

Taking the Lede – Colorado Edition (44-minute documentary video)

YouTube link = https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZK9FXS-D_k

OR <http://cunewscorps.com/about-2/current-projects/taking-the-lede/>

Summary / Study Guide

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Chapter 1 – The Scoop (includes introduction and runs through 5:30)

Standley Lake HS “The Lake” with editor Chaye Gutierrez ‘15, and a Boettcher Scholar at the University of Denver.

- Following a year of controversy, the Jeffco School Board began discussing some changes in the AP History curriculum during a regular review. [Here is some coverage from the Washington Post.](#)
- The newsmagazine provided in-depth coverage, and you can find it [on page 20-25 in this issue on the publication’s ISSUU site.](#) [This was written prior to the big walkout.](#) The main article has interviews with all 5 board members. [This is right before the recall election.](#) The story is on pages 14-19.
- Much of the coverage by The Lake was on social media, through live tweeting and [Storify](#)
- The Lake got ahead of local pro media, interviewing all board members as well as providing the student perspective, which most local pro outlets did not pursue.

For reflection: *What would be important enough to you to require some sort of formal protest, walk-out, civil disobedience, etc.? Whether you were involved or not in such an action, what role would student media have in covering such events? If it’s an issue you personally care about, how do you distinguish your role as a concerned student from that of a journalist covering the event? Should student media cover such events at all? Do you recall any such protests from the recent past? What was your reaction?*

Chapter 2 – The Sting (5:30 – 17:15)

Interview with David McSwane, a junior at Arvada West HS in 2006, and now a data and enterprise reporter with the Dallas Morning News (you can find some of his recent work [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). He decided to explore military recruiting practices in the area (recruiters were in schools, etc.).

- He decided, with consent of his mother, to go undercover, claiming a marijuana problem and plan to drop out of school – to find if he could he get in the Army with the drug issue plus no GED.
- The recruiter told him how to create a fake diploma online, and how to buy a detox kit to mask his drug use.
- The story ran in the school paper, plus McSwane faxed the story to local and national media. He called Rick Sallinger at Channel 4 in Denver ([read about him here](#)) and Sallinger investigated, finding this was not an isolated incident. [Here’s the initial report.](#)

- McSwane mentioned being compared to Woodward and Bernstein, but at the time he didn't know who they were (links)
- [KCNC won a Peabody Award](#) for its reporting, and McSwane and Sallinger both received individual Peabodys.

For reflection: *What are your feelings about “sting” operations? Ethical? Unethical? Something in-between? How important is it for student journalists to identify themselves as reporters prior to interviewing, etc.? What are possible opinions of those in power (more power than students) to a sting operation? What is your comfort level with anonymous sources? What’s an issue you would consider worthy of going undercover to investigate?*

Chapter 3 – The Shooter (17:15 – 26:30)

Dec. 13, 2013: student Karl Pierson entered Arapahoe HS and shot and killed Claire Davis and himself.

- Tori Hoffman, yearbook editor, and Maggie Hurlbut, newspaper editor, were key sources here. Staff took photos with cellphones as students were evacuated. Both said they received lots of support from adviser Greg Anderson and administrators, and that they showed great faith in them.
- [You can read the special edition the Herald published on ISSUU.](#)
- Tori said the yearbook theme had to be changed in January to “There’s more to our story” and used the hashtag #warriorstrong to gather photos and writers from students not on staff.
- Joe Redmond, managing editor, and proponent of print (you can’t click away, and “social media is not enough”) was a friend of Karl’s.
- Joe went to the Columbine memorial ([need some background on this school shooting from 1999?](#)), which is eight miles west of AHS, and noticed no voice for the Columbine shooters. He wrote an award-winning column on forgiving his friend ([read it here](#)). Joe, Tori, and Maggie all graduated in 2014.

