

Recall Interesting Events Of Early Day Happenings In Observer Office

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had no business in saloons, that is if they valued their skins, the director of the Methodist church business in Boston and left the battlefield to two subordinates—his brother Fred and his new editor, Nelson. These two carried on the last three weeks of the campaign while George read about it from afar off. Those who knew the two on the job appreciated the situation. They have never forgiven the boss.

Historical Night

Election night that year will go down in history. Speaking of the shock Oregon got when Mr. Joseph was nominated was but a firecracker in comparison to the explosion that morning when La Grande awoke to find that the night before, many of the hundreds who tried to get The Observer returns, went forth to seek solace in the cup that's red and came back to sleep on the front office floor, in corners, on the safe, on the press. The news staff in its mad scramble picked a precarious path hither and yon over prostrate forms who sought to bury the horrors of a day tomorrow in blissful sleep. No effort was made to clean house the next morning. It was a party those folks had that night in The Observer office, and no little party was it.

The local option election news was unquestionably the biggest and most vital story handled by The Observer in that decade, but in a national way came the San Francisco earthquake, the Harry Thaw trial and the Titanic disaster. Still another story that drew great interest was the President Roosevelt visit to the county fair on the same day that a special train came as far west as La Grande with a party of nationally known politicians stumping for Taft and met in La Grande the foe they fought, namely Teddy himself. Two national stories from a small town the same day! One reporter fed the national press wires, covered the running story, reported the Roosevelt speech, covered the usual news facts and had dinner on the Taft special with supreme court judges, while crackers on the Taft regime and the best political writers of the decade. Such is the life of a small daily reporter.

The Thaw trial was a frightful story to handle. One must keep in mind that the public's notion of what was decorous and decent language for a newspaper then differed with today's version—vastly so. So putrid, so vile, so salacious and stinkingly rotten were these horrible details that scarcely a sentence of the weeks' long trial reports were free of the most nauseating obscenity. The biggest job of the news editor was to re-write the dispatches and make them fit for local consumption. The first two days were raw—the next rawer, and then the storm broke. Women stormed The Observer demanding deletion of the vile stuff. Deletion began with a vengeance. Observers in the deleted form were stripped of the Thaw trial before children saw them. But the news editor remembers that the husbands of the protesting women were often among the scores who snatched themselves into the news room to read the original dispatches in all their ugly vulgarity.

When the earthquake story broke there were of course many local people who had friends and relatives in San Francisco, and surrounded The Observer in hundreds, overflowing to the mud of Sixth street where a local wag had the day previously stuck a sign warning the public to go swimming only when properly attired. As the list of dead was read every half hour, terror stricken members of the audience stood aghast, dreading the next name. The Titanic disaster had less local color but strong men wept as the horrors of that episode were read from an up-ended box on the board walk in front of The Observer building.

Certain local names are so intimately welded to Observer history that any reminiscence of early newspaper life would be wholly incomplete without them. La Grande had several "Printers of Uddell's." Frank Kilpatrick, for instance; Kilpatrick the father of Earl Kilpatrick who laid down his life recently in Red Cross service to flood sufferers. Mr. Kilpatrick was in the way around the cramped quarters and though he brought many a juicy yarn, he never would write it himself, which in the absence of an adequate news staff, was something to regret. His long legs had a habit of being where they should not be while he occupied one of the few chairs in the cramped area.

A little later on came Upton H. Gibbs. What a joy he was to the lone reporter. A pastor by vocation, a proof reader by instinct and a good guy by force of habit, he was in The Observer office many hours a day making himself useful and often dashing off a learned exegesis on topics of the day.

A Veritable Encyclopedia

Then came J. D. Gillilan, another Printer of Uddell's. His humor of a dry, keen type, flowed like a perennial well. Good fellow, speaker of the common-herd jargon as the common herd speaks it, he was for all that a veritable encyclopedia. To him the reporter turned for spelling to him went arguments in the back shop over apostrophes or the fine shading of an adjective. He could use more quaint words than any other human alive—and he still does it in his Idaho home where he strolls at sundown of his life with the fleeting years. How he liked to jump in and help in the rush hours. And how he could! To many, the finest piece of literature that has come into The Observer in its life time came from his pen. Rhetorically perfect? Good question? Yes, but these were the

minor virtues of that story. Alice had died. Alice lived at 444 Jefferson street which means nothing now but meant a lot then. Alice had to be buried, and the occasion needed a man of the cloth. From place to place went a committee from Alice's living rendezvous. No luck. Preachers shook their heads. The situation was bad until the committee tramped up Fourth street to the Methodist parsonage where good old J. D. lived. Did he preach the funeral sermon? Yes, and the news editor went along to cover the story. The possibilities for something big were there and the reporter wished the story off on J. D. He did the writing and in writing wrote. It unquestionably was the greatest sermon preached on such a subject from pulpit or editorial sanctum in this city. Before writing he looked deep and far and found something kindly to say of Alice and with never a word of blame or chastisement, put over a story to the girls of La Grande supremely human and rich with advice about the pitfalls of life.

Of such characters was The Observer's unpaid staff.

