



THE VOICE OF THE CHAIN OF LAKES

The Misquah Pilot-Independent

“Where the coffee’s hot, the lakes are cold, and all the children are above average.” — Serving the Chain since 1897.

NEWS

Eight Hundred Ninety-Four Pounds, and Nobody to Beat: Bjornstad Wins the Scale Alone

M. Aakre scratched Thursday with a split found on the shoulder of the pumpkin, leaving C. Bjornstad to roll onto a certified scale in front of two hundred people and win a war he has been fighting since June by not having to fight it. He did not enjoy it.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

AT THE FAIRGROUNDS — The scale said 894.5 pounds. It was the largest pumpkin ever weighed in this county, it beat last year’s winning number by better than a hundred pounds, and it was the only entry on the platform Saturday morning, because the man who has spent eleven weeks in this

newspaper’s letters column arguing about carts and gates was standing in the crowd with his hands in his pockets, having withdrawn on Thursday afternoon. M. Aakre found the split Thursday morning — a shoulder crack, four inches, the kind that opens quietly overnight when a fruit puts on twenty pounds in a

week and the skin declines to keep up. He telephoned the horticulture superintendent at 11 a.m., scratched the entry, and asked that it not be announced until Saturday, “so the man doesn’t spend two days deciding how to feel about it.” The superintendent honored the request. Bjornstad learned of it at 9:40 Saturday morning, twenty minutes before the weigh-in, from Verna Tho, who says he stood still for a moment and then said, “Well, that’s no good.” What followed was the strangest ceremony this fair has staged. Two hundred people came out for a contest with one contestant. The pumpkin came off the trailer on a sling and four volunteers, went onto the certified scale, and registered a number that would have won any weigh-in ever held here by any measure anyone could name. The crowd applauded for a long time. The winner accepted a purple ribbon, a check for forty dollars, and congratulations from perhaps sixty individuals, and this newspaper watched him look for the same person in the crowd about a dozen times. They spoke afterward, briefly,

by the scale, out of the hearing of everyone including this reporter, which is why it is not printed here. What is printable is what Bjornstad said when asked for a comment on the number. “It’s a good pumpkin,” he said. “It isn’t an answer. An answer takes two.” Asked whether he would say more, he said he had a letter to write and that we would print it, which we have, on the opinion page, along with one from the man who scratched. The pumpkin goes to St. Paul. Entries for the State Fair’s giant-pumpkin weigh-off close this week and the fair opens Thursday, and Bjornstad has borrowed a flatbed trailer and a tarp from his neighbor and intends to haul it down Wednesday night, in the dark, driving fifty. He has been advised by three separate people that the numbers down there begin around a thousand pounds and go up sharply from there, and that nobody from this county has ever placed. “I’m aware,” he said. “I’m not going down there to place. I’m going down there to see what it looks like next to the real ones. Then I’ll know what I’m doing next spring.”

NEWS

Five Days, One Porcupine, and the Biggest Gate in Forty Years

The fair board counted 11,400 through the gates across five days — the best since 1986 — and lost, in Verna Tho's accounting, one ice machine, one animal, and no children. Sunday's rain arrived exactly late enough.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Grand Champion Goes to a Fifteen-Year-Old Who Has Been Getting Up at Five Since March

Callie Tho's market steer took grand champion Saturday afternoon in front of the biggest barn crowd in years, and the record fifty-eight-member 4-H roster sent seven animals and eleven exhibitors on to the State Fair.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Three Girls, Eighty Cows, and a Clean Sweep of the Dairy Barn

Maren, Greta, and Liv Vekved took grand champion dairy calf, cow, and steer in the same afternoon — the first sweep by one family in the barn's memory — and all three animals load out Wednesday for St. Paul, where the girls have been before and their mother has stopped being nervous about it.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026





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NEWS

The Porcupine Was Out for Fifty Minutes and Made It Roughly Nine Feet

A latch, a Thursday afternoon crowd, and one of the least urgent escapes in the history of American animal husbandry. He was located under the display case he had been sitting on top of, and was, per the Forest Club, “not even hiding, exactly.”

