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NEWS

Ratliff named Editor of Merrill Courier

BOB CLOUD
MMC SENIOR EDITOR

As of Monday, March 18 Jeremy Ratliff has been named editor of the Merrill Courier.

As the Tomah, Wis. native explains, his career in journalism came unexpectedly in the summer of 2008, shortly after relocating to Merrill. "I happened to see an ad for a freelance sportswriter in the Merrill Courier. Even though my background up to that point was primarily in law enforcement and corrections, I decided to give it a shot. I didn't have any experience or education in journalism, but I had always enjoyed writing and I love sports. I'll never forget the day I walked into the Courier office to apply for the position. When former owner and publisher of the Merrill Courier – the late Jeff Hovind – had a look at my resume, he smiled and jokingly asked if I realized I was applying to a newspaper office rather than a police department."

Ratliff's resume includes experience as a patrol officer and correctional officer, an associate degree in criminal justice and law enforcement training at Western Technical College-La Crosse and an associate degree in human services from NTC.

During the job interview, Hovind asked Ratliff why he felt he could succeed as a freelance sportswriter. His response was citing a quote from one of his police academy instructors.

"One the first day of the academy, one of our instructors told us 'the three things you will do the most as a cop is drive, talk and write. If you don't like doing any of those three things, you're in the wrong place,'" Ratliff said. "I told Jeff from my perspective, those are also the three main job functions of a reporter. Apparently I got his attention, as my first assignment was a fall sports preview that was due two

weeks later."

Over time, Ratliff took on more assignments and more responsibilities.

In August 2014, MMC (Multi Media Channels) purchased the Merrill Courier and Ratliff transitioned to writing for both newspapers as a full-time reporter.

"While my journalism career began with strictly covering local high school sports, investigative reporting still remains my favorite aspect of journalism," As he now settles in to the role of editor, Jeremny plans to continue the legacy of quality reporting that Jeff Hovind and Collin Lueck brought to the Merrill papers.

"Jeff and Collin taught me literally everything I know about journalism, but in different ways," Ratliff said. "The best way I can explain it is Jeff showed me the ropes; the basics of journalism, article structure and writing professionally for example. Collin taught me everything about 'staying in the ring,' so to speak. Among the many things I learned from Collin, was developing a sense of ethics in reporting and using those principles as a guide when taking on any story. I learned from two of the best as far as I'm concerned, and I'm very grateful."

Ratliff said he has no immediate plans for any changes to the Foto News. "I have some pretty big shoes to fill as Collin's successor, so my focus will be to maintain what he started. I do have a few ideas on the staffing and management end, which I think will enhance our efforts in continuing to provide quality coverage of local news and events for our readers. That has always has been, and always will be our top priority."

Jeremy readily admits fulfilling that priority is a team-effort every week.

"From the Sales and Marketing team, to the Front Office staff and Circulation Department, our 14 member team are all amazing at what they do for our papers. I look forward to what the future holds in my new role, but one thing is for certain, everything we do as an editorial team would not be possible without the amazing team of co-workers we are so lucky to have,"

Jeremy can be reached during regular office hours of 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday at (715) 536-7121 or via email at jratliff@mmclocal.com.

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