



News — New Jersey

Fake news a big hit for rural South Jersey 'funny paper'

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Ken Camp, retired helicopter pilot and publisher of the South Jersey DEVILer, talks shop in his home office, surrounded by memorabilia.

by [Jason Nark](#), Staff Writer [@jasonnark](#) | [narkj@phillynews.com](#)

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/new_jersey/fake-news-south-jersey-deviler-funny-paper-hit-salem-20170925.html 1 day ago ... Ken Camp's formula for his 20000-circulation **South Jersey DEVILer**:

The pen his pitchfork, his wife the censor, part-time comedian Ken Camp said he's found the secret to a successful newspaper.

"Light comedy in the front, centerfolds and more risqué stuff in the middle, and the dirty stuff goes in the back," Camp, 69, said last week in his tiny office across from a horse farm in Elmer, Salem County.

Camp's South Jersey DEVILer, a free "funny paper" with a monthly circulation of 20,000 in the area, was first published in March 2001 with some fake news about Air Force One crashing in South Jersey, and it's been a hit ever since, he said, with about 700 subscribers from as far away as Maine and Alaska paying \$24 a year.

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Camp said he's not as political as the Onion, the best-known "funny" paper, but the DEVILER does claim to be "voted the best newspaper in these here United States of America!"

Some think the DEVILER is a welcome relief from real news.

"Any time you can make a fart joke and people laugh at it, you've got an audience," said Jeffrey Tirante, an artist who's been rebuilding a bizarre roadside attraction called the Palace of Depression in nearby Vineland for nearly a decade. "I don't mean that in a bad way, either. Welcome to South Jersey, I guess."

The top headline in the September DEVILER is, surprisingly, real news: "Hillary Clinton considering becoming a preacher!" Camp goes on to wonder what her sermons might sound like. Clinton has taken a lot of hits in the DEVILER, but Camp swears he'll make fun of anyone. Caitlyn Jenner is featured in a fake movie ad this month, too. The rest is mostly jokes and letters.

"I get negative feedback all the time, and I don't care," he said. "Any feedback is good."

It's not a typo: The DEVILers' FREE Because Who'd Pay For It!

"At the end of the day it's not about what you have or what you've accomplished. It's about what you've given back" Denzel Washington

WO Kenneth L. Camp, 22, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth D. Camp, of Elmer, N. J., received the Army Commendation Medal while on duty with the 17th Air Calvary in Vietnam.

ARCHIVES Daily News clip from August 11, 1970, shortly after Camp's crash.

Camp's circuitous route to becoming a publisher began in Vietnam after one year in college in Minnesota. He flew in "hunter-killer" helicopter teams in Vietnam after he was drafted and went to flight school. He spent 1,000 hours flying scout helicopters to look for enemies and draw fire ahead of more heavily-armed attack teams.

"I had the most dangerous job," he said. "We got shot at two or three times a day."

In August 1970, Camp was training a new pilot when his helicopter took fire over thick jungle near the Cambodia border. He had bad vibes, then a rocket-propelled grenade struck their tail boom, spinning them down to the canopy.

"This all happened in seconds," he said. "I thought that I was in a car wreck here in Elmer. I was all messed up."

Camp said he nearly lost his nose and had to have several operations on his wrist. He was medically discharged from the Army as a Chief Warrant Officer 2 and declared 50 percent disabled as a result of his crash. He still has trouble breathing through both nostrils despite numerous surgeries, and sometimes he can't taste or smell.

After Vietnam, Camp sold cars and insurance before he was cleared to fly again, and he headed south to transport workers back and forth to oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, where employees often ragged on one another in an underground newspaper. He later flew lawyers, executives, and sometimes even prostitutes to and from Atlantic City casinos. When he finally gave up flying, Camp opened a sporting goods store near his home and began writing little stories he'd leave around the cash register.

Print news was far less dangerous than flying, Camp said, and surprisingly profitable for a part-time job. He said he's never been in the red.

Camp likes to keep the monthly scantily-clad centerfolds local, but he's been known to publish a buddy or two, like Buzzy, the guy from the VFW.

"He weighed about 115 pounds, but he had a lot of money. People still talk about that centerfold," Camp said. "Some of the photos I get are just unbelievable. I mean, get a professional photographer."

Camp used to make fake advertisements, but now he has a handful of part-time, paid salesmen securing ads for rodeos, duck decoy shows and septic services with mascots straight from the toilet. Camp will localize jokes, turning "a man walks into a bar" into "a man walks into a bar on Buck Road," and there are some positive affirmations sprinkled in.

"In a country where you can be anything, be kind," one of them reads.

Comedy is Camp's true love these days — he has a hippie character and a Vietnam veteran character — and he organizes open mics, emcees shows, and organizes benefits all over South Jersey. Camp cut the paper from 20 pages to 16 and said he'd like to sell the operation, if he could, to get behind the mic more. He estimated it's worth just under six figures.

"This was my retirement, but it turned into a a full-time job in the beginning," he said. "It used to be seven days a week. Now, mostly I get up and write jokes."

When all the content and ads are in, Camp said he can lay out the paper in 12 hours.

Melissa DeCastro, a Salem County freeholder, prefaced her comments about the DEVILer by saying she subscribes to several local and national newspapers, including the Inquirer. Everybody needs a break, though, she said.

"There's a lot of sad news out there, and he's really found a niche," DeCastro said. "There's a lot of hard parts of the day. Sometimes you just want to be entertained."



CURT HUDSON Ken Camp, a retired helicopter pilot, is a comedian and publisher of the rural South Jersey DEVILer, which he produces in his home office.

CURT HUDSON photo

It is easy to tell when your children are growing up. They stop asking where they came from and start refusing to tell you where they are going.

Camp's wife, Kathy, reads over the jokes each month, marking "OK" on most with a blue marker, with a few question marks mixed in when the punchline doesn't work.

"I can pretty much get away with everything," Camp said. "I'm getting better all the time."

PROVIDED Clip from the September issue of the South Jersey DEVILer