The Currey boys, as they were commonly called, frequently got the itch to go fishing, and when the affliction struck, it struck. Such an episode happened in April of 1906 a month after A. W. Nelson had arrived from Wisconsin and who was still here because his mother had provided sufficient funds only to get him out to Oregon. Danish sagacity forbearing what would have happened had it been otherwise. He had come from the east to be collector and general utility man. With no conception of a daily newspaper, its mechanics of its travail, he found himself the following month sole occupant of the editorship, the news man's job, the front office key and the combination to the safe while the Currey's were Miami bound for two weeks.

From these fourteen nightmares until 1914 he served as city editor, telegraph editor, sub-editor and political writer, besides keeping up the local column by meeting the trains. Proof reading, proof pulling and correcting, make-up man in rush periods were other minor duties he inherited. As a pastime he occasionally coached high school track teams and basketball squads, and was athletic director for the Blue Mountain Athletic club during two or three years of his early stay in La Grande.

His sanctuary was a cubby hole on the South end of the front office, cold in winter and hot in summer. The room was served with one window so low that with close attention to her step, Flavia Ritter Sherwood could climb through at the most inopportune moments and make her self a mighty nuisance around the place. It was her access of a good time to rap on the window and scout. Through this window came most of the court house news—in the summer time especially. Lawyers had to pass it on their way to the court house and it was easy to be interviewed—sneaks might take time for the reporter. It J. Green's first case in La Grande reached the news column through this window.

Spinning yarns one Saturday night after the sheet was off, and the chief cook and bottle washers had helped fold and wrap the angles and sent them aboard an Indian war veteran pinto to the post office, John Walden as the marshal of La Grande had a gun argument where the Galtier & Walter coal sheds now stand. The long axis of these bullets was along Sixth street and the news room window casing was in the path. The bull test broke up—now—and reporters and printers went away—fast. After the shock came the bent for news, and the fuzzy reporter helped the late Dr. C. P. Bacon and the late Dr. M. K. Hall pack John's assault ant up to the offices now occupied by R. J. Kichen law offices where the doctors proceeded to probe the young man's vitals for John Walden's bullets. John had taken one under the belt too but drew the more commodious quarters in the hospital. The reporter had business with the dying man, who wanted a message relayed to his mother in a far away state to the effect her son had died with his boots on. Just to be sure, the man

PLANE FOR GRADUATION GIFT



Wife—Martina Candler was graduated from Ward-Belmont, Nashville, Tenn., she was presented with a four-place monoplane by her father, Asa G. Candler, jr., Atlanta, Ga., capitalist.

lived long after and the reporter still has the message given him that night.

H. J. Hockenberry is a name that means a great deal to La Granders of the older generations, and some not so old. As superintendent of schools he was busy—very busy—but bi-weekly one whole winter he conducted a school in The Observer office where he patiently hammered some respectable diction and musical rhetoric into the news staffs (and editors) not to say anything about plain spelling. How he would storm next day when The Observer came out with inexcusable spelling, intolerable rhetoric and unforgivable grammar.

In the winter and summer of 1906 and the first part of '07, The Observer had a remarkably capable force of girl composers who picked-up little pieces of type due at a time, made words, then lines and then columns that went out as news reading matter. These girls were the linotypes of their day. The late Syd Budge, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Budge was the dean of the girl composers. Setting a swift pace, she egged her co-workers on to unbelievable feats of hand composition. When the time came to substitute mechanical composition for human hands, Miss Budge, Floy Massey Nelson, Jane Cotner, Mrs. J. B. Smith, Miss Ferguson and one or two others lost their jobs. Prior to being society reporter Edna Morrison set type shoulder to shoulder with Sadie Given, credited with being Edna's equal at talking while working. To stop the chatter between these two the business office paid on a piece basis instead of day basis. The change only increased the pay checks to these two girls. They simply couldn't be stopped.

When Otto Didion, some time since dead, came over from Milton he brought his own linotype, on a contract basis, and the community flocked to The Observer to see the remarkable machine. He was an artist, a rapid compositor, and quick tempered. Shortly after his arrival he returned one noon to find his machine had been tampered with during his absence. He formed his own conclusions instantly, seized the shop devil by the scruff of the neck, laid him over a composing stone bottom side up and blasted such portions of the boy's astonished anatomy as seemed most appropriate. It was no playful mood he was in and if in doubt, ask Sydney C. Happerset, now compositor in the Nelson Printing company. He remembers well.

Later on the proprietors purchased a new machine and the operator sent from San Francisco had a habit of not only getting drunk for dinner but staying drunk for breakfast and a daily chore for the news staff and boss was to first find the pest, and then sober him up enough to get some type set in time to get drunk again. This had to end and a fellow was brought up from Triana. He was different. Of unbelievable speed and accuracy he frequently would set up 20 galleys in a shift for a week at a time. So far so good, but when overtime calls came it wasn't so good. Eventually the city editor learned how. A well filled bottle along side the linotype did the business. Knowing about how long a quart would last, the city editor could keep the wizard working at top speed all night with but two or three interruptions in his own night's rest. Getting the bottle after saloon hours was sometimes a problem. It was this routine or no type—take your choice, Mr. Editor.

In the mechanical department Steve Cady was foreman for many years. He knew how to keep girl typesetters docile but flinched when the linotype came and quit forthwith. Bob Cotner served many years in The Observer job department and ad alleys. His workmanship was of the unusually artistic nature and he was recognized far and wide as able to produce job work of the very highest type. His artistry showed itself in his ads, too.

In the old days there were no automatic press dispatch writers. The abbreviated, skeletonized "pony" service came over the Western Union wire and was transcribed by a