

The Death of The Tribune

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*(Music.)*

**00:08**

Intro

VO: Can you name one of your local papers? If your local paper were to suddenly shut down would you notice? When was the last time you read a printed newspaper?

I am Briani Questelles and today we're going to be talking about a paper from my hometown Queens, New York. This local paper enjoyed nearly 50 years years of success before it was brought out by a newly-formed media company and suddenly went bankrupt and closed its doors. But is that the whole story? Today we are going to dig deeper and speak with former Tribune employees to figure out what really happened to The Queens tribune.

**00:47**

VO: Let's start off with Ariel Hernandez, who is a former Queens Tribune reporter. In her time there she was the youngest reporter working on the Queens Tribune newsroom floor, from 2015 until the end of the paper. This is her recalling her final days.

*(Recorder starts.)*

**01:01**

AH: December 17th, 2018. The week before they told us to work from home we hadn't been paid for a month already so we were expecting to go into the office that Friday to be paid. It was a paid Friday. They told us that we would be getting paid and everything will be good. That Thursday, my Editor texts me and he's like "Hey we all have to go into the office tomorrow bring a big bag," and I was like we haven't been working this week so I haven't been sending Grayson, my son, to daycare. He was like 10 months old. I was like I've been staying home with Grayson this week because I haven't been able to pay for daycare so I won't have anyone to watch him tomorrow. He was like you might as well just bring him into the office with you tomorrow because we won't be there for long. So I was like can you just be completely transparent with me and tell me if we are losing our jobs, and he was like I can't say 100% but there's a possibility that that's what's happening tomorrow

*(Recorder ends.)*

VO: On the next day December 18th, 2018, the owners and employees left the Tribune's temporary co-working space and they said goodbye to nearly 50 years of queens history. The Queens Tribune was coined the Paper of record for Queens in its heyday and was once the largest local newspaper serving the borough of Queens. Now only shadows of this once great paper remain scattered throughout the streets of queens. This is the story of how the loss of this local paper impacted nearly 2.4 million residents in New York city's second most populous borough.

Narrated and reported by journalist Briani Questelles, this is The Death of the Tribune.

*(Music.)*

**02:50**

History

VO: The Flushing Tribune was founded by high school teacher Gary Ackerman in 1970. He founded the Flushing Tribune as a way to help spread the stories and the opinions of the Queens community. Queens is a borough made up of 91 distinct neighborhoods and the borders of these neighborhoods typically vary and mesh with each other, with one step you're in Jackson Heights Queens, and with another, you're in Corona Queens. What is important is that each neighborhood has its own identity amongst its resideNorthwesternest way to divide these neighborhoods would be based on their regions. There is Northwesternnewspaper Queens, which includes Astoria, North Eastern Queens home to bayside and Flushing, Central Queens which contains Jackson Heights, South Eastern Queens, south Western Queens, and the Rockaways.

**03:39**

MN: I always say to people who don't know New York and don't know Queens when you write your letter and you're from Brooklyn you write Brooklyn, New York. If you're from The Bronx you're right Bronx, New York or Manhattan, or Staten Island. In Queens we don't write Queens, New York we write Jamaica, New York Forest Hills, New York Flushing, New York Bayside, New York. We are a community that reflects the neighborhoods in which we live the Tribune was unique is that it had within its paper sections that only covered the various communities so we devoted editorial coverage for the Bayside or Eastern queens or Western queens or South queens and people got to know that we were there for them

**(04:25)**

VO: That was Michael Nussbaum the former Publisher of the Queens Tribune. As the Flushing Tribune became more popular in the early '70s, it expanded to cover stories in other Queens neighborhoods; Astoria, Jackson Heights, Western Queens, South Queens, Foresthills, Bayside, and Eastern Queens, thus making it the Queens Tribune by 1976. The paper's founder Gary Ackerman would go on to become a congressman and serve for 30 years until his retirement in 2013. As Ackerman began to focus on his legislative duties he passed the baton onto the publishers— first, the late Mike Shankler and later on to Michael Nussbaum. Here's Nussbaum again:

MN: Over the years it grew to become the borough's number one weekly newspaper, from the 1970s until we sold it in 2018. The Tribune was a weekly paper that covered local community news. Queens being one of the largest geographic boroughs of the city and also the most diverse part of the city had a multitude of community newspapers.

