

“Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press ...”  
— From the First Amendment to Constitution

## Raising awareness for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Every 16 hours, right here in Arkansas, we lose a neighbor to suicide. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the state and the second leading cause of death for those between the ages of 10-34. Last year, we lost 583 of our neighbors, friends, and family members to suicide, 107 of these losses being veterans. Suicide is an epidemic and one that requires the attention of every Arkansan.



**U.S. REP FRENCH HILL**

The suicide rate among veterans is 1.5 times that of the average civilian and made up 18 percent of suicides in our state last year. Thirty percent of active duty and military personnel struggle with a mental health problem requiring treatment, but only half ever receive treatment. We owe it to our heroes to break the stigma behind mental health and encourage one another to get the help we may need.

September marks Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a month for us to join one another to recognize the importance of mental health, recognize the signs of someone struggling, encourage those who may be struggling to reach out, and ultimately be there for one another.

I am proud of the resources we have here in central Arkansas to help and support those who need it most. One of these valuable resources includes the Behavioral Health Services of Arkansas that provides therapy and support to all ages in a comfortable environment — including offering telehealth. Other resources include the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Arkansas and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which has a list of providers. Veterans in need can contact the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, which offers services throughout the state.

In addition to these organizations, resources available both within our community and nationally. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available toll-free at 1-800-273-8255 — 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. A text line is also available to by texting “NAMI” to 741-741. Additional support for veterans is available via by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and pressing 1, or by texting 838-255. These lifelines will confidentially provide help to all who need it and walk through the resources available.

The suicide rate in Arkansas is above the national average. We need to work together to change this. I have a part to play and recently introduced the Preventing Overdoses and Saving Lives Act to prevent tragedies related to opioid overdoses. In 2020, 547 Arkansans died of an overdose, and purposeful overdose accounts for almost 13% of suicides nationally. Last year, at the height of COVID-19, I introduced a bipartisan bill to make accessing telehealth services easier. These bills aim to prevent avoidable tragedies. I will also continue to support legislation that supports mental health programs because these programs save lives.

My office is ready to help you find additional resources that may be needed. We can be reached at (501) 324-5941. If there is an emergency, please call 911 immediately. Mental health does not discriminate and can affect anyone. It's okay to seek help, and if you or someone you know needs help, resources are available.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Saline Courier encourages readers to submit letters to the editor expressing opinions on local, state, national or international issues.

The Saline Courier prefers typewritten or emailed letters not more than 250 words in length. Please provide name, daytime phone and address for verification.

Letters are checked for libelous and/or vulgar language and may be edited for length or content. Writers are limited to one letter per calendar month.

We cannot accept form letters in support of or against any candidate for public office.

Email letters to news@bentoncourier.com or bring them by the office at 321 N. Market St. in Benton during normal business hours.

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## THE SALINE COURIER

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### EDITORIAL CARTOON



## There will be no return to “normal”

The single element that Canadians most resent about Americans' views toward their northern neighbor may be the conviction in the United States that Canadians are just like us. This week, in the wake of a Canadian national election that Americans all but ignored, it is time to turn the tables — to say, in oversimplification, that in a very important aspect, Americans are just like Canadians.

Listen for just a moment to the columnist Robyn Urback, who in the day after Justin Trudeau's return to office wrote this in *The Globe and Mail* about her country:

“Canada in 2021 is not normal. The country has endured a type of collective trauma; a disruption so thorough and profound that not a single person has remained unaffected. ... Every single Canadian has lost something: a job, a loved one, a connection with friends, a routine, a sense of security, or a belief that, in the end, our leaders are capable and willing to make the tough choices to keep us safe.”

Change a word or two, and that applies to our own predicament today. The United States is not normal. The country has endured a type of collective trauma.

In the past century, the United States has lived through several hinges of history:

World War II changed the role of women in American life, transformed the nation into a global superpower, created a baby boom and a mass consumer culture and — no one says everything changes — failed to redeem the “Double V” victory that the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the indispensable Black newspaper, yearned for: broad victory for freedom overseas and broad freedom at home.

