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Columns

Bites

The young and clueless

By Bites

What about the kids? In newsrooms everywhere, the dilemma is the same: "How do we make young people read our paper?" The graying of newspaper readers is a big part of the layoffs happening at major daily papers like **The New York Times**, the **San Francisco Chronicle** and the **San Jose Mercury News**.

But when daily newspapers try to attract the young, hip crowd, the results can be bizarre.

Take the phenomenon of the "faux weekly," where daily papers spin off smaller publications that mimic the alternative-weekly format.

Bites got a look at a prototype cooked up over at the Bee last year--a little thing they called **Blurt**.

The fake version of the fake weekly tabloid features a color cover for a fake story about Arnold's steroid use. There's a whole spread of photos from NapkinNights, snapshots of pretty young drunk people in local bars. There are some syndicated alt-weekly staples, like News of the Weird and the Savage Love column. It all looked very "edgy."

Bites hears that Team Scoopy ultimately abandoned Blurt. But the **McClatchy Corp.** is going ahead with a faux-weekly experiment in Anchorage, Alaska. Its **Hotsheet** weekly, launched in mid-September, drew the ire of the city's real weekly paper, the Anchorage Press. It seems the McClatchy folks "borrowed" some content for a mock-up version of the paper (more of a flier than a tabloid) to show advertisers--including **Freewill Astrology** (without author **Rob Breznsny's** permission) and a photograph taken by one of the weekly's freelance photographers.

The Anchorage Press sent a letter to McClatchy CEO **Gary Pruitt** here in Sacramento, threatening to sue. But **Pat Dougherty**, editor of McClatchy's **Anchorage Daily News**, told Bites he had already decided not to pursue the astrology column and to focus instead on club listings and restaurant reviews aimed at drawing youngsters to the parent paper's Web site.

Whether in Alaska or California, Bites doubts the dailies will get very far by aping the weeklies. Even this paper has to endure being called "**the SNoRe**" by the cool kids over at **Heckasac**. Maybe if we printed NapkinNights ...

Help me help you: What in Juarez is **Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez** talking about? In trying to put a little of the old political pressure on the governor, Núñez continues to harp on **Arnie** about the state's border dilemma. But he has yet to lift a legislative finger to help out.

If Bites were so bold as to put words in the mouth of the **Austrian Oak**, we would direct these to the Democratic Angelino: "Help ... me ... help ... you."

After the governors of **New Mexico** and **Arizona** declared states of emergency in order to properly ask for more federal money to assist them in better securing their borders with Mexico, Núñez called on the governor to also declare a state of emergency.

Schwarzenegger responded that he does not have the constitutional authority to call a border problem a "state of emergency."

Four Republican lawmakers from the southern part of the state--**Senators Dennis Hollingsworth** and **Bill Morrow** with **Assemblymen Ray Haynes** and **Mark Wyland**--responded by writing a bill that would give the governor that authority. But rather than help usher the bill quickly through the Assembly, Núñez let the legislative session expire, and the border bill languished.

Two weeks later, relatively confident that the border bill had faded from the collective short-term political memory, Núñez has dragged the issue out again, calling on the governor to develop a responsible border policy.

Maybe the **Minutemen** need to stand guard between Núñez and the people responsible for his talking points.

Such great heights: Sure, **gated communities** give Bites the creeps. But surely the

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Meet **Marty Walden**, who on Monday won a seat on the homeowners-association board at **The Summit**, a gated neighborhood in El Dorado Hills. A few days before the election, each Summit household received a convincing candidate statement on his or her front doorstep, including more than half a page of Walden's furious complaints that the Summit does not adequately reflect qualities of an "exclusive upscale neighborhood."

"This is supposed to be an upper class neighborhood, not an **immigrant ghetto**." Congratulations, Summit dwellers. You've got yourselves a winner!

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