VO: New York City has over 200 local newspapers, with about a quarter of them housed in queens county. These papers vary based on interest, frequency of publication, and circulation, but no other weekly paper was created quite like the Tribune. Within the Tribunes compact tabloid-style sheets of paper, it sectioned off areas where readers could specifically read news from their specific neighborhood, or read the news of all of Queens giving each neighborhood their own focus and news coverage.

**05:59**

MN: We were the largest paper in the county. We were the only paper that truly covered Queens County with a circulation at the height of 146,000, which was enormous. Many people probably said that we did too much but we believed that we also had the financial wherewithal to do what we did.

**06:19**

VO: Due to its success the tribune was motivated to do more and give more focus to other parts of Queens that had been overlooked in their weekly papers.

The SE Queens 1990

**06:27**

MN: Going back to the late 1990s I believe I came to Mike Shankler and I said there's a community of queens that we're ignoring. A community that's growing rapidly, that has a financial base and is thriving and we're ignoring it by not really delegating enough space in the

paper so, therefore, let's create our own paper. So we created The Press of SouthEast queens which was a separate paper, with a separate associate publisher Marcia Comrie, and a staff and we've made it our became our Friday paper with the Tribune was the Thursday paper and it covered SouthEast queens on its own which was an interesting group it's the interesting group geographically that made it easy to distribute the paper.

VO: In the '90s with the growing success of the Tribune and the growing population of South East Queens, the owners of the tribune decided to create another paper to compliment the reportings presented in the Tribune. This new paper would shine a brighter light on SouthEast queens. Here's Marcia Comrie who worked as the South East Queens Press editor in its early years.

**07:40**

MC: The publisher's Mr. Shankler and Nassbaun felt that Southeast Queen should have its own dedicated full paper. In the queen's Tribune you have sections for communities there's just a section dedicated to them to that area but by and large, you are reading about the entire borough. Again nothing wrong with that. You know, information is good, but they felt that Southeast Queens was unique that we had a unique perspective and a unique sort of community. Southeast Queens at the time, I don't know about now, but Southeast Queens was known as the wealthiest black community in all of America. And there was a community in Baltimore as well that has that distinction, they were I believe number two at the time and Southeast Queens was number one. And Southeast Queens has its own elected leaders and just some great stories to tell. So they wanted to give us full coverage with our own paper designed with its own look and with a black editor-in-chief, me. And so it really worked.

VO: Queens is the most diverse borough in New York city its racial and ethnic communities are usually concentrated in different areas. Census data shows that Northern and Western Queens are home to a predominantly more white population and South-Eastern Queens being home to large numbers of black and Caribbean residents. While central Queens is home to large concentrations of Hispanic and Asian residents in the borough. The South East Queens Press covered the neighborhoods of Jamaica, Rosedale, Saint Alans, Hollis, Springfield Gardens, Lurelton, and Queens Village. These are all areas with high percentages of black and Caribbean residents. Heres publisher Michael Nussbaum again.

MN: It is concentrated literally in 2 community boards, community boards 12 and 13. And those 2 communities I've worked in when I was with the mayor's office, you know centuries ago, and they were separate they had a strong business base and a strong leadership base. And while we all say we get along we are diverse but we're not really diverse we retreat ourselves into our own neighborhoods. And that was one unique community that we could identify geographically and

cover the news as easy as we would go to some other communities where you would have a normal mixture of ethnic groups and religious groups so it was what I like to say are easy to identify the readership and the news.

VO: Due to the racial makeup of the South East Queens and its separation from the Tribune, writers were able to be more experimental with their reporting, dedicating sections of the paper to the traditional and religious readers as well as being able to offer early reporting opportunities to young journalists from the area.

9/11

**10:47**

VO: With the addition of the second paper both The Queen's Tribune and The SouthEast Queens Press now had more space to dedicate to local stories. This proved essential during times of crisis as the extra space became crucial to help address the community.

MC: It was not a hard newspaper because it's weekly so you don't do hard news in weekly papers because by the time it comes out it's old news. But I remember after 911 the 1st couple of weeks after 911 happened I was gathering the stories. You had the big stories being covered by the major papers every day, and the TV news, and all of that. We didn't do that. We didn't want that because the story– it happened and they're all covering it. We focused on the community. The impact on the community. Who lost loved ones from our community. Who is hurting, seriously hurting mentally needing therapy or whatever if they chose to talk about that.

