

Steve Goldman

## **“That Newspaper Guy”**

Anyone who has been in Talbot County any time at all knows who you are talking about when you refer to “that newspaper guy.”

Steve Goldman is “that newspaper guy” – the fellow who has turned his passion for collecting into teachable moments using historical newspaper coverage to bring history alive. Steve’s two courses this semester through Chesapeake Forum, an Academy for Lifelong Learning, do just that: “Fake News” and “Presidential Elections.” Their popularity is also responsible for a large portion of registrations this fall.



*Figure 1: Steve Goldman with some of his stack of newspapers*

Describes Goldman, “I started out lecturing by doing the history of newspapers in general, but the subject was just too big. So instead, I looked at what subjects I thought people would be interested in and for which I could use newspapers to present how it was reported at the time. In 2013 I gave a lecture in Oxford based on the War of 1812 that drew a turnout of 70 people. Then I started to do displays in the Oxford museum. I next did a 3-year exhibit at the Oxford Museum titled ‘Oxford Goes to War.’

“I then thought, what else would people be interested in? I gave a lecture on Black history using newspapers to bring it to life. I did one on how women were portrayed in the media from the 1500’s to present time. Later came Crime and Punishment, Disasters, Sports, famous deaths, the history of aviation, space travel. Famous women in aviation, and so on.

“Basically speaking,” he concludes, “I talk about war, I talk about social movements... I talk about topical subjects... which is where the ideas for ‘Fake News’ and ‘Presidential Elections’ came from.”

***“I do it because I really, really, like doing it.”***

“I use the newspapers as a storytelling vehicle,” describes Goldman. “I call it the Magic Carpet ‘time machine’ that takes the viewer on a trip through

history. And it really is just that. You are reading exactly what people were reading back in those days and that's basically what I do."

"I am just so amazed by him," describes Mary Robinson of the St. Michaels Library after a visit to his warehouse in Oxford, MD. "You name a subject and he can grab a newspaper that tells you about it. His head is just full of information. He is so passionate about it that it's contagious." Goldman is known for his sense of humor as well as an amazing ability to answer most, if not all, questions his audiences can come up with.

**"He is so passionate about it that it's contagious."**

This passion started in 1969 after Goldman's Father died and he discovered a drawer stacked full of newspapers commemorating historic events that were important to his Dad. "He put away the end of WW1, Lindbergh crossing the Atlantic, Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt's death, Kennedy's assassination. He had all these things and until he died I never knew that he had them. I've always been a collector as long as I can remember. I was collecting coins back then and I subscribed to a weekly magazine called 'Coin World.' In that periodical I saw an ad offering historic newspapers for sale and I sent in my twenty dollars for 10 newspapers from the War of 1812.

"When they arrived, I was hooked! Not long after, I decided that I was going to build the largest collection of historical newspapers in private hands."

**50 years later, Steve Goldman is still collecting newspapers.**

Ask Goldman a question about his passion of collecting newspapers and you will surely be regaled with stories of his exploits collecting newspapers. "Every time my wife and I would go on vacations, I'd go into used book stores and ask about old newspapers. They would point me to a back room and say I could have the whole room full of dusty bound newspapers for fifty bucks. They would literally say that! That went on for many, many, years. Then I started sending out 'want lists' to historical societies and libraries. Some were putting newspapers on microfilm and they wanted the space. 'We want you to buy the whole library,' they'd say. I asked how many they had, 'Oh, a couple tractor trailers full' and they would sell the whole lot to me.

“I originally started with a 5,000 square foot warehouse. After a while, I started getting occasional calls from dealers who knew I was a serious buyer. Then I started getting calls all the time. I got some incredible material that way.”

***“I was a collector. I just wanted to collect things.”***



***Figure 2: A seaman's chest filled with newspapers reporting from Hawaii after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.***

Goldman used to collect non-sports bubblegum cards from the 1930's and 1940's. “But a person cannot have two very serious hobbies so you have to pick one of the two. You buy what people want and sell what they treasure.

“After a while, my wife said ‘you’ve got all those newspapers, why don’t you sell them?’ Goldman was still practicing Periodontics (dentistry specializing in the gums and supporting structures of the teeth), but he cut back his hours, eventually to one day a week, then one day every two weeks. Then, one day he came in and told his partner he was leaving to go into the historical newspaper business full time.

“I just love it!” he explains with a twinkle in his eyes. And what might have started as hobby eventually replaced dentistry as his business. “I sometimes think I should have done the newspaper thing first!”

***“I wasn't doing this to make money, I was just doing it because I loved it.”***

The story changes with a phone call in 1997. “I got a voice message from someone at a place called the ‘Newseum’ wanting to know if I had the New York Daily News from January 15, 1928. When they called back, I said ‘you may not know me, but you NEED me’ because I knew exactly why they wanted that particular edition.

“The curators came out to my house and spent some time looking at what I had. About two hours after they left they called and offered me a consulting job. For them, I was one stop shopping. They didn’t have to go out searching for things because I had it. At that point, I lent them my collection. I’d go over there once a month for planning of the News History Gallery at the ‘Newseum.’ Eventually my

loan of historical newspapers led to the sale of the collection to the 'Newseum.' They bought the best of the best. The museum quality stuff."

Goldman led a busload of Lifelong Learners from Easton on a trip to the Newseum last winter before the museum was to be closed. For many, it was a first visit and one to look back on with remorse that there was no more time to spend there.

"Now that they have closed and the building is purchased, the plan is to find a new location, a virtual exhibit, or an exhibit that travels around the Country," describes Goldman. "Right now, they are just focused on getting the exhibit out of there."



*Figure 3: Goldman in front of his warehouse in Oxford, MD*

And so another chapter in Goldman's life of collecting comes to an end, but his humor remains. Just look at the name he came up with for this semester's course. Not just 'Fake News,' but 'Five Hundred Years of Fake News: From False Facts and Fictitious Fallacies to Forgotten Foibles and Fabulous Frauds, 1502-2019.'

**Readers can find both of Steve Goldman's presentations this Fall Semester at**

**[www.chesapeakeforum.org](http://www.chesapeakeforum.org). Recorded courses are available for a nominal fee of \$5.**