The combination of the Vietnam era, the youth rebellion and the Watergate scandal produced a national skepticism of authority and institutions that we live with today.

Though the Trump rebellion might be ascribed by historians to the disruption that began in the high-tech age, do not forget that the 45th president was born in the first year of the baby boom, and that he ingested that sense of rebellion in his youth.

The implications of the COVID-19 virus cannot be overstated. By month's end, the American death toll may reach 700,000, about 12% more than perished in the Civil War, the deadliest conflict in our history. The Civil War split the country, shattered families, altered economic relationships, and created a new kind of politics that arguably dominated for a century. (It was only in the late 1960s that there were cracks in the Democratic Solid South, an immutable force in politics that assisted military mobilization in the years leading to World War II but resisted racial integration in the years following World War II.)

In similar fashion, the virus split the country, shattered families, altered economic relationships, and created, or at least amplified, a new kind of politics.

The Spanish flu of 1918-1919 was, in terms of death rates, more deadly than COVID-19. But its cultural and political implications were far less.

That earlier pandemic occurred in a far different country, less tied by means of communication, less aware of the sweep of the disease. And the flu was less politicized; the World War I-era pandemic barely rated a mention in the last two scholarly biographies of Woodrow Wilson, the president at the time. He never once mentioned it in public. It is a disgraceful record, earning Wilson the opprobrium of Tevi Troy, former deputy secretary of Health and Human Services in the George W.

Bush administration and onetime CEO of the American Health Policy Institute, who in his book “*Shall We Wake the President?: Two Centuries of Disaster Management From the Oval Office*,” considered Wilson the country's worst president in a disaster.

But here's the difference, or rather the indifference: The American response to the Spanish flu was nonpartisan. The sitting president neglected to address it (and may have hastened its passage through the population by continuing troop mobilizations when they might no longer have been necessary) but did not politicize it. The president who followed (Warren G. Harding) may have subliminally invoked the pandemic when he spoke of a “return to normalcy” — a return to a world without war or pandemic — but he didn't make flu response an issue.

Americans were devastated by the Spanish flu. But they were not divided by it.

Today, our politics are contaminated by the coronavirus, and so is our everyday culture.

The wearing of masks, the acceptance of medical warnings, even the willingness to take a vaccine that was produced in large part by the determination of Donald Trump to create one at warp speed — all of these are political indicators. Since 1942, with the introduction of a book bearing that title, Americans have known the phrase “You are what you eat.” Today we are — Republican or Democrat — what we wear on our face, or don't.

Now to the question of whether we ever will return to “normal.”

President Harding argued that there was an American normal, but of course he could not replicate in the third decade of the 20th century what had been destroyed in brutal wartime carnage in the second decade. Even with a prime minister who bears the same surname as a previous prime minister (Justin Trudeau's father, who held the position from 1968 to 1979 and 1980 to 1984), Canada isn't returning to an earlier era. Trudeau's leadership opponent, the Conservative Party's Erin O'Toole, knew he couldn't hearken back to an earlier age; he broke with party orthodoxy on climate change, abortion and LGBTQ rights.

We will not return to a pre-COVID world. We won't go to the office the way we used to, we won't eat in restaurants the way we used to, we won't travel the way we used to, we won't have the comforting sense of national health and well-being that we didn't appreciate before and now yearn for.

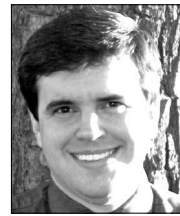
But it is important that we understand what we are experiencing.

Just as COVID was not the flu medically, our experience with this disease is not like the experiences of our predecessors. COVID-19 is a medical marker in the human story, to be sure. But it is a historical turning point, too. All those cellphone pictures of people in masks will be the 21st-century equivalent of Brownie-camera snaps from 1945 of gatherings of people in uniform. They are time stamps, evidence of a transformative moment.

David M. Shribman is the former executive editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Follow him on Twitter at ShribmanPG.

