

# Staff produces Oologah Lake Leader at dining room table

It took an Oklahoma ice storm to create enough havoc to delay production of the Oologah Lake Leader by a day.

John and Faith Wylie, publishers of the Lake Leader, published on schedule through their son's liver transplant, through John's life-threatening staph infection, family deaths and illnesses, a political campaign and even a tornado.

But they were powerless over the December 9, 2007, ice storm that left both their home and newspaper office in the dark.

In her weekly column on Dec. 13, Faith described the series of events that led to the paper being put out a day late.

It started around 4 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 9, when the first wave of the ice storm took out the power at the Wylies' lakeside home.

Later that day, Faith cleared fallen branches from the driveway and headed into town to the newspaper office.

After working for a few hours on a Christmas project, she filled a Thermos with hot coffee, picked up dinner and headed back home to her dark home.

Bundled in their coats, John and Faith ate dinner by candlelight and decided that the next day they would move to the newspaper office, which still had power.

But that night, more freezing rain and high winds left the yard blanketed with limbs.

"A huge limb sprawled across both cars.

The power line was ripped from the side of the house," Faith wrote.

Then Carolyn Estes, marketing director at the Lake Leader, called with more bad news. The power was out at the newspaper office and at her home.

The Wylies hunkered down for another night in the cold and dark.

The next morning, determined to get out, calls for help went out.

"The cavalry arrived in the form of friends with a four-wheeler and a pickup truck," wrote Faith. "We packed up ourselves and the cat and abandoned our dream house."

The Wylies set up housekeeping in the powerless newspaper office and began planning ways to get the newspaper out.

"We were not sure we would publish at all," said John Wylie.

When power was restored to Estes's home that day, she volunteered her dining room table as a temporary office.

The offer was quickly accepted and the Wylies packed up the production computer and moved it to Estes's house.

"Carolyn fed us a warm, home-cooked dinner," wrote Faith. "It was the best meal I have ever eaten."

After dinner, the Wylies returned to their cold refuge at the newspaper office.

"The lights are on in the building next door," Faith wrote. "The Christmas lights



John Wylie, Vickie Hefner, Faith Wylie and Chris Edens work around the dining table at Carolyn Estes' home to put out the Dec. 13 issue of the Leader. Power was off at the newspaper office and at the other staff members' homes.

*Photo by Carolyn Estes, Oologah Lake Leader, reprinted with permission*

twinkle down Cooweescoowee. We are green with power-envy."

The next morning, the staff descended on the Estes's house, taking over the driveway, phone, computers, bathroom and kitchen.

"Thanks to the hospitality of the Estes' family and the hard work of our staff, we got a newspaper together," said Faith.

For the first time since the Wylies owned

the paper, it was a day late and limited to eight pages.

By Wednesday evening, power had been restored at the Lake Leader office.

"Hot showers! Warm sofas! Refrigeration! A place to work and sleep!," penned Faith.

"We have survived."

## Norman Transcript published despite lack of electricity

Condensed from an article  
By M. SCOTT CARTER  
Staff Writer at The Norman Transcript

Around 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 10, 2007, The Transcript went dark.

The weekend's ice storm had coated trees and power lines, collapsing both all across Oklahoma. At one point, more than 600,000 customers statewide were without power. Including The Norman Transcript.

Monday's paper was already on the streets with the first stories of the weekend's ice storm, but Tuesday's paper was just beginning when the lights went out.

At first, Publisher David Stringer wasn't too concerned.

"We were waiting for a while to see if it was a temporary or a long-term thing," Stringer said.

"We really didn't do much for two or three hours. But by about 1 p.m., we had decided we better make alternative plans to get the paper published somewhere else."

Normally, The Transcript's 14,000-run is printed on the company's 8-unit Goss Urbanite offset press. The paper also prints the University of Oklahoma's Oklahoma Daily newspaper, and other newspapers in Moore, Chickasha and Midwest City.

But with the power off in most of Cleveland County, Stringer began searching for an alternative printing site.

His original backup plan, to print at the Shawnee News-Star, fell through because Shawnee was dealing with its own storm-caused electrical problems.

A few strategic telephone calls and arrangements were made to have The Transcript printed at its sister-paper, the Edmond Sun. At Edmond, the staff juggled schedules and made computer equipment available to staff members from The Transcript.

With a printing location secured, Transcript employees moved into crisis mode.

At least three times Tuesday, Transcript Advertising Director Sandra Morris found herself in her car with a laptop and cell phone, stationed at the parking lot of Norman's Panera Bread.

"I went there to use their wireless Internet," she confessed. "But the building was full, so I sat in the parking lot."

Morris needed a way to send advertising and information to Edmond and other company newspapers. The process worked fine, most of the time.

"But I did get more than my share of weird looks," she said. "I was in the parking lot, in the same place for a long time."

When she couldn't transmit, Morris and her staff burned ads on a compact disk, put them in a car and drove them where they needed to be.

Now the attention turned to editorial staffers.

Managing Editor Andy Rieger's home was originally planned as the backup newsroom, but it was also without power. So Rieger moved the paper's news operation to Norman Regional Hospital.

NRH Public Relations Manager Brenda Finkle and her staff provided office space, electricity, wireless Internet access and even coffee to several of The Transcript's homeless journalists. Gathered around a large conference table, staff members used laptops and flash drives to write and edit stories.

"The staff at Norman Regional was wonderful," Rieger said. "They bent over backward for us."

Once the stories were written and edited, Rieger posted them to The Transcript's Web site.

"That worked out well," he said. "We were able to keep our Web site updated and use it to help produce the newspaper."

Rieger said he developed a new appreciation for laptop computers, Web sites and flash drives — three pieces of technology that made putting out the paper possible.

"I am now a firm believer," he said. "We were able to take advantage of new technology to get our paper on the streets."

After the stories were posted, Rieger dispatched city editor Linda Henley, news editor Christian Potts, sports editor Clay Horning and sports writer Scott Moore to

Edmond where they took a backup CD with the paper's templates, type fonts and other needed elements.

Starting nearly from scratch, they constructed Tuesday's newspaper pages. Five-and-a-half hours after the group arrived at about 5 p.m., the pages were complete, printing plates were made and by late Monday evening, The Transcript was rolling off the presses at the Edmond Sun.

Once printed, the 14,000-plus copies of Tuesday's Transcript were shipped back to Norman.

From there, Circulation Director Maurice Barcomb's 45 newspaper carriers took over. "What happened was what always does," Barcomb said. "The carriers came in there, they got their inserts, their paper, put them together, they bagged them, and they went out and delivered 'em."

The task of delivering to the 69 routes, 16 of them rural, was complicated by frozen, icy roads, fallen trees and downed power lines. Even with the ice, Barcomb said 96 percent of The Transcript's subscribers received their paper Tuesday morning.

"Our staff performed wonderfully," Stringer said. "Those who weren't already doing something pitched in where they were needed. It was a great team effort."

An effort that, it is hoped, won't have to be repeated anytime soon, but one they will be ready for just in case.