

Thanks, Chris, for 16 years of covering Whitewater like a blanket

A century-and-a-half ago, Daily Union founder W.D. Hoard became the first newspaperman to use country correspondents. He paid them by the column inch to report the comings and goings out in Hebron, Oakland, Cold Spring, Palmyra, Johnson Creek and all of the other hamlets throughout Jefferson County. Back then, there was a lot of social news, such as who visited whom for Sunday dinner, who baked pies for the church bazaar and even whose prize cow birthed a calf. These rural reporters — usually farm wives — played a major role in gathering all the news ... and juicy gossip.

Today, we call these correspondents “stringers,” and they concentrate more on the news than scuttlebutt as we contract with people who have actual journalism experience or a writing background. Finding such folks is not easy, even in a city like Whitewater that has a university journalism program. The odd hours, deadlines and per-story pay don’t exactly drive them to our doorstep.

So we were pleased, to say the least, when a young bearded man decked out in a suit and tie walked into the newsroom back in 2003 to answer our long-running ad for a Whitewater correspondent. New to town, his wife was teaching at UW-Whitewater and he was a stay-at-home writer of zombie tales. He’d “strung” for a newspaper in Minnesota to make some extra money and thought he might do so here,



Tom Ganser

Chris Welch snaps a photo at the Whitewater Common Council meeting Tuesday night.

as well.

We quickly said “yes.”

It doesn’t seem like 16 years have passed, but now Chris is removing the reporter’s hat to concentrate on his fiction writing and teaching English classes at Madison Area Technical College. We are happy for him, of course, but sad for ourselves.

Though a free-lancer, Chris has been “one of us” and an integral member of the news staff. He has attended some 832 staff meetings and likely almost that many Whitewater Common Council and Whitewater Unified School District School

Board sessions. In addition, he’s penned countless feature stories, chronicled candidate races and commencements, and photographed everything from frat house fires and Polar Plunges to trick-or-treaters and Memorial Day parades.

When the Daily Union’s county reporter left, Chris added the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors meetings to his “beat.” And then there have been the numerous other “outside” assignments he’s taken on, all too often handed out at the last minute.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not mention that while writing for the Daily Union, Chris also has been stringing for WFAW Radio, making certain Whitewater received its fair share of coverage on the air, as well as in print.

The Daily Union was so very fortunate that Chris Welch walked into our office 16 years ago. Not only has he done a fantastic job covering the area’s news, but he has represented this newspaper with professionalism and personality. We are proud to call him friend.

Life at a small daily newspaper is fast-paced and often hectic. There never is enough time or people to cover everything that is going on, much less to give “attaboys” for jobs well done. But allow us today to offer a tip of our editorial hat to one of our own, Chris Welch.

It’s been a sweet 16, Chris.

You’re already being missed.