



It was **twenty** years ago today,

Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play

They've been going in and out of style

But they're guaranteed to raise a smile

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band © 1967 EMI Records Ltd.

It started very simply and quietly. Notes posted on bulletin boards on the walls 20 years ago hardly anticipated the revolution that was to come.

In that note, the first modern newspaper graphics editor job was created. It was a new job for me at the Chicago Tribune: It was an unheard of job in the newspaper industry.

Mostly, the creation of this new type of editorship was lost in the turmoil and angst caused by the closing of the Tribune Company's Chicago Today and the merger of dozens of "tabloid" journalists into the white-shirt and narrow-tie culture of the Chicago Tribune.

It was a perfect time for me to move from word editing and picture editing to graphics editing. I had several co-conspirators supporting this move, mostly Tony Majeri and Gus Hartoonian, art directors, and Max McCrohon, managing editor. It was Max who believed in the power of graphics, and it was his idea that the paper should make better use of this important communication tool as he tried to move the paper out of the 1940s and into the '70s.

Part of Max's understanding of the power of this form of communication came from his knowledge

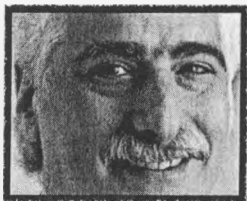
of British journalism. As an Australian, he was much more familiar with the efforts of editor Harold Evans and art director Peter Sullivan, who plied their trade at the Times of London.

Gus and Tony (as they were collectively known at the paper), on the other hand, were trying to carry out Max's visual mandate and trying to redesign the paper quietly so that its long-term (read that as "old") subscribers wouldn't be shocked. They needed all the friends, allies and help they could find in the newsroom.

And help was what my new job was all about: Help for the reader in understanding complex stories, help for the reporters in getting information and help for the artist in getting the particular information needed to make a successful graphic.

Did we think we were starting something new? Sort of. Did we think it would be as big and important as graphics have become? Not bloody likely.

Remember, this was eight years before USA Today launched, four years before the founding of SND, and most newspapers were still printed in black and white. Rather than think about starting a graphics revolution, we were too busy making



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Chicago Tribune

The Presidential years: 1969 to 1974

Successes and failures of the Nixon administration and public reaction to the events



AUGUST 9, 1974: President Nixon resigns, and the Chicago Tribune does a full-page chronology of the former president's reign in the White House. This occurred one month before the official establishment of the Tribune's graphics desk.

graphics by hand (look, Ma, no Mac!) and trying to visually redefine the paper.

Personally, I was too busy trying to define my job to think about redefining anything else.

That was the hardest part: Figuring out what a graphics editor did. I knew what a copy editor did. That's how I started at the Tribune, as a copy editor on the national news desk. I knew what a picture editor did: I did that job, too. And I sort of knew what a "makeup" editor did; I did that for a temporary stint to help design a feature section.

What did a graphics editor do? It was a question that more people — at the paper and outside — asked for many years. Did I draw graphics, or cartoons as some editors liked to call them?

No, I never drew cartoons. I can't draw. I'm not an artist, I told them. I am an editor. I edit graphics. That was the bottom line.

How do you edit graphics? The same way you edit anything else at the paper. Carefully and always with the reader in mind.

I based my job on the city editor's role at the paper. The city editor made assignments, assessed the importance of information (is the story worth

20 inches?) and helped reporters and editors process the article into the paper.

That's what I did. I made assignments to the artists. By reading the wires (or by developing strong working relationships with the local and wire editors — sometimes not an easy task), I was able to gauge what stories were likely to be candidates for page one, which stories were important and which stories needed information graphics.

Today, finding out "what's news" around the world is comparatively easy: Turn on CNN, read the wires on your desktop computer. Twenty years ago, we were still making the transition between hard copy and an electronic front-end system. You still could stand over the wire machines and watch the paper versions of Associated Press and United Press International stories being printed.

There were two things I wish I had explained better to those content editors:

- The importance of graphics. We had no information about what readers wanted; no readership studies to back up our "gut feeling."
- The process necessary to create a graphic. The art department was off in its own area, in many

HOWARD FINBERG'S BOOK

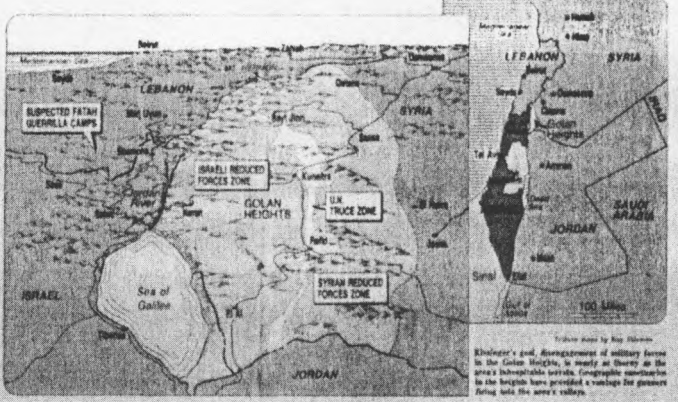


Visual editing: A graphic guide for journalists
Howard Finberg and Bruce Ittule
1990, 280 pages, 8 1/2" x 11"
ISBN 0-534-11736-8

