

# Letter to the Editor from Kurt Prenzler

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To the Editor:

Sixty two years ago, a 19-year-old Lutheran “preacher’s kid” took over as publisher of a Troy weekly newspaper.



Paul Simon, at the urging of his father and members of the Troy Lions Club, purchased the weekly newspaper on June 24, 1948 from Ben Jarvis, for \$3,600.

Simon turned the town of 1,200 and Madison County upside down.

Simon’s investigative reporting exposed that both the Madison County State’s Attorney and Sheriff did not enforce the laws on prostitution and gambling. In fact, the elected officials benefitted financially from the illegal activity.

During the 1951 Kefauver Commission — a U.S. Senate Special Committee to investigate crime in interstate commerce— Simon said, “The big-time gamblers and others who would violate the law have formed an unholy alliance in our county with those charged with the responsibility for enforcing the law.

“I have little respect for the gentry of the gambling profession and the hoodlums they bring with them. But I have even less respect for men in our county who have prostituted public office and betrayed the public for a few dirty dollars. This has been particularly true of the office of sheriff and state’s attorney.”

Three years after he purchased the paper, Simon interrupted his career by serving a 2-year stint in the U.S. Army. However, in those early years that he was in the newspaper business he proved that one person can make a difference.

Kurt Prenzler

[Image via the blog of Darrell Hampsten.](#)

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