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"Thoughts Of An Editor's Wife" - Mrs. Underwood

When the subject, "Thoughts of an Editor's Wife" was assigned to me, Tom immediately began trying to find out what I had in mind. Believing, as we all do in free speech, I refused to submit to any censorship. Then for a time, due to illness in my family, I was afraid I could not have this opportunity to tell what I know about editors, or at least an editor. I was very anxious to do it. In the first place, after all the speeches I have had to listen to "as an editor's wife," I felt that it was my turn. In the second place, I was particularly anxious to go on this boat trip for I have always wished to see the place on this river near Maysville where "Eliza crossed on the ice."

I have some ideas, not only as an editor's wife, but as an editor, for I was State Editor of The Lexington Herald until I became an editor's wife and as such I learned a good many of the technical details of the craft.

These, now, I must forget about and became a "yes man," so when the editor comes in with something he has written I always say "fine," "splendid," or "superb," no matter what I really think about it. I have to applaud the eulogies of Mr. Whoozit, although I may think Mr. Whoozit is a terrible person and should be consigned to complete oblivion. I must approve of all campaigns, movements, policies, fights, controversies and exposes, although I grew up in a peace-loving, conservative Republican family of English descent whose family motto is "Deeds not words."

I thought I was getting away with the role of being a "yes man" beautifully until not long ago a gallant gentleman asked: "Did you dictate that smart editorial Tom had in The Herald this morning?" And before I could deny the allegation the editor half of the Underwood family spoke up and said: "She dictates everything else I do, so she might as well get credit for the editorials."

I thought this idea might be confined to Central Kentucky newspaper men until I read in Jay Jay's column in the Lexington Leader last week this little story from the Mayfield Messenger:

"On his trip to Frankfort last

week to get his quietus on tax collections, Sheriff Cliff Howard took his wife and son. Upon his return he was asked if he brought his quietus back with him and he replied, 'Yes, and my son, too.'

I try not to be a quietus, but as a matter of fact I know more than it is polite and polotic and at times to admit, not only about newspaper contents but about such things as the hours and duties of newspaper men as ascertained during my seven years as a newspaper woman but not since verified in all instances by my observations as an editor's wife.

But seriously, I am glad of the opportunity to speak a word for and in behalf of the editor's wives in Kentucky.

Being an editor, after all, isn't just a job. It is more of a calling. The editor is like a preacher or a doctor. His duties are not confined to his office but touch very intimately the lives of the people of his community.

The three eventful steps in life are the cradle, the altar, and the grave. One Kentucky newspaper once ran three columns, side by side, under these headings, "Cradle, Altar, Grave." The editor records the arrival of the "bouncing boy." He doesn't always do it just as he should because I remember very well after devoting seven long years to eliminating from country correspondence the graphic phrase "both mother and child are doing well," I suffered a serious relapse when I picked up the paper the morning after Tommy's arrival and read those time-honored words, "Both mother and child are doing well."

Then having brought him into the world, the editor ushers the gentle reader up the aisle in "conventional black" to the strains of the wedding march from Lohengrin. This does not always come out just exactly right, either, at least in the newspaper, for that's where the proofreader has the last say. Not long ago an account of a wedding was published in The Herald from Paris in which it was intended to say of the bride, "Her only ornament was a string of pearls" and the proofreader let it go through. "Her only garment was a string of

pearls."

At one time also The Herald published a funeral notice concerning a gentleman named Gay, of Mt. Sterling, and the present distinguished editor of the Lyon County Herald, then occupying the state desk of The Lexington Herald, dashed off this classic headline in a moment of inspiration: "Gay Funeral Held In Mt. Sterling."

But when the dark angel, unbidden, calls, and the heavy shadow falls over a home, the sympathy of an editor and the summing up in the printed word of all that is best in the life that has gone does bring comfort to those in distress not surpassed by those of the minister and the physician.

And all through the intermediate stages, such as graduation, traffic law violations, election or nomination to office, participation in luncheon clubs, articles of incorporation, suits filed, breach of peace or breach of promise and so on and so forth, the editor is very much a part of the life of his community.

The editor's wife is no lesser person. She gradually becomes active in the life of the community whether she wants to or not. She must belong to clubs, serve on committees, sell tickets and patronize advertisers. She must never buy anything from a mail order house. No mater how tempting the bargains she sees advertised in the Sunday New York Times, the charms of Macys are forbidden fruit in her garden of Paradise.

Of course the complimentary tickets that come our way are a great consolation. I was most sympathetic with the look of complacent superiority on my young son's face as we started out to our last circus when a neighbor boy called out: "Oh, or course, you'll have a reserved seat. Your daddy is a newspaper man."