Chicago Tribune

Golan: A key to Mideast strategy

By Philip Caputo
 (Left) The Golan Heights, an escarpment of volcanic granite and basalt that extends for about 10 miles along the Israeli-Syrian border, is a key to Israel's defense strategy. It is the only natural barrier between the two states. (Right) The Golan Heights is a key to Israel's defense strategy. It is the only natural barrier between the two states.



Chicago Tribune

Mideast has all the tornado ingredients



EXPERIMENTATION WITH COLOR: Typical of this approach was an "explainer" (above, left) on the Golan Heights. This page tried to give an **understanding** — with graphics, pictures and words — of the **complex situation** involving Arabs and Israelis. This was the **foundation for all the graphics projects** that followed: **Make it easy for readers to understand complicated and complex situations** — and make it visually appealing. April, 1976: still **six and-a-half years** before USA Today (above) explains the **genesis of storms and tornados**.

“Rather than thinking about a graphics revolution, we were too busy making graphics by hand.”

respects isolated from the rest of the newsroom. Artists didn't get dupes of stories and didn't have a computer terminal when they were first introduced. I wished I had taken editors on "tours" of the graphics-making process so they could better understand why I kept coming back for "one more piece" of information and, more importantly, why an artist needed more than five minutes before deadline to produce a graphic.

That's the value of hindsight. (Even today many editors could benefit by taking a tour of their art departments and seeing how a graphic is built on the Mac and why it is still important not to request something five minutes before deadline.)

After finding out what's news and what stories could be helped by an information graphic, the next major task was making sure the information was correct, spelled properly and placed on the graphic in the right position.

This "checking" role was vital. Not only to prevent serious mistakes from getting into the newspaper, but also to ease some of the burden from the copy desk. However, even my former colleagues on the copy desk didn't understand why graphics were

important and often complained that I was adding an "extra burden" on the desk. Gee, and I thought they wanted to see everything in the paper.

The final aspect of this new job was to negotiate space within the newspaper. Every graphic needed to be sold. Graphics competed against words and pictures. And being the "new kids on the block," we suffered from an occasional shrug of the shoulder by the news editor on duty.

For some news editors, it was a matter of learning to play to their ego. One editor in particular could be "flattered" into giving his opinion about a certain graphic. After that, he "owned" part of it and would — more often than not — use it.

With other editors, I needed to use the "nag" school of journalism. I'd nag them about the importance of graphics and how great they were, etc. And when they didn't use a particularly good graphic, I would ask them "Why?" Pretty soon, they started dummifying in a graphic — any graphic — when they saw me coming across the newsroom.

Would I do it like that again?

That's a hard question. I don't like thinking about some of my behavior back then. The problem



DEADLINE COLOR, MAY 15, 1975: The American ship *Mayaguez*, captured earlier by the Cambodians, is freed by military intervention. The *Three Star Final* edition, left, prepared in the late afternoon and early evening, has a full-width color graphic on page one. By late evening, events caused a remake of the graphic into a 4-column black and white graphic (middle). The *Five Star Final*, about 1:00 a.m., right, has color restored to the new page one graphic — all in the days of letterpress printing and hand-drawn artwork.

with zealous visual journalists is that they can't see the bigger picture. I wish I had been more of a teacher or leader and had been less of a nagger and so tightly wound.

I was wound-up so tight at one point that a couple of practical jokers on the city desk doctored up a graphic to make it appear that the June baseball schedule for the Cubs had 31 days that month. I was half way out the door to the engraving room (and running at the time) when I turned to notice their sly smiles and the pasted 31. It was a valuable lesson. I wish I had had more of them.

The Tribune was exploring new presentations with every new graphics project. We did full-page graphic explainers on subjects from understanding tornadoes to maps of the Mideast to the hunt for the Loch Ness monster.

These projects were the forerunners of many of the efforts being done today by the wire services. But all were original. There weren't any wire graphics services back then. And what graphics did move on the wires, via the photo network, were simple maps and charts. Sometimes, these graphics were nothing more than a cartoon.

The early Tribune graphics pages were in black and white. One of the first explained how air traffic controllers managed the airline traffic in and out of O'Hare airport. Another involved a chronology of President Nixon's term in office that ran the day after he resigned. In retrospect, it doesn't look very complicated to execute. But, 20 years ago, we had no models to use, no examples to follow. It was new, and it was innovative to try and explain to a copy editor who wanted to know why there wasn't a story running on the page.

