

Headlines

by Ulrik Remy

I love reading the papers. Really do. It is so much more informative, so much more in-depth, so much more intellectually challenging than watching TV or listening to the radio. And it smells better, too. If you like the smell of dead fish with a hint of rotten broccoli, that is. If you don't – well – you may miss out on a treasure of highly valuable information.

That treasure doesn't come easy. It's the privilege of superbly trained eyes and hunting dog instincts – and noses, for that matter – to spot the headlines of the day. They are carefully hidden between the consumer information – vulgo: ads - of your local Chevy dealer, your local Honda dealer, your favorite palm reading service, and the Swedish massage salon your wife is not supposed to know about. But believe me, my friend: It is a treasure worth digging for. The headlines, of course.

Let's take today's as an example: "Foreclosures Threaten Home Owners". That's news, right there. If you had been one of those many misguided fellows who kept thinking that foreclosures are home owners' best friends – well, think again. It just ain't so!

The second headline – well, it's not the second headline in terms of importance, it is just smaller than the primary one, and it is placed lower on the page on the right hand side, hard to find, okay, it is the second headline – reads: "Pentagon Is Planning For The Future". That seems somewhat disquieting. Does that indicate a major shift in policies? I mean, after decades and decades of planning for the past, they just now realized that retrospective plans may be pretty tough to implement? Well, we will have to wait and see what is going to come of this. Hopefully, nobody will tell our enemies about this new approach – at least not before we know it really works.

The local section opens with "Crime Rate Concerns Sheriff's Office". I was wondering anyway what those guys are doing all day long – trimming bushes? Analyzing the love life of caterpillars? Alright, so now they have been assigned a new task. Good for them. Good for us.

Usually, I don't feel compelled to dive into the article. All I need is the headline. It gives me the essence of the news in a nutshell. Newspapers employ specialists for headline design, and for good reason: Headlines are poetry. Reality with all the air sucked out. A good headline makes the article seem redundant and helps free up valuable space for ads.

Some headlines simply state the obvious: "Rockies Tough To Beat" – that's fairly common knowledge. Everybody who ever tried knows: It hurts. Others are slightly more cryptic, like "Durable Goods Weak" – hm. Shouldn't they be given a different name? And "Gas Price Back To \$3" sounds ambiguous. It can make California readers jump for joy while people in Florida are fighting back anxiety attacks.

But most the time, I find comfort in the profound wisdom of headlines. "Children Are The Future Of This Country". Who said that? The President Of The United States? Who told him? Man, that really makes my day. I was under the impression that the future of this country was all on the shoulders of 80-plus-year old folks and, for that matter, rather limited. Now I can, with a deep breath of relief, take my time and finish my paper before reality calls again. The future of this country is way down the road.

I enjoy reading my paper in the morning. The touch, the feel, the smell, everything. And secretly, I am waiting for the day when it opens with the headline "President Says Something Incredibly Stupid".

But then, that's not news.