As an editor's wife I know and understand the daily problems of the newspaper man. Happily the day of horsewhipping the editor is passed, but this does not keep advocates of pet causes from coming up in droves on the busiest days, it doesn't keep the press from breaking down occasionally

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YOUR EDITORIAL PAGE

By Lawrence W. Hager

The subject assigned me, "What to Editorial Page," sounds as broad as Write and How to Write It For the that chosen by the boy orator who elected to speak on "The World, All That Is Known About It, Conjectured About It and a Few Supplementary Remarks." Yet, it suggests certain fundamental truths and basic principles of journalism, which we should repeatedly rededicate ourselves.

We have heard the subject debated, whether a newspaper is an institution or a personality. To my way of thinking, the ideal newspaper is both. In some respects it is an institution, a commercial institution helping to bind together the material interests of the community it serves in linking communities into great economic and governmental units. In others it is a personality, reflecting the composite picture of the humanity of its locality and its generation.

The personality of a newspaper is reflected primarily in what is written and how it is written for the editorial page.

The chief and sacred heritage of the press is the right of the people of the land it serves to be stimulated in their thinking and to be encouraged to take a firm stand as society attempts to work out its problems. People are prone to think of freedom of speech as a right claimed by the orator and statesman for his selfish interest and of freedom of the press as a right loudly proclaimed by newspapers for their own aggrandizement. But primarily these are rights inherent in society as a whole with the public platform and the press as the means by which they may be exercised and made useful.

And so it follows that editorial freedom, while a precious privilege of the press, is its greatest responsibility. The editorial page should be the people's forum. Its most beneficial function is to reflect the thoughts of the newspaper's readers, through the editor's intelligent understanding of the needs, hopes and ideals of his public and through the fair presentation of opinions that may differ with his own.

The editorial page that strives relentlessly to carry on the processes of

education among its readers, honestly, broadmindedly is the one that commands the respect and confidence of the public. Editorials that arouse interest in public questions and start processes of thought working in the minds of the people, and that do not fail to implant the conviction that the editor himself is thinking, fulfill the highest aims. Editorials that stick to issues and avoid prejudice and petty personalities, achieve progress for the human race and respect for the paper.

The belief of some that to be independent a newspaper must not adhere to the principles of any political party or remain loyal to its organized efforts to effectuate those principles seems falacious to those of us who believe in government by political parties. Yet, adherence to the principles espoused by a political party does not impose upon an editor the obligation to be a partisan apologist and he who would serve his party best would so conduct his columns that they will be a continued, living protest against inefficiency or corruption in government.

A newspaper that is worth its sale will give conscientious guidance through its editorial page. Its power lies in its ability to do this. To do it successfully and continuously it must be truthful, decent, fair and generous. If it abuses the confidence of its readers its power atrophies, for the public is quick to detect and revolt against insincerity. The editor must remember that there are two sides to every question and state both fairly. The American people do their own thinking and they will not think much of the editor who uses his columns to take an unfair advantage for personal gain.

Its tolerance is one measure of the greatness of an editorial page. Recently at Harvard University a portrait of John Reed was hung, a Harvard man who died a Communist and is in heroic honor at Moscow. In reply to the critics of Harvard for accepting Reed's portrait the New York Herald-Tribune, the mouthpiece of Republican conservatism in America, said: "Harvard is not concerned with Reed's opinions, but with the spirit of a man who gave everything he had in support of what he believed. Not as a Communist, but as an idealist, does she honor his memory." If a paper as devoted as is the Herald-Tribune to the economic and political beliefs it holds can be thus intellectually tolerant of an incident of this sort, there is cause to believe that intolerance may be banished from the editorial pages of America.

An editor can never rest on his laurels. He must be ever up and doing, still achieving, still pursuing, he must labor and wait. It is not important to him as to men in public life that he

be consistently a winner. A few reverses do not eliminate him. But his own indifference or disloyalty to the ideals of his upright, conscientious, thinking audience can eliminate him. He may follow an ideal without reaching his goal—even to the end of his days—and ever be a success.

The editorial page should promote civic virtue, local interests of its town or city. The more of this service that the country press and non-metropolitan dailies perform, the nearer they approach fulfillment of their high mission. It is their almost exclusive privilege to perfect inter-community relationships, foster neighborliness among the people and counties coming within the radius of their circulations, and by so doing to contribute greatly to the sum total of human happiness.

The editorial page that is not alert to the need in a democracy or an educated and enlightened citizenship is short-sighted indeed. Schools are a major concern of the thinking journalist. Qualified teachers, modern equipment and a standard of living conducive to school attendance are our responsibility.

Religion plays a dominant role in forming the character of our race and in the newspapers which it is my privilege to edit, our purpose is to give it that emphasis which in our humble opinion is in the interest of a well rounded community. We accept the ideals of religion and seek to give them local and national meaning and application. We recognize the mutual interests of the pulpit and press, which center in a better community and better world and seek to cooperate in the common task of attaining this goal.

Public recreation has become one of the major concerns of society, especially for children. It is a part of the curriculum advocated for every local school in social service by the wide-awake editor. Public health—that comes home to the editor's people too and it become today a plank in his platform.