It didn't take long to move into full-color, although the paper was still printing on letterpress. By keeping the colors simple, the graphics worked fairly successfully. Sometimes color was really just an "afterthought." And sometimes the color got in the way. The technology 20 years ago was not quick enough to respond to changing news.

When the U.S. was involved in a crisis in Southeast Asia, the front page graphics used color to show how events had unfolded. Unfortunately, events kept changing and so did the graphic. (The paper published almost 24 hours a day back then with more than half a dozen editions.) Technically,

“...many editors could benefit by taking a tour of their art departments...”



RELATION OF THE REAL TO THE THEORETICAL: One of the graphics I'm most proud of involved the crash of a DC-10 at O'Hare airport. The crash probe focused on a bolt that held the engine to the wing. We created a very simple graphic, but a graphic that clearly told the story because it related the theoretical — how an engine is bolted to a wing — with the real: a picture of the bolt held before cameras by an FAA inspector. Simple, direct and informative.

“It’s ironic (that)...as graphics have gotten better our readers have less time to spend with them.”

we just couldn’t change the graphic and keep color; color was quickly sacrificed.

Looking at the state of information graphics today, I sometimes marvel at how far we have traveled down the information graphics highway. However, I also wonder whether we have lost sight of the goal of communicating complex information clearly and simply. Sometimes we get so fancy, so involved in the process of creating wonderfully colorful “mega-graphics” that we lose sight of the reader’s needs.

It’s ironic that as graphics have gotten better (and more complicated and packaged with information) our readers have even less time to spend with their newspaper.

I know that sometimes graphics need go deep into a subject and that those readers interested in that information will dive into that material regardless of the time needed to read and digest the information. But what of the casual reader, the skimmer, the subscriber that doesn’t have time to study a

Broken bolt is found; FAA to probe DC-10s

The Chicago Tribune

THE DC-10 THAT crashed Friday may have had a crucial engine bolt that after lifting off the runway, broke off, a Chicago Tribune reporter says.

Although investigators have not yet been able to identify sufficient evidence to prove the plane's accident was, in all, engine bolt break just after takeoff, officials of the Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board are looking into that possibility.

Some aviation officials claim it is the most plausible explanation for the way the bomber got with 275 people aboard turned to the left, after beginning what appeared to be a right turn.

Edward Dwyer, safety board vice chairman said Friday the DC-10 should not have rotated even though was on glide path and on the ground before it hit the top of a three dimensional

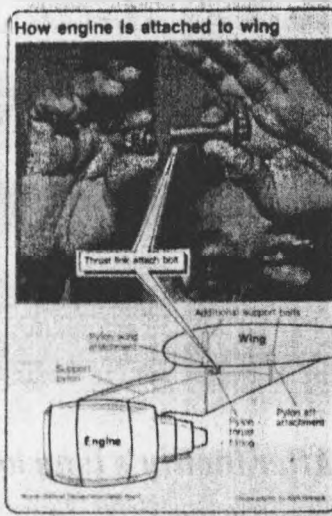
THE FAULT occurred in gate installation normally for a few seconds before leaving to the left. It resulted in a ball of fire, killing 270 persons, including 25 people on the ground, one half mile from the runway.

Investigators pointed that the plane was unable to do with one of its three engines operating on a track designed to do not admit an airplane that part of the separated left wing might have been attached, but engine, causing it to fall.

Although the assembly that holds the engine to the wing will have the engine over the wing to avoid damage to that structure, about a failure where the failure of the left of the engine where the bolt which is located has been located to get the engine to come into the air, making it more noticeable in being able to lift, when not.

FAA said that the DC-10 was not the latest DC-10, but an older model, but indicated the engine bolt had a design error.

The FAA indicated that for the DC-10 to be able to operate, it would weigh no more than 30,000 pounds and



With chairman Edward Dwyer of the National Transportation Safety Board, Dwyer says the broken bolt that broke off that day have contributed to the DC-10 crash.

double-truck spread that looks like it came from a scientific journal or encyclopedia?

There is need for both kinds of graphics — the mega-graphic and the graphic that quickly presents important information that the reader needs to know to understand an event. Think of the reader. It worked 20 years ago. It works today.

I’ve learned a great deal from the early days of information graphics. I learned more about how newspapers are put together — visually and verbally — in the first year as graphics editor than in the previous five years as a copy editor. I also learned more from the daily interaction with editors and artists than I had learned during my college studies.

It was a wonderful time to be a pioneer, even with a few arrows in the back. It was exciting and a little risky. And we had no idea of what was to happen: from USA Today to the founding of SND. It’s fun to be a small part of a very important change in the way newspapers present news and information to their readers. □