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Twenty-Two Years of This: Sandbo Beats Tvedt by Fourteen Inches in Front of the Biggest Crowd of the Week

The Friday night tractor pull drew standing room, ran until ten-forty, and ended the way it has ended more often than not since 2004 — with two men who have been trading this class back and forth their whole adult lives shaking hands at the sled.

BY CURT “SONNY” HALVORSEN • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

It Rained. They Ran It Anyway. It Was Better in the Mud.

The demolition derby went off Sunday afternoon in a steady rain that turned the arena into something between a track and a stock pond, and the fair board reports the grandstand did not lose a single person to the weather.

BY CURT “SONNY” HALVORSEN • AUGUST 25, 2026



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NEWS

The Beer Garden Had Its Best Five Days Ever, and the Local Tap Ran Dry on Saturday

The Lions Club's garden poured a record volume across the fair, helped considerably by a taproom eleven days old whose flagship went empty at 8:40 Saturday night and had to be resupplied by pickup truck.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Ninety-One Units, Four Tractors Older Than the Highway, and Candy in Quantities That Alarmed the Dentist

The fair parade ran eleven blocks Saturday at eleven, took thirty-eight minutes to pass a given point, and included — for the first time in its history — a brewery float, a porcupine sign, and a pumpkin on a flatbed.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Eight Seconds, Then Twelve Minutes: The Rodeo and the Fireworks Close the Biggest Night of the Year

The sanctioned rodeo filled the grandstand Saturday night for the first time since the fair added it in 2019, and the fireworks that followed at



9:40 were, per the fire chief, “adequately supervised and slightly longer than budgeted.”

BY CURT “SONNY” HALVORSEN • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

The Complete Open-Class Results: All 412 Entries, and Where the Purple Went

Judged Wednesday, posted Wednesday evening, argued about since. The full list of first-place and champion awards across the open-class divisions, printed here as it is every year, with the pickle classes given the space they have earned.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

“Chain of Lakes” Goes to St. Paul: The Aid’s Quilt Is Selected for State Fair Display

Seven women, four hundred hours, and one blue-green quilt that has been on a frame in the church basement since January. It was judged champion Wednesday and named to the State Fair’s exhibition display Thursday, which has not happened to a Misquah quilt since 1994.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

School Starts a Week From Wednesday, Before Labor Day, for the First Time Anyone Here Can Remember

The board voted in March under a temporary state waiver. The superintendent says the alternative was teaching into mid-June. The



resort says it is the difference between a season and most of one. Both of them are right, which is what makes it hard.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

The Board Meets Tonight, With Sixty-Six Comments Behind It

Written comment closed a week ago at 4:30. The planning board takes up its recommendation on the eighteen-lot plat at 7 p.m. at city hall, in the room with the folding chairs, and the clerk has counted the chairs.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Somebody Said a Name: The Bird List Was Claimed Thursday at the Fair

The spiral notebook found near the bay in July, held at this office for four weeks and moved to the safe with the good pencils, went home Thursday afternoon with a woman who described the cover, the year the entries begin, and the first bird on the first page.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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NEWS

Half the Town Goes South: The State Fair Opens Thursday and Misquah Sends Cattle, a Quilt, and a Pumpkin

Eleven 4-H members, seven animals, one champion quilt, one 894-pound vegetable, and an unknown but considerable number of people who will drive down for a day, complain about the parking, and eat something on a stick.



BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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LAKES & OUTDOORS IN THIS EDITION



LAKES & OUTDOORS

The Lake Had the Week Off, and the Fish Noticed

Tim Brevik on the quietest week of the summer: an empty Chain during fair week, walleye that got comfortable, water down to 68, and the first morning of the year that required a jacket without argument.