VO: That was former South East Queen Press Editor in Chief Marcia Comrie. She recalled reporting the story of a Queens man who worked in the world trade center and escaped the disaster but died a week later from a heart attack caused by the trauma of that day. She also remembered when the tribune and Press would print essays from high school students that went to school in Manhattan as a way to share with others what the community felt during these uncertain times.

MC: We told those stories that these kids witnessed Nobody else had told those stories. Covering these little side stories was more important to me than the big stories because we all know the big the attacks happened we know that was the search and rescue and everything that was going on we didn't need to tell that everybody else was telling that the community papers needed to tell those stories so and that's what we did we tell the story about our how this massive story impacted our people. Our neighbors, you're really writing about your neighbors because the paper is in your community and you're from the community writing about it. So it was a very powerful moment in our history.

VO: Throughout the years the Tribune would cover stories that may not have affected all of New York but had big impacts on the Queens Community. Reporter Ariel Hernandez, who we heard from in the very beginning of this podcast, recalled her time reporting on local fires, homeless shelter shutdowns, and local politics.

AH: we covered everything. We covered basic needs of the community. So like people that were having plumbing issues or natural disasters, racism, hate crimes. We covered of course like shows that were going on local talent. We covered it all.

VO: It wasn't only local stories that the Tribune and Queens Press printed, both papers also featured advertisements for local businesses. In the 2000s The Tribune and Queens Press secured advertising deals with local institutions, such as the JFK AirTrain and a number of doctors' offices and businesses that popped up during these times. The bulk of the advertising revenue for the Queens Tribune came from local stores and as long as the local businesses were okay, the Tribune was too.

#### Problem: 2008

#### **14:51**

MN: 2008 hit everybody in this country and remember, weekly newspapers survived based on advertising. It doesn't survive on the 50 cents or a dollar that people pay, it's free. And if you don't have the advertising revenue you can't do what you can do, and you don't have the bank account that we had, to a certain time, you can't keep on publishing the size. So in 2008, we had to make some decisions because revenue dropped off substantially. And it hit the newspaper business but it hit rather the mom and pops

#### **15:26**

VO: The 2008 recession was triggered by a bank crisis that led to a rapid increase of property prices and just as quickly a rapid decrease of those values, thus leading to a stock market plummet that lasted from 2007 to 2009. It would ultimately be coined the Great recession and for many Americans, it resulted in higher student loan debt, diminished job prospects, and an overall shift in supply and demand for everyday necessities. For the Tribune this led many advertisers pulling out their advertising in order to keep themselves afloat.

MN: Well a lot of the Queens Tribune advertisers are your local, you know, stores. whether it be a clothing store or a restaurant and those were hurt dramatically. And larger industries were hurt and you know people had to save their dollars and advertising money is relative money based on

the availability of cash and also the need to advertise. So people cut back and we had to cut back and we began reducing some of our staff and some of our circulations at that time.

**16:27**

VO: The Queens Tribune wasn't the only local paper to suffer great losses during the recession. I spoke with Jim Kelly the owner of another local New York paper, The Long-Islander. Which shared a similar circulation number and geographical range to that of the Tribune.

JK: It was tough times. I looked at the 09', 10' time frame when I bought the paper and they slowed down. But, interestingly enough I think that was the beginning of the decline of the local newspaper because people stopped advertising, so advertising dwindled and if you look at 2011, 2012 up to 2013 almost every year advertising budgets went down for newspapers.

**17:15**

VO: Due to this Kelly turned the Long Islander into a subscription newspaper. He was able to do this without much pushback, due to the majority of his readers being made up of middle-class families. Back at the Tribune, Michael Nussbaum seemed to be against the idea of charging for a local weekly paper, due to the economic diversity of Queens. They continued to rely on local advertisers. But not everyone at the Tribune thought that dependence on local advertising was good for the paper, Here is former Tribune reporter Ariel Hernandez.

**17:46**

AH: Journalism is a dirty world. It is a very dirty world. It's amazing how much advertisement plays a role in journalism. There had been many times where I would want to cover a hard news story, like homeless shelter being shut down, like important things and then being told you cannot because we have an advertiser that just gave us money for you to run the fact that they are opening up their business. So like if it had nothing to do with advertising it was that hard to compete with. So that was like one of the main things, that was the biggest thing actually like if it wasn't getting paid for it was likely not going to be ran.