If I were to attempt to epitomize "What to Write and How to Write It for the Editorial Page," I believe I would say first, learn to be human, know yourself, conquer and control yourself, get acquainted with your neighbors, whom you probably will find you like, write about the things vital to your life and theirs and to the lives of your children and theirs, and write about them the way you feel about them and you will not write to empty chairs or wastebaskets.

Frederic W. Goudy, type-designer, has lost the sight of his right eye, it became known last week, through his devotion to the work of designing type to relieve eye-strain. Just turned seventy,

(Continued From First Page)

or the irate subscriber from calling up and stopping his subscription over what you think is a good editorial or your best advertiser's name being spelled wrong in the society column.

As an editor's wife I know that your best efforts don't come as the gentle rain from Heaven but as the result of hard study and concentrated work. I know, too, how you can rise above all such difficulties and through sincerity of purpose and honesty of action in the news and editorial columns of your papers do much for the upbuilding of the community and through a sympathetic and friendly attitude add greatly to the happiness of your neighbors and fellow citizens.

We are proud of the part we are permitted to play in your work. We admire and respect you for your achievements, we sorrow with you in your disappointments and glory in your ambitions. You are our knights come riding—you are defenders of the faith, champions of the truth and protectors of all that womanhood holds dear.

COMPETITION

Meeting competition in the newspaper line is not a matter, merely, of carrying the goods and meeting prices. It is more a matter of carrying a different line of goods. If regularly you beat a competitor in getting important news, your goods are more attractive than his and will command a higher price. If you have a special feature that is rife in reader interest, something which he cannot get, again you are ahead of him in the quality of your goods and need not be concerned about meeting his prices.

News gathering has reached such a degree of efficiency that there is little opportunity to excel in that line. As a rule, news sources are as open to one price if you choose to ask it. If you publication as to another. Individual initiative and ability will convey an advantage to one until the competitor also employs them. This is not difficult in view of the fact that more trained

newspaper men are available than are jobs for them to fill. Any publisher willing to pay the price and employ the ability, can supply readers with a news service equal to that of any other publisher.

Since it resolves itself into a matter of carrying a better—or at least a different—line of goods, and there is no use to rely upon a staple such as news, it all gets back to the only answer possible, namely, features. Anyone who has observed the trend during the past ten or twenty years has noted that feature development has grown in a direct ratio with the improvement and increase of news facilities. The figurative Times has developed its news coverage to a point where it equals that of the 'figurative Record; therefore, the only thing for both the Times and Record to do, to avoid standing still or going backward, is to find a new avenue of progress in the feature field.

The daily press recognized the condition and fell into line with it, but the small town and country press has acted more slowly; been too much committed to tradition. The country publisher has lost sight of the fact that a city newspaper is just a small newspaper grown big, in the same sense that a city is merely a small town grown large. Human nature is the same in both centers. Policies may differ, but the fundamental conditions which govern publishing are the same in both centers.

The word, feature, has an elastic meaning. It comprehends, roughly, about everything that goes into a newspaper aside from routine news and departments of long standing. It has too many ramifications ever to be subject to the standardizing process which characterizes news treatment. It will always be possible for every publisher to obtain distinctive and exclusive features.

According to an amendment to the postal laws, passed by the last Congress, mimeographing is not recognized as printing and mimeographed sheets cannot be recognized as newspapers. The third clause of section

620, Postal Laws and Regulations, is amended by the addition of the following:

"Provided, that publications produced by the stencil (mimeograph, or hectograph process, or in imitation of typewriting, shall not be regarded as printed within the meaning of this clause."

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Pres.

Electric Rates Vary Because Conditions Vary, But Trend Is Toward Uniformity

The Federal Power Commission reports a wide spread in the prices charged for various quantities of electricity in cities and towns throughout Kentucky. This condition prevails not only among communities served by privately owned power companies but also among communities served by municipally owned power plants.

The discovery of price variations by government agents does not mean that either the privately owned plants or the municipal plants are dishonestly managed, or inefficiently operated, or that many of their customers are being gouged.

It simply reflects a broad variation in capital investment, in operating cost, in taxation, in population density, in volume of electric power sales, in per capita wealth, in per capita income, etc.

Both cost price and selling price of electricity in a given town depend largely on the nature of the service, the location and character (as well as size) of the community

and the average amount of electricity used by each customer.

The tendency of engineers and executives responsible for satisfactory operation of electric service companies (from the viewpoint of both customers and stockholders) is to make the rates as nearly uniform as practical throughout a given operating territory.

To do this they have to level off and merge many inequalities in service costs. But in doing so they bring about better public understanding of the value of service and better appreciation of the problems of the electric service business—a business much more complex than some newspaper writers and politico-social reformers would have you believe.

The price trend of electricity is downward because the price is based on the amount of electricity sold—and that amount is once more rising a little after more than three years of dropping.

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