, technologically speaking, as we can be in 2023.

Do you see yourself as the President?

Josh, I will be retired by then. I will be retired, but I will be coming to lectures, art presentations, sporting events.

Dr. Sturgis was at the very first Sentinel staff meeting on August 2, 1968.

How have you thought about the Sentinel since the Betty Siegel era.

I would like to expand this answer to Owl Radio. Both the Sentinel and Owl Radio have been extremely responsible media voices on campus. They do a good job reporting and investing. In my experience both the Sentinel and Owl Radio have been very honest. Very productive.

Do you think you've been treated fairly by KSUSM?

Yes, but that's not to say that I agree 100% with what is said in the Sentinel.

Is it true that you volunteered to ride the bus with the rest of the KSU faculty when the Central Deck was being built?

That is true, I parked my car in the Bank of America parking lot and rode the bus to campus.

Student Media Historian Interview with KSU Historian Dr. Thomas Scott

On the Early Days:

When I started in '68 there were 1300 students in 8 buildings.

On Growth:

Growth has been phenomenal. There's construction going on constantly. It seems like a new building opens every year or so. It's really amazing nowadays when a student who graduated 10 years ago comes back and feels lost, because we've got so much more than we used to have.

On Academic Growth:

[Doctoral programs] are "a big step forward"

On Attitudes of Growth

We've always wanted to grow.

On Small College Experience and Growth

There were really brilliant students in the early days. [KSU] is not the place to go for a small college experience anymore. We've preserved some of that small college experience at least with the upper level courses. The effort of KSU 1101 is the university [trying] to recover the small campus experience.

On Small College Experience in Student Media and Growth

Take a look at the Sentinel. It's a perfect example of how you can be involved and be at the heart of campus life. There's still ways to do it.

On the Creation of the Sentinel

Doctor Sturgis met with students before we had classes, a month before we opened up, fall of 66. Got the first issue out by October.

On the Sentinel's Challenges

The sentinel relies on volunteer labor, sometimes you have more of it than others.