## Clyde E. Palmer

Any successful business or public service has to stay innovative in order to stay relevant to the shifting needs and tastes of its customers. Seeing opportunity and staying updated on new technological trends can make all the difference between survival and oblivion in the business world. Clyde E. Palmer never stood still for long and spent a career looking for the next big thing. Because of his ambition, Palmer eventually built one of the most influential newspaper chains in Arkansas.



**KEN BRIDGES HISTORY MINUTE**

Clyde Eber Palmer was born in Spirit Lake, Iowa, in 1876. As a young man, he traveled extensively. He ended up working as a stenographer with the *Texarkana Gazette and News* in 1894. He soon went to Nebraska where he worked as an office manager and an accountant for a time while briefly attending a business college. In 1898, he enlisted in the army, serving in a Nebraska regiment in the Spanish-American War.

In 1909, Palmer was traveling with his new wife and returned to Texarkana almost by chance. He had developed a fondness for the city and almost immediately decided to buy a small local newspaper, the *Texarkana Courier*, for \$900, roughly the price of a new Ford Model T at the time. He showed a talent for the newspaper business. He renamed the paper the *Four States Press* to emphasize Texarkana's border city status and steadily built circulation. Within a few short years, his paper came to dominate the city and he bought out his old bosses at the *Gazette and News*. Looking to consolidate costs, he merged the two into the daily *Texarkana Gazette*.

The Great Depression pushed many newspapers to the brink of bankruptcy, but Palmer saw an opportunity. In 1929, he bought the struggling *Camden Evening News* from Curtis B. Hurley and rechristened it *The Camden News*. He also bought the *Hope Star, the Magnolia Banner-News*, and what was then called the *El Dorado News and Times* (the modern *El Dorado News-Times*).

He also bought two Hot Springs newspapers, the *New Era* and the *Sentinel-Record*. As he had in Texarkana to cut costs, he consolidated the *New Era* into the *Sentinel-Record*. As the paper still struggled, Palmer devised a way to promote both the paper and the city. He had subscribers designate a “mail-it-away” edition to send a copy of the paper to a friend or relative in a different part of the country. The impact was slow at first, but more tourists began trickling into Hot Springs and more subscribers began making the *Sentinel-Record* profitable again within a few years.

His daughter, Betty, married Walter Hussman, Sr., in 1931. Soon afterward, Hussman began working for Palmer. Hussman, as ambitious and innovative as his father-in-law, became a trusted part of the operation.

Through the years, Palmer had a great interest in technology and its impact on media. While telegraph systems had connected newspapers for decades, eventually forming the “wire services” that brought world news to local newspapers, teletype systems were available by the early twentieth century, with writers being able to remotely type stories to typewriters in other newsrooms. However, the wire services were often congested. Palmer brought in a new, high-speed telegraph service in 1930. Palmer took this a step further with his own system by 1942. His automatic teletypesetter system connected all six of his newspapers, greatly reducing the man-hours needed to produce stories for the next edition. The “Palmer Circuit,” as he called it, was one of the first to be set up in this way, and the innovation quickly spread. He went even further by experimenting with color pictures in some editions as early as 1946.

Palmer also expanded into broadcasting. He started radio station KCMC in Texarkana in 1933 (renamed KTFS in 2014) as an outlet for the newspaper. He eventually started other stations across Arkansas. In August 1953, he began his first television station, also KCMC of Texarkana (renamed KTAL in 1960). KCMC was the second television station to broadcast into Arkansas, following the first airing of WMC from Memphis in 1948.

Even as the years advanced and son-in-law Hussmann took over more of the management operations, Palmer still looked to innovate and expand. He bought the weekly *Stephens Star* and, in 1951, bought the *Russellville Courier-Democrat* (the modern *Russellville Courier-News*) with Sen. J. William Fulbright, though they sold it four years later.

Palmer died on July 4, 1957. His son-in-law became president of the Palmer chain, which expanded again and was renamed the Walter E. Hussman Co., or WEHCO, in 1973. Tens of thousands of Arkansans read papers from this newspaper chain today.