VO: The recession hit certain parts of Queens harder than others. Marcia Comrie told me that the South East Queens Press was the paper that struggled the most as a result of local advertising dependency.

**18:38**



MC: Financially it was not that successful for them or for us. Because at the time we did not have major restaurants in Southeast queens. We've had some since. We also did not have a lot of major commercial entities; they were mom and pops, almost all mom and pop stores. So in terms of the financial aspect, it didn't have a whole lot of that.

VO: Comrie said that a lot of South East Queens residents tend to spend more leisure time and money in neighboring Long Island and that the Queens Press had to get more creative with their advertising by teaming up with companies that appealed to their reader base such as Air Jamaica and doctors' offices located specifically in Southeast Queens. Tribune Publisher Michael Nussbaum said that these deals fell short of keeping that paper sustainable.

MN: The press of Southeast queens was never profitable in any year that we published that I think we published over 20 years of that paper it was never a financial success. I mistook the advertising base it wasn't as great as I would hope it could be even though we kept the overhead down and we used the same staff. We assigned a full-time reporter for that paper, but the administrative offices and the art department, and everyone else and classifieds all worked together for every aspect of the company. So you're able to be successful by using every resource you had under one roof for any particular product. But the advertising revenue was the key and it never met its expectations.

### Problems Money and advertising

**20:30**

VO: After a time of struggling to keep the tribune afloat, in 2015 The Queens Tribune moved north from its two-story Fresh Meadows office space to a more affordable office in the Whitestone neighborhood.

**20:42**

MN: The good news is the size of the paper you know did not shrink that much. I think we cut back on other expenses that we had other frills we had an office in queens that was reasonably large. Probably had much, much too much space. And we cut back on two things one the executives and the senior staff took a salary cut and we cut back on our overhead by eventually moving from— at the time we were in fresh meadows with two levels and a lot of space, to a smaller office in Whitestone. And we were able to save substantial money in terms of overhead close to 50%.

VO: The Press stayed in SouthEast Queens but Comrie gave her take on these changes from the point of view of the Southeast Queens Press staff.

MC: You could see by the ads or lack thereof. You could see by the size of the paper. The Southeast green spread the Southeast Queen's press rarely ever went over 24 pages and that's not good. In terms of the commercial viability of it. That wasn't good. And the Tribune also was not doing as well as some of its competitors if you will.

*(Music.)*

**22:07**

MN: Probably my biggest mistake that I made. We were looking at some point, obviously, Gary retired from Congress Mike Shenkler, you know, was getting tired and he wanted to retire. I was still willing to get up every day and work 7 days a week and I was interested in carrying forward and we decided to continue, but the economics dictated that we need a cash infusion. We needed someone to come in. I spent 5 years running the paper and at 1 point we decided that enough is enough we need a cash infusion fusion. And we were approached by a broker to this particular group Ocean Gold

Ocean Gold

**22:51**

VO: In the Spring of 2018 Nussbaum sold both The Queens Tribune and the Southeast Queens Press to an independent Media company called Ocean Gold LLC.

By this time magnitude of the paper's financial burden had become clear even to those not employed at the paper. Annie White works for the New York Digital Print center located in Whitestone New York. Her office was just a few steps from the previous Queens Tribune newsroom. And although the Print Center never printed the Tribune, due to her proximity she became friends with members of the Tribune sales team. The sales team employees I reached out to chose not to comment for this podcast, but Annie Whyte spoke about what it was like working next to them at the time.

AW: I'm gonna say at the beginning of 2018 all of a sudden we didn't see the employees that much. Things started to change and you can tell something was going on but they weren't at liberty to really say anything so for months we didn't see them very often— where they would just pop in our office because the door was open and they just would pop in on the way to the ladies

room or something like that. All of a sudden we stopped seeing them they were very secretive and I would say– to one of the women who was kind of in charge and– I'd say "what's going on over there?" you know, and she's like "oh I can't really say anything yet," but "I don't know, I don't know," and she was very hesitant. She was very apprehensive. I don't think that she liked the direction it was going, but yeah I can see the writing on the wall. And then when The owner up and decided to leave and go to the communal space that they went to the employees were very unhappy.

VO: Tribune reporter Ariel Hernandez also remembered the newsroom feeling unstable in the months leading up to the sale.

