

# Local ownership good for The Sun and Baltimore

By Patrick Weadon

*"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."  
— Thomas Jefferson*

I was born and raised in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and first came to the Baltimore area in 1970 as a student at what was then Towson State College. Those were the days of Mayor William Donald Schaefer and countless moments of athletic glory at Memorial Stadium. It was also a time where an ambitious person could find work at places like Bethlehem Steel, General Motors and Sweetheart Cup. I came to love the city and its people.

But long before I lived in the Baltimore region, I had developed a deep affinity and appreciation for the city while living in Chevy Chase. This would never have happened had it not been for The Baltimore Sun.

From an early age, I loved ice hockey and was an avid fan of the old American Hockey League Baltimore Clippers. The stodgy old Washington Post was obsessed with the city's football team and rarely covered the sport of hockey in Baltimore or anywhere else for that matter.

I still remember, on a cold December afternoon, when I walked down to Doc's Drugstore to buy some candy. Doc's was located in a small shopping center on Brookville Road (it's still there today), and being one of the

few business in Chevy Chase proper, it sold a wide variety of newspapers. As I was leaving, I noticed a copy of The Baltimore Sun in the newsstand area and decided to buy it in hopes there would be some stories on my beloved Clippers.

That was the day I fell in love with the paper. I not only found great stories about the hockey team within its pages, but also discovered that its entire sports section was second to none. This epiphany resulted in my buying the paper every day. Sometimes due to weather or other issues Doc's would not get their copies, and I would have to go up to the stores at Chevy Chase Circle to search for it.

As I grew older, I came to appreciate the paper for more than its sport's coverage. I found out from some of my more erudite high school teachers that The Sun's international reporting was legendary and exuded a level of journalist gravitas that put other papers to shame. In the early 1980s I wrote the Sun op-ed writer Gwinn Owens a letter taking umbrage with his views. He wrote me and asked me to write a rebuttal. He received it, and lo and behold, published it in The Evening Sun. Seeing my byline in the paper of Mencken was one of the greatest moments in my life.

As the decades passed, and the digital revolution ramped up, I began to realize that The Sun and newspapers like it were in a fight for survival. Every day, it seemed one would read about the reduction of news staffs and acquisition of iconic papers by entities that had profit rather than journalism on their minds.

I would see the when pundits on the area's right wing radio station would gloat over the fact that The Sun was getting thinner and thinner every day. Periodically, I would read a story about a local person or group that was interested in buying the paper and ensuring that its editors and reporters could uphold the papers promise of "Light for All," but they always seemed to fall through.

So, it was with immense joy that I learned respected Montgomery County business owner Stewart Baimum Jr. was close to making the dream come true. He has established the nonprofit Sunlight for All Institute for the purpose of acquiring The Sun and its local affiliate publications in a deal that's still being worked out.

I am hopeful that this purchase goes through and that it will be a new beginning not only for The Sun but for the city. Since the uprising after the death of Freddie Gray in police custody in 2015, Maryland's greatest city has been in a distressing slump, with no end in sight. But I sincerely believe that with the right leadership the city can triumph over its many challenges, and once again become a sterling example of the best that our state has to offer. In the 1960s Baltimore was one of the nation's largest cities. We can get there again, and if we do it will be institutions like The Sun that help to lead the way.

Thank you, Mr. Baimum; Mr. Jefferson would be proud of you.

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