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Weapons of mass-media destruction

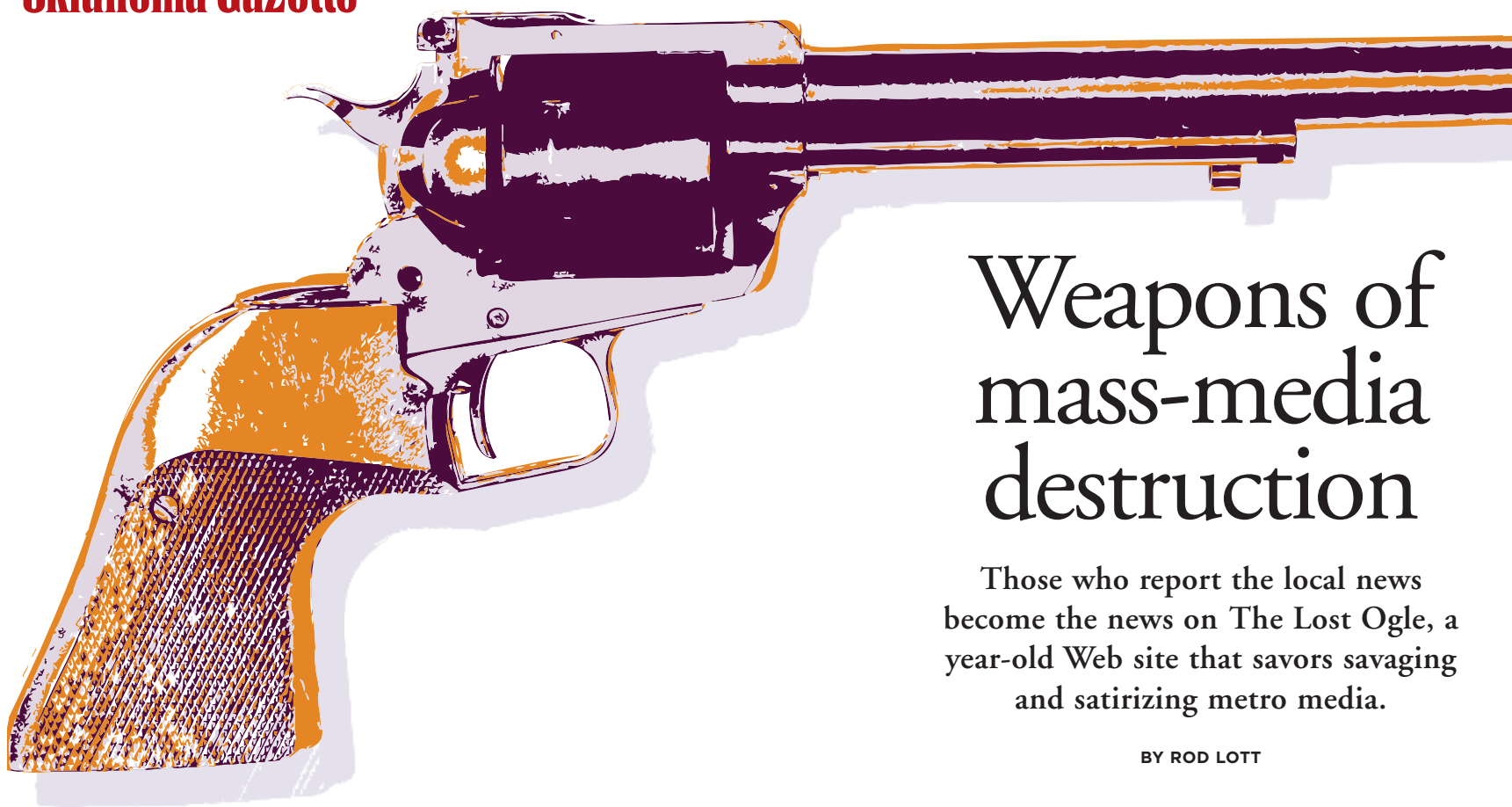
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the news on The Lost Ogle, a year-old Web site
that savors savaging and satirizing metro media.

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BRIAN TAYLOR



Weapons of mass-media destruction

Those who report the local news become the news on The Lost Ogle, a year-old Web site that savors savaging and satirizing metro media.

BY ROD LOTT

On Tuesday, an Oklahoma City Web site hit a few thousand times each day celebrates its first anniversary. Unlike other well-traveled Web destinations, it does not provide a useful service or product, like e-mail and MP3s. It does, however, regularly feature a photograph of purportedly a popular local anchorwoman in a pink bikini.

The Internet hot spot in question is The Lost Ogle, found at www.thelostogle.com, which, according to its mission statement, offers “‘rants’ and ‘morning news styled opinions’ on a variety of topics concerning Oklahoma City and the rest of the world.” “It’s a daunting task,” the statement continues. “In fact, it’s a task so daunting that only an Ogle brother could do it. That’s why we’re TheLostOgle.com. And that’s our two cents.”

