

Welcome to the [Daily Pilot](#) > [Opinion](#)[Email Story](#) | [Print Story](#)[Text Size](#)

IT'S A GRAY AREA: Job loss can happen to anyone

By **JAMES P. GRAY**

Updated: Saturday, December 20, 2008 6:43 PM PST

There are No comments posted. [View Comments](#)

I had the good fortune to meet Anthony George Dodero — known to his friends as Tony — when I inquired about the possibility of writing these weekly columns. He was the editor in chief of the Daily Pilot, and he and Brady Rhoades, who was the managing editor, took me to breakfast to discuss the possibilities. Since that time they have both become my friends.

Tony is an American success story. Prior to his graduation in 1989 from the journalism school at Long Beach State, Tony became an intern at the Daily Pilot. His professional goal was to cover national politics, so when he was offered the opportunity to travel with the national press corps and cover part of the 1988 Dukakis presidential campaign, he jumped at it.

After graduation, Tony accepted a full-time position as a reporter with the Daily Pilot. At that time it was an independent paper with 16 reporters that provided full-time political, sports, business and national news, as well as local area news and events coverage in an area including Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Costa Mesa and Laguna Beach. He called this "the greatest job in the world."

In 1991, since it was being squeezed by both the L.A. Times and the Orange County Register, the Daily Pilot changed its focus and became primarily a local paper for the Newport Beach and Costa Mesa area. In making that change, it tried to create a niche market and outdo its competitors in local coverage. The paper also reduced expenses by cutting out the Associated Press wire service, and reducing its staff down to five reporters.

When that happened, Tony moved to the Huntington Beach Independent. That turned out to be a great move because he was able to work under the direction of Bob Barker, who was a classic old-time reporter. Barker really knew how to get a story, and both taught Tony the ropes of being a good news reporter, and also "what the world was about."

A few years thereafter, Tony accepted the "primo assignment" back at the Daily Pilot of covering City Hall in Newport Beach. With that he walked into a "gold mine" of stories, in that Newport Beach Chief of Police Art Campbell was being sued by several of his police officers, dispatchers and clerks for sexual harassment, and this provided a large amount of coverage for a full year. And with that exposure came a promotion to city editor.

So what does that mean? What is the hierarchy at a newspaper? For years I have heard these various positions mentioned, but have had almost no idea of what they actually meant. Well, the big boss at a newspaper is the publisher, who, in effect, is the chief executive. Usually that person is not a journalist, but instead deals with business matters, advertisers, labor issues, etc.

The editor in chief reports directly to the publisher and is basically considered to be the "mayor" of the newspaper. He or she is the head journalist and oversees the news operation and officially interacts with the public. But that person almost expressly stays out of the business part of the paper in order to ensure the paper's integrity.

Why is that so important? Well if, for example, one of the paper's large advertisers gets into trouble, there can be a tendency for that company to threaten to withdraw its advertising unless the paper "soft-peddles" the story. But in that case the publisher, who is the only one that deals with the advertiser, can rightfully say all of the coverage decisions are made by the editor in chief, and that is a completely separate division of the paper.

The person who oversees the day-to-day news operations of the paper is the managing editor. This

More Stories

- **SOUNDING OFF:**
[Remember the day that lived in infamy](#)
- **EDITORIAL:**
[Next mayor should be Leslie Daigle](#)
- **EDITORIAL:**
[Perhaps a new liaison is needed](#)
- **EDITORIAL:**
[American flag represents our freedoms](#)
- **COMMUNITY COMMENTARY:**
[Reps. step up for Back Bay dredging](#)

[Save/Share](#)

Surf & Sun
Coastal Surf & Weather Report

AccuWeather.com*
Costa Mesa
43 F
7-day forecast

Surf Report

ADVERTISEMENT

FASHION ISLAND
Newport Beach, Newport
Costa Mesa, Laguna Beach

ADVERTISEMENT

2008 PATHFINDER

Surf City
NISSAN

You won't get burned at the beach!

ADVERTISEMENT

Post Up!
Your source
for youth and
high school sports

GAME ON OC

GameonOC.com
GO NOW

Daily Pilot

ADVERTISEMENT

Twice the coverage

Only \$2.99 a week.

Subscribe to 7-day home delivery of the Los Angeles Times and get the Daily Pilot Tuesday - Sunday.

[Click to subscribe](#)

Los Angeles Times

PHOTO GALLERY

TOPSHOT

PHOTOGRAPHER'S
FAVORITES

is where the "rubber meets the road." The managing editor decides what the main stories will be and where they will be placed, and also which stories will be the subject of more long-range news investigations.

Those who report to the managing editor are the city editor, who is the teacher or "coach" of the team, as well as the first one who edits the stories written by the reporters, the copy desk chief and the sports editor. Then there is the editorial staff, and they report directly to their middle managers.

The L.A. Times bought the Daily Pilot in 1993, and other local papers as well, with the idea of expanding their total circulation from 1 million up to 5 million. Soon, The Times had a network of 23 local newspapers from as far south as San Juan Capistrano to as far north as Ventura.

And the Daily Pilot was the model for this entire project. The goal was to be better at local community news reporting than the Orange County Register. To some degree, they were successful, because readership increased by 18%.

The problem was that the goal was to expand readership instead of turning a profit. So when The Times was sold to the Chicago Tribune, those bottom-line-oriented people saw that most of those newspapers were losing money. Not surprisingly, the new owner decided to shut many of them down.

This naturally resulted in massive layoffs, and many of those had to be enforced by Tony. He called the laying off of so many of his protégés and friends at the various papers the worst days of his life.

Unfortunately those layoffs have continued. And Tony Doder, who has always been a star performer, was recently laid off by the Daily Pilot as well. So all of this goes to show that in these difficult financial times, losing a job can happen to anybody — and it has.

But, Tony, we wish you good luck, and I am sure that things will turn out fine.



JAMES P. GRAY is a judge of the Orange County Superior Court, the author of *Wearing the Robe – the Art and Responsibilities of Judging in Today's Courts* (Square One Press, 2008), and can be contacted at JimPGray@sbcglobal.net or at his website at www.JudgeJimGray.com.

There are **No comments posted** on
**"IT'S A GRAY AREA:
 Job loss can happen to anyone"**

Feedback Rules

Users will only be required to register once and all registrants must supply a username, password and valid email address that we will check for authenticity. Those comments flagged for abuse will be reviewed by the editing team and taken down if we agree the comment crosses the line of good taste and community standards. As usual, reader comments must be free of obscenity, profanity or content of a questionable nature. The readers comments are your Town Hall forum. Please keep the debate civil and above board and thank you for your participation.

Add Your Comments

[Registered Users Sign in Here](#)

*Member ID:

*Password:

Remember login?
(requires cookies)

[Forgot Your Password?](#)

[Become a Registered User](#)

Do not use usernames or passwords from your financial accounts!

Note: Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required!

*Create a
 Member ID:

*Choose a
 password:

*Re-enter
 password:

*E-mail
 Address:

*Year of Birth:

(children under 13 cannot register)

First Name:

Last Name:

City:

Zip Code:

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright © 2008 Daily Pilot

LOCAL LINKS

[Orange County Criminal Attorney](#)
[Orange County DUI Attorney](#)
www.ronaldhedding.com
[California Medical Malpractice Attorney](#) www.fagellaw.com
[Los Angeles DUI Lawyer](#)
[Criminal Defense Lawyer Gregory Caplan](#)