AH: 1st of all the staff when declining every week it was like we lost a person every day. Apparently, our newspaper was going bankrupt so Michael Nussbaum who was running the Tribune had to sell the Tribune. Which is weird because as he was selling the Tribune he was starting up a new newspaper called the Brooklyn eagle. We kind of had an idea that the Tribune was going through issues because we went from getting paid twice a week to sometimes getting paid twice a month. It went from every 2 weeks to like twice a month. And then there were times where they would give us our paycheck on a Friday and be like you can't cash this until Monday. So like we knew there was some type of like money situation going on but we didn't like think anything of it. Until Ocean Goal Media came to visit us one day and like they just dropped the bomb on everybody that we're being sold.

VO: Ocean Gold was a company created by William Ruggiero earlier that same year and it quickly grew local buzz by sponsoring and donating to multiple Long Island and New York City events. In the Spring of 2018, it sponsored the Friday Night Fight down that took place in Williamsburg and it made a positive name for itself by swooping in and offering support to many local events. While Nussbaum stayed with the paper until the fall of that year, he eventually moved on to focus on his current paper the Queens Daily Eagle.

**26:01**

MN: I knew eventually I was not gonna stay with the Tribune even though they wanted me to it was not a great separation.

VO: In the take over Ocean Gold had a lot of plans for the Tribune. Although Ocean Gold had no previous experience in local paper management, they used their previous knowledge of media and local events to partner the Tribune name with other large local events in Queens and the surrounding areas. One of their highest-profile moves was to partner the Tribune with the

Belmont horse race track to produce the guides for the 150th Belmont Stakes Race. This secured the Tribune with a large advertiser for that summer. Ocean Gold showed that they were willing to invest considerable money to reassure the Tribune employees that they were in good hands and recruited seasoned publishers and news heads to run the paper. They appointed former City & State publisher Andrew Holt to be the new CEO of the Tribune, and the City & State Vice President Jasmine Freeman to run the South East Queen's Press.

### OceanGold Problems

#### **26:58**

MC: They Sort of relaunched the Southeast Queen's press. They had some little changes but they relaunched in Brooklyn. The launch of the paper took place in Brooklyn. So you are covering Southeast Queens but you don't have your launch in Southeast Queens or anywhere in Queens, you took it to Brooklyn. That's what I heard. So you know if you want to introduce yourself as the new publishers you come to the community that you're covering or at least the borough that you're covering. Little things like that added up to a big failure and I think they, whatever they spent to purchase the papers was lost I would imagine.

VO: while Comrie had moved on to work at York College at this time, Ocean Gold also changed the look of the paper by choosing to change printers and work with The New York Times printing plant in Queens. In the hopes of making the paper more appealing to compete with other big named papers.

#### **28:10**

MC: The papers did not look the same. The Press kept its look, The size, and the cover, and everything but the Trib went big and long not in terms of pages but terms of design. And you had all these separate sections like The New York Times, and you're on the train trying to read it but it's falling apart because it's not stapled— granter neither is The New York Times but The New York Times is a big paper. So I just think they were in over their heads, the people they had managing it. I don't know if it's the company that was over its head in general, or it's the people.



Photo Source: *Issuu.com*

Queens Tribune Example September 2014



Photo Source: *Issuu.com*

Queens Tribune Example July 2018

VO: With each change, the Tribune transformed from its familiar small-town paper-feel to mimic the larger papers of the time. However, Ocean Gold's funds were not endless and they quickly needed a way to cut back on their spending. Following the introduction of their new look and feel Ocean gold let go of most of the Tribune's senior staff. Under Ocean Gold, the Tribune kept its younger and newer reporters and assigned them to write for both the Tribune and the Press. This meant a smaller staff but more work for the reporters that stayed.

29:26

MN: They did understand the Queen's Tribune brand. They decided to rebrand it. Reorganize it and the focus totally changed. And the format changed from a tabloid to a broadsheet and the content changed. And they were young people that did not have a base in Queens or a true knowledge of what was going on. They had other ambitions and they failed to execute, you know, a good proper business plan to keep the Tribune going.

VO: Similar to Nussbaum in 2015, Ocean Gold attempted to cut back on its overhead by downsizing the office, taking the Queens tribune from its Whitestone office to a co-working space in the more modern neighborhood of Long Island City.