BY TIM BREVIK • AUGUST 25, 2026

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LAKES & OUTDOORS

The Adults Went While We Were at the Fair

Sometime between Thursday and Sunday, with the whole town four miles away eating mini-donuts, the adult loons of Big Pelican left. The juveniles are still here. The log has its second entry under LEAVING, and it is the shortest one in the book.

BY TIM BREVIK • AUGUST 25, 2026

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SPORTS IN THIS EDITION



SPORTS



Two Games in Cambridge, One Win, and a Summer That Ended on a Thursday

Post 162 beat Braham 6–4 in the section opener Thursday and lost to Cambridge 8–2 on Friday, ending a 17–12 season in a parking lot four counties from home with four seniors taking their time getting on the bus.

BY CURT “SONNY” HALVORSEN • AUGUST 25, 2026

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SPORTS

The Scrimmage Went Fine and the Crowd Was Forty People, Which Everyone Expected

Pike scrimmaged at home Friday evening opposite the tractor pull, drew the parents and a handful of people who had lost an argument at the fairgrounds, and came out of it healthy with the opener a week Friday.

BY CURT “SONNY” HALVORSEN • AUGUST 25, 2026

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SPORTS

Ten Consecutive Rides on the Zipper, and One Sophomore Still Standing

The Pike football team went to the fair after Friday’s scrimmage and made a plan. Twelve went on. Ten rides later, eleven were sitting on the grass by the pole barn, and Jon Sandbo was asking if anybody wanted to go again.

BY CURT “SONNY” HALVORSEN • AUGUST 25, 2026

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OPINION IN THIS EDITION





OPINION

Our View: Young Love Under the Midway Lights

A hundred and some years of this town's people have met, courted, argued, and decided something on five acres of gravel behind the horticulture hall. A word for the fair's other tradition — the one nobody puts in the premium book.

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD • AUGUST 25, 2026

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OPINION

Letter: On Scratching

M. Aakre of Loon Lake, on a split found Thursday morning and a decision made by eleven o'clock.

BY M. AAKRE, LOON LAKE • AUGUST 25, 2026

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OPINION

Letter: The Week We Are Not Getting Back

R. Fontaine of Loon Ridge Resort, on the school calendar, without asking anyone to change it.

BY R. FONTAINE, LOON RIDGE • AUGUST 25, 2026

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THE KLATCH & LIVING IN THIS EDITION



THE KLATCH & LIVING



I Won the Pickles and I Am Going to Be Insufferable About It Until Approximately October

Eunice on five days at the fairgrounds: the champion ribbon she has waited eleven years for, the beet entry that finally surfaced, a superintendent's ruling about salsa that everyone understood, and the quilt that had Lorraine's chair in it.

BY EUNICE DAHLQUIST • AUGUST 25, 2026

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THE KLATCH & LIVING

The Mini-Donut Trailer, the Church Ladies' Pie Booth, and a Taco Stand That Sold Out Every Single Day

A survey of what this county ate for five days: the midway classics that have not changed since 1974, the local booths that are the actual reason people come early, and one newcomer that had a line before it had a sign.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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THE KLATCH & LIVING

The Table Took Nine Ribbons, and Then Had to Sit With Each Other on Monday Morning

The Daybreak's regulars entered forty-some exhibits among them and came home with nine firsts and two champions, which produced the most awkward and most enjoyable coffee hour of the year.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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SCHOOLS

The Supply Lists Are Out, and the Fourth Grade Wants Exactly Twelve Glue Sticks

School opens a week from Wednesday. The lists went home in the class-list envelopes and are posted at the school, the bank, Tim's, and the hardware store, and Sorensen's has laid in composition books for the first time in six years.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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SCHOOLS

Friday at Two: Forty-One Readers, One Blank Panel, and Mrs. Aune

The summer reading finale is this Friday. The certificates are lettered, the ice cream is ordered and stored, the tiers will be called from the bottom up — and the space above the eagle is still empty, waiting for the only person permitted to fill it.

BY MARVELLA TOLLEFSON • AUGUST 25, 2026

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