

July 14, 2008

MEDIA TALK

Big-Time Cable News to Small-Town Paper

By **BRIAN STELTER**

Roger Ailes, the chairman of Fox News, liked his local newspaper so much he decided to buy it.

Mr. Ailes, 68, who counseled Republican presidents before creating the Fox News Channel, purchased The Putnam County News and Recorder last month. The 142-year-old weekly newspaper has a circulation of about 3,000 in Putnam County, N.Y., which is about 60 miles north of New York City. The sale was announced Wednesday in the newspaper.

But residents of the area should not expect any sort of makeover, ideological or otherwise. The paper will “probably stay the same,” said Elizabeth Ailes, Mr. Ailes’s wife, who will be the publisher. “We bought it not to change it, but perhaps it will evolve over time.”

The Aileses do not plan to manage the paper day to day; rather, they will hire a general manager. For now, the seller, Brian O’Donnell, who has been the publisher for 12 years, will stay on as a senior consultant.

Mr. O’Donnell, who did not respond to a request for comment, was quoted in the article that the paper ran about the sale as saying that he thought “it was time for a change.”

To readers, the change may be imperceptible. “It’s a really quaint paper,” Mrs. Ailes said by phone. “It reflects the community. We really like it, and that’s why Roger wanted to buy it.”

Mrs. Ailes said that being in the News and Recorder newsroom was “sort of a throwback” to her days on the college newspaper at Southern Connecticut State University. In the 1990s, she worked at NBC, CNBC and the short-lived cable channel America’s Talking.

In the News and Recorder article about the sale, Mr. Ailes said that his family had recently built a home in the area and had “always enjoyed reading the local paper.” The article did not disclose the sale price, though it was probably small change to Mr. Ailes: according to a News Corporation filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, he earned nearly \$11 million in the fiscal year that ended last year. **BRIAN STELTER**