*(Long Island City Streets natural sound.)*

**30:20**

VO: Walking the streets of Long Island city the high-rise buildings, compact streets filled with restaurants, and above-ground subways feels like a stark contrast to the quiet suburban streets of most Queens. It comes as no surprise that when the Tribune under Ocean Gold LLC. Moved from its Whitestone office to a co-working space in Long Island city it lost a bit of its connection to Queens as a whole. The articles shifted to reflect the news and events of the entire City of New York as well as parts of upstate New York.

**30:51**

VO: Hernandez was one of the few journalists spared from the rapid layoffs and went with the new owners to the new location.

AH: They had this entire vision, how they were gonna completely revamp The Queen Tribune, make it more modernized. They completely change the logo, it kind of looked a lot more like The New York Times like if you were to open it up– it didn't look like The Queen's Tribune. And like they had a huge vision of how we're gonna focus on hard news. We started doing like around the borough just like New York One but we had it in writing. Like it was a lot of dope things like, had had they been legit about what they were planning it could have possibly been a very successful newspaper

VO: These changes did little to bring the Tribune out of its financial problems and the paper continued to lose money over the next several months.

MC: I think I saw the writings on the wall but the shock, if I can call it that, was how quickly they managed to kill these two papers. They had no idea how to handle two newspapers in Queens under the same roof.

*(Recorder starts.)*

Last day

**32:00**

AH: I've never felt such a toxic vibe in my life. Like everyone was so hurt and scared and worried about what was gonna happen to their jobs. We were all waiting and he was supposed to get there at 9 AM he didn't show up yet and I'm talking about Andrew, he hadn't shown up yet.

VO: the Andrew that Ariel Hernandez is referring to is Andrew Holt, the then CEO, and publisher of The Tribune under Ocean Gold.

AH: Then he says 11:30 he calls and he says that he's running late. So we're all still waiting, we've been there since eight in the morning. He says 9:00, then he says 11:30– we're still waiting. Then it's almost 2 o'clock and we're like okay, is Andrew coming in? So he comes in he strolls in, he doesn't say anything to anybody he goes straight into the room to talk to HR, who obviously will be the one who provides us with all our information. So then he comes into the room he has everyone crowded into one room and he just tells us, you know, unfortunately, The Queens Tribune was so bankrupt that Ocean Gold Media was not able to pull The Queen's Tribune out of this bankruptcy. We don't have enough money, So everyone is being furloughed today. We don't know– maybe if we can sell the Queen's Tribune you guys can start working again or you guys can get paid again but it all depends on whether or not we sell The Queens Tribune.

*(Recorder ends.)*

VO: On December 18th, 2018 The Queens Tribune closed its doors for good.

### Conclusion

### **33:29**

MC: it was unfortunate. It was sad. It's a big loss to the community. Papers come and papers go, usually not so suddenly. It was like the death of somebody almost. One moment it was there and then it was gone. Queens lost a part of its representation. Certainly, Southeast queens lost a big part of its representation in terms of news coverage, local news coverage. It was a huge loss to us. To the area and as far as the Tribune goes the entire borough.

VO: The Tribune was the first job for reporter Ariel Hernandez when she graduated from University. Publisher Michael Nussbaum said The Queens Tribune often acted as a stepping stone for young reporters to get their start in journalism.

MN: We brought people in that we'd like to nurture and a particular Mike Shankler was very very good to teach young reporters how to be a better reporter. And we're proud of the fact that so many of the reporters or editors that work for the Tribune are now or have been working on the national level. Whether be the Washington Post, or whether it be in the Dallas morning star, The New York Times, The Daily News, The New York Post Miami papers. So, we have given bread to a lot of people that have started with us. And a reporter you know has to have ambition

and the Tribune was known that if a reporter stayed too long he was probably not ambitious and if a reporter stayed for 2 or 3 years he'd learned a great deal to move on to another level

VO: Marcia Comrie, the former editor in chief of the South East Queens Press, agreed that local papers like the Tribune played a key role in helping young journalism students, in Queens, begin building their careers.

MC: Part of the loss of the Press and the Trib— I work at a college, we have a journalism major here. They provided internships and job opportunities for our students. We benefited the paper as well the paper's because they're getting basically free reporting by these young reporters, who are looking to build bylines so that when they graduate and sometimes even before they graduate they can use those bylines to get jobs, and then when they graduate to get into grad school. It's been a loss on many levels.

VO: The Tribune is just one of 1,700 weekly papers nationwide that have closed since 2008. I wanted to get a sense of what people outside of the industry thought about the importance of local news, and whether they agreed with Comrie that it was a major loss for the community. So I approached some residents from different neighborhoods on the streets of Queens.