News personalities Kelly, Kevin and Kent Ogle don’t actually have another brother taking potshots at his siblings; the site is run by three unrelated, not-chiseled-enough-for-television average Joes who — as online — wish to keep their true identities secret and go by the names of Clark, Patrick and Tony.

“The truth is,” said Tony, “it’d be pretty boring if people found out who we are. None of us holds any high-powered position.”

One works in marketing, another as an accountant, while the third remains in college; together, they combine forces to produce a daily deflation of the tires among local media, with wit, satire and recklessness.

For them, nothing — this publication included — is sacred. Except maybe OETA-TV Channel 13.

“And that’s because nobody watches them,” Tony said. >>>



The Web site gets much mileage out of one recurring bikini.



Linda Cavanaugh of KFOR-TV Channel 4

WHAT WOULD LINDA CAVANAUGH DO?

On any given day, The Lost Ogle may feature a YouTube clip of a local commercial, an embarrassing photo swiped from a media personality's public MySpace page or an essay taking a meteorologist, politician or Sports Animal commentator to task. The idea originated with Patrick, who approached two fellow posters on a "cheesy little" New Orleans Hornets message board he ran to contribute to his new endeavor, inspired by snark-laden Web sites like the gossipy Gawker and its ilk.

"I loved the writing style, the attitude of those sites," Patrick said. "I thought it'd be fun to start a Web site like that, only Oklahoma City-centric."

Said Tony, "I didn't know what he was talking about."

Nevertheless, the three 20-something men who had never met each other in real life decided to give it a go. The first stumbling block was picking the right name. Initial brainstorming gave birth to "What Would Linda Cavanaugh Do?," "Free Gary England" and "Sorry About Toby Keith," before the trio settled on the current moniker.

"In retrospect," Patrick said, "we picked the absolute perfect name. Four days later, my wife and I separated, so it became a good creative outlet for me."

The first post, on May 13, 2007, was little more than an introduction, although it did ask, "Is it just me, or does the FOX 25 weather crew look more like a bunch of Bob Howard car salesmen rather than a group of Oklahoma City weathermen?"

"We had a certain amount of cynicism about local media, especially with the local news," Tony said, about what drove their initial content.

"I think it has to do with pop culture, because in a way, that's what we cover," Patrick said. "Since I can remember, Gary England's been the weatherman. Linda Cavanaugh has

always been on. The media just has that pop culture thing. We like to make people laugh, and you can usually make people laugh with a pop culture reference. It's such a part of our lives."

"Why do the Mathis brothers have a puppy on their lap?" Tony asked. "These are things that people just talk about and like to read about."

HOW TO POST A WILD BIKINI

Although the three admitted slight mortification over how weak their posts were out of the gate, it didn't take long for them to hit their stride — and attract some hits.

Tony pointed to four pieces that placed The Lost Ogle among many an Internet browser's bookmarks. One was a centennial-year list of the "Top 100 Oklahoma Embarrassments," ranging from sportscaster Dean Blevins ("a terrible writer who ... appears to be pretty lazy") at the bottom to country singer Toby Keith ("represents those Oklahomans who drive 75 miles to go [to] the State Fair and toss a baseball at a beer bottle") up top.

Another attention-getter was a slightly censored Playboy photo of Sunni Golloway, daughter of University of Oklahoma head baseball coach Sunny Golloway. Switching schools and sports, Oklahoma State University football coach Mike Gundy's taped tirade against The Oklahoman sports columnist Jenni Carlson also garnered tons of traffic.

And then there's the aforementioned pink bikini.

The photograph shows five women in swimsuits, smiling for the camera, apparently on a trip to the lake. It would be wholly forgettable except that the one in the middle is allegedly KWTU Channel 9 anchorwoman Amy McRee. The Lost Ogle has posted and reposted the image whenever it sees fit; the guys even sell T-shirts on their site that make a rather clever visual pun about it.

"We didn't discover the picture," Patrick said. "People have the perception that we dug it up. But we made it our own. It's almost like Branding 101."

Said Tony, "You wouldn't believe how many people find the site by searching for Amy McRee." He's not kidding; Google her name, and The Lost Ogle pops up first.



O BROTHER!

In everywhere but Oklahoma, "ogle" means a flirtatious look. Here, it means being part of a media dynasty. Brothers Kevin and Kent Ogle preside over KFOR-TV Channel 4 newscasts, with Kelly Ogle doing the same at KWTU Channel 9.

"I'm sure they all work hard, but is it really a coincidence that three of the anchors in Oklahoma City are the sons of the same guy?" asked Tony, one of the three founders of The Lost Ogle Web site.