For reflection: *What is your reaction to Joe Redmond’s contention that we need to seek to understand people doing something evil? Is it ethical to take photos of people who are in shock or grieving? Are there policies at your school for covering “the unthinkable,” or such challenges as the death of a student or faculty member? Should there be, and what sorts of “rules” would you like to see?*

Chapter 4 – The Controversy (26:30 – 31:35)

First of two segments involving Palmer HS in Colorado Springs.

In 1996, the Lever, then volume 109, covered gay marriage and sexuality – written by editor Mary Margaret Nussbaum Alvarado (now a poet and professor at UCCS). Adviser Vince Puzick, at the time.

- Coverage was reaction to Amendment 2 in Colorado (http://www.dailycamera.com/news/boulder/ci_29915204/20-years-after-colorados-amendment-2-struck-down), and the community was and is quite conservative.

- There was immediate anger about the coverage, calling on then-Principal Jay Engeln to be fired, to close down the paper, etc.
- Nussbaum's father is a lawyer, and supported her... Lots of support and anger at a school board meeting, but her opening statement is a model. The board wanted to limit topics, but the state law provided some protection. Most community members were (and are) unaware of the law.

For reflection: *How important is the power of parents in potential student press rights situations? How would you characterize your school community's opinions on [LGBTQ+ issues](#)? What are current issues your community would consider "sensitive"? Is it possible to be unbiased in your coverage of topics like this? Would you support your publication endorsing a political candidate, [as happened in 2016 at Palmer Ridge HS](#)? The editorial board's endorsement of Hillary Clinton in the latest presidential election resulted in a storm of criticism, followed by strong support of the students from school and district administration. How prepared are you to take on community criticism, lack of awareness of student rights and responsibilities, and more?*

Chapter 5 – The Law (31:55 – 35:30)

- The Tinker case, with the decision on Feb. 24, 1969 ([quick podcast summary here](#))
- Frank Lomonte, former SPLC director and as of Aug. 1, 2017, at University of Florida as a professor of journalism and Director of the Brechner Center for Freedom of Information.
- New court case=Hazelwood ([quick podcast summary here](#)), released Jan. 13, 1988, with new Supreme Court
- How did Colorado respond to Hazelwood? [Check out our state law here.](#)
- Mark Goodman, former SPLC director, now professor and Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University, on California law that changed the game.
- Lomonte said "simple choice: individual liberties vs. government thought control."
- The map of states with a student freedom of expression law has grown since this video was produced. The latest list and information on various state-by-state efforts can be found at the [New Voices website](#).

For reflection: *How do you, as a student journalist, decide where the line is between what you CAN legally print/broadcast and what you SHOULD print/broadcast? How well do your administrators understand Colorado's student free expression law?*

Chapter 6 – The Censor (35:30 – 40:15)

Back to Palmer, but now in 2012. Yearbook editors Anna Carmichael and Rodolfo "Coco" Toribio were told by the yearbook adviser to remove a photo of two girls walking down a hallway holding hands. The adviser was backed by administrators, who claimed the photo violated rules against PDA (as a change of direction). The editors refused, and were removed by the adviser, who simply insisted on that one photo being removed.

- Adam Goldstein formerly a SPLC attorney, advised them to “go public,” which finally got the admin to talk with the students, but the cover-up persisted.
- Goldstein talked about the frequency of administrators “running out the clock.” The students were given a compromise of mailing students the censored page plus a letter saying the page had been left out by mistake.
- Today the district still claims the photo was “obscene” (share definitions)

For reflection: *How do you feel about involving parents and the professional press in cases where student press rights are in question? How comfortable would you be in meeting with administrators to make your case about publishing on a “sensitive” issue? How much involvement should admin have in student media? How do you see your adviser’s role in student media? Different advisers were involved in the two Palmer HS cases. How did their different attitudes affect what happened?*

Back to Standley Lake (40:15 – 44:00)

Chaye: “We were here, and it was our job to share the truth. We were creating something beautiful every day.” (all staff write, photograph and design). She supports print, though she also sees the value of social media in a comprehensive program.