### VoxPop

#### **36:31**

Jamaica Resident: Say that again?

BQ: what part of queens are you from?

Jamaica Resident: Jamaica.

BQ: Jamaica, Queens?

Jamaica Resident: Yeah.

Fresh Meadows Resident: here, Fresh Meadows.

Sunnyside Resident: I'm from Sunnyside.

St. Albans Resident: St. Albans



Queens Village Resident: Queens Village

Springfield Resident: I am in Springfield Gardens

St. Albans Resident: Where do I get my local news? Channel 5, Fox 5, The Daily News, News Day, you know, stuff like that.

Jamaica Resident: New York one. You have CBS

Queens Village Resident: I'll be honest with you- I don't buy papers. I'm not going to lie to you sister

Jamaica Resident: My go-to is New York one because that's the local. Channel 2- an old staple. Channel 7, if Channel two is not showing.

Sunnyside Resident: Sunnyside news from the Sunnyside Post and New York City news probably from the New York Times.

Fresh Meadows Resident #2: I get it online on my phone

Jamaica Resident: Well there's no more news papers everything now is on the internet everything now is digital

Fresh Meadows Resident: I don't watch too much *news* news anymore it's depressing.

St. Albans Resident: now really a big news paper guy, it's a lot of negativity. I'm not really big on that.

Queens Village Resident: if you listen to the news it's bad news. You watch tv it's bad news. If you read the newspaper it's bad news. There is nothing good on the news.

St. Albans Resident: a lot of negative news out there we need more positivity in our life.

**37:45**

VO: In a report, by Penelope Muse Abernathy of Hussman School of Journalism and New Media, they found that within the past decade and a half more than 1 in 5 newspapers have closed nationwide. A good half of the counties throughout the United States only have one newspaper and there are almost 200 counties sprinkled throughout the nation that have no

newspapers at all. This largely affects suburban and rural areas throughout the country where most newspapers see pushed to focus their coverage on larger metro regional and city areas. And as we've heard the effects of this are already evident amongst Queens residents. Here's what Michael Nussbaum had to say on this topic.

**38:24**

MN: The Daily Newspapers only cover the larger picture. Rarely cover the communities of Queens and if they do it's usually the negative aspect of it, it could be a crime scene or a shooting or something that happens but we delved into literally block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood and it made the Queens Tribune a very important paper.

VO: With the lack of local papers like the Tribune people are left to rely solely on papers that cover more general areas, such as New York City as a whole, and those papers are more spacially limited in what stories they can cover, usually opting for more urgent hard news stories that aren't always the more positive. The largest 25 newspaper chains own  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all newspapers including  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the countries' 1,200 daily papers. Many families and locally-owned papers have given up competing with the big guys. This all leads to a consolidation of all news. Which means that a group of people is actually in charge of what news we're actually receiving. This leads to less diversity in the news coverage and specific areas of the country that are being overlooked entirely.

**39:31**

VO: After they stopped publishing, Ocean Gold continued to attempt to find a new financial backer for The Tribune, but by June of 2019 they gave up for good. In total, Ocean Gold was only able to keep the paper open for eight months after buying it, ending the Tribunes 48-year run. The Tribune never resumed publishing and its website was taken down. Today there are a few digitized copies of the Tribune's old papers in some internet archives, but other than that, not even its old journalists have access to their old stories.

*(Music.)*

**40:00**

VO: I'm Briani Questelles and this has been the death of The Tribune

## Source List

Marcia Moxam Comrie, November 9, 2021; Former Editor-in-Chief of the Queens Press;  
[mcomrie@york.cuny.edu](mailto:mcomrie@york.cuny.edu); 718-262-3865

Ariel Hernandez, March 24, 2021; Former Queens Tribune Reporter;  
[ariellhernandez1.wixsite.com/raisingreysen](http://ariellhernandez1.wixsite.com/raisingreysen); 1(845) 645-2198

Jim Kelly, October 7, 2021; Owner of The LongIslander News Paper; (515) 351-7091

Michael Nussbaum, June 23, 2021; Former Publisher and Owner of the Queens Tribune;  
[michael@queenspublicmedia.com](mailto:michael@queenspublicmedia.com)

Annie White, April 24, 2021; June 25, 2021; New York Digital Print Center; 1(347)  
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