Kevin Ogle may have been equally perplexed when he first heard about the site that bears his name.

"Somebody told me about it, and I went over to it and my first reaction was, 'Tell me there's not another one here!'"

he said with a laugh. "They seem like they're pretty funny. The times I've been on it, some of their stuff has been pretty cute. I think it's all in good fun. They seem to have a pretty good handle on the local media and can have some fun with it."

Kelly Ogle agreed.

"I think it's very clever, very funny," he said. "I'm usually not offended by things like that, (but) I get a little nervous every time I go to it."

For the record, Kevin Ogle said "except for the 'Lost' one," no other Ogle siblings exist.

—Rod Lott

Others frequently assailed ever since have included — to name just a few — OklaTravelNet.com's Brent Skarky ("couldn't make it as a back-up sports anchor"), WWLS-FM 97.9 host Al Eschbach ("leprechaun") and NewsOK.com personality Dave

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In this photo at the Norman Music Festival, The Lost Ogle combined two favorite targets: Sports Animal radio personality Jim Traber and Web site Wimgo (“WTF is Wimgo?” the site asked).

I can't tell you how many times I've watched the news and screamed at the TV, "This is not news!"

—Tony of The Lost Ogle

site's pages, with clips of her attempting to logroll or make an ice-cream sundae embedded prior for all to see.

"Lucky me, right? I guess to me, it's funny. It gets people talking," Richardson said. "It's all in good fun, and if they tune in to our show, great. That's how we feel about it."

Not everyone who becomes Lost Ogle fodder shares Richardson's attitude. McRee said she "wouldn't feel comfortable" making a comment because she doesn't read the site. Skarky would not go on the record. By press time, Morris had not responded to requests for interviews.

But Carlson did. In the days following the so-called "Gundygate," The Lost Ogle guys regularly made clear they are not fans of her "terrible columns and trite features," but Carlson said she has not read those posts.

"I'm not sure I've seen enough to really know (whether they cross the line). That's a tough one for me to answer. I've maybe been on there twice," she said. "Look at all the things that are on the Internet that you can get people giving their opinions on. Now that includes the media."

"I think that's becoming more and more pervasive. It's just part of that Internet revolution (where) more and more areas of society are going to come under the microscope, because it's easy for people to get a Web site, get a URL and start putting stuff on the Internet."

Tony said that for the most part,

"We try not to be mean-spirited. We try to at least be fair."

One time when perhaps they were not arrived in January. A poll asked with whom visitors would rather have "drunk sex." The choices were two Sooner State reality-show contestants: one from "America's Next Top Model," and one from "The Biggest Loser." Family and fans of the latter were not amused.

"I felt bad after I hit the 'publish' button," Patrick said. "Once again, we don't have editors to say, 'You know, this isn't a good idea.'"

Following the furor, the post was deleted permanently, and the site issued a formal apology.

"We don't really think of (the people we write about) as targets," Tony said.

"Sometimes, I'm just looking for a joke," Patrick echoed. "We try to make fun of ourselves, too. There's an alter ego, to a degree, but I mean what I write."

OGLING EYES

Evidently someone appreciates the joke, because according to Patrick, by the end of April, the site passed the quarter-million mark in terms of all-time total visits, 154,000 of them from within the state. Statistics also show more than 111,000 unique visitors have spent time perusing the site's pages in this infant year.

"You don't start a blog or a Web site for nobody to read, so it's flattering," Patrick said. "I always say the thing that's great about it is that it's something I enjoy doing. I've always been the class clown, the obnoxious kid who wouldn't shut up."

Because it's a hobby they all enjoy, they said they're in it for the long haul. Besides, it's not like they're lacking in subject matter.

"I don't think people realize how hard it is to put up good content every day," Tony said. "And I'm not saying we do that." OKG

Morris ("douche bag").

"People have been surprisingly good-humored about the whole thing, for the most part," Tony said of their take-no-prisoners skewering. "Personally, Channel 5 has been the best about it altogether. They seem to 'get it.'"

"It's like the A-listers, you don't hear from them," Patrick said. "But the weekend reporter may send you an e-mail or some radio DJ might ask to be our friend on MySpace."

"People ask, 'Is it fair to go after news people?' But they're not news people. They're entertainers. They market themselves as personalities," Tony said.

"Bob Barry Jr.'s on TV talking about getting his stomach stapled. I can't tell you how many times I've watched the news and screamed at the TV, 'This is not news!'"

TARGET PRACTICE

In March, the site offered its own version of March Madness, dubbed Ogle Madness, a month-long tournament in which visitors could vote on 65 of their favorite Lost Ogle regulars in seeded matchups. Barely besting McCree, FOX Channel 25 reporter Lauren Richardson emerged as the victor; it was hardly her first appearance on the