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Last fall, my husband and I moved from the Bay Area to Grass Valley. Confessing my past address, I add this disclaimer: I do not miss the Bay Area. I moved here to get away from traffic, Starbucks and Wal-Mart. Sure, I miss Trader Joe's and fast-speed Internet, but I am proud to shop locally, and I refuse to complain about dial-up. Besides, I get a lot of knitting done while logging on to the Internet.

Probably the best way to learn about a community is by reading the newspaper. Our subscription began shortly after moving in. Our Bay Area paper was delivered 25 feet from our front door. I could retrieve it while wearing my bathrobe. The Union arrives about a quarter mile away. I'm not complaining. This is closer than the distance we have to walk to pick up our mail. Besides, my husband and dog both start their day with a little exercise.

Nearly every activity we have connected with, we learned about from The Union. Shortly after settling in, we saw an announcement that the Cornish Christmas Choir was open to anyone who wanted to join. We had never been to a Cornish Christmas, but we wanted to start giving to the community rather than taking from it, so we joined the choir.

Our previous newspaper was a well-known publication, weighty in size and thought. Reading it, I should have been well informed. However, I was too busy to devote much time to it, so I read the front page, the comics and the weather. On Sundays, I read the entire paper except for the classifieds and the sports pages. This meant I was well informed one day out of seven.

I discovered that I do not need newsprint to keep abreast of international affairs. The Internet is a good source for national and world news. Granted, the rate at which my computer retrieves it is so slow that by the time I read it, the news is history. However, the Internet cannot compete with The Union for what I want - news about Nevada County. For that, I prefer the warm feeling of newsprint.

I live a slower life in Grass Valley. I have time to read the paper cover to cover. Dixie Redfearn seems like someone I invited in for tea. The colorful Police Blotter reports a wide variety of events that I would never have imagined, occurring on streets with names I could not have made up. The Ideas and Opinions page informs me of what is on the minds of other Nevada County residents.

The weather page is what actually prompted me to write this piece for an Other Voices column. In my old newspaper, the area forecast used words such as clear, cloudy, rain, showers likely, and partly sunny. It was boring. The forecast in The Union doesn't just predict the weather; it describes it. Here are some of my favorites: "Precipitation remains elusive," "abundant October sun," "a crisp end to November," "plenty of December sun," "quiet weather expected" and "a sunny and dry weekend start."

I am not being tongue in cheek. The weather section charms me. No matter what the forecast, it seems more hopeful when I read about it in The Union. It occurred to me that the weather report is syndicated, originating in San Francisco or Los Angeles. I reject this possibility, preferring to

picture an elderly retired librarian practicing her craft, scanning a thesaurus for ways to transform weather into interesting reading.

The Union feels like an old friend that comes to visit us in the morning. It is a part of our life. Last Sunday, my husband put the leash on the dog and headed out for his daily walk. I pointed out that there was no newspaper since it was Sunday. His reply: "No wonder yesterday's crossword puzzle was so hard."

We decided against supplementing our subscription with a Sunday edition of one of The Union's bulkier competitors. I thought I'd miss that weekly ritual, but I don't. It ate up a large part of my day off. A day of fasting from the news is good for my soul. Besides, it gives me that much more to look forward to on Monday.

Lucinda Porter is a registered nurse and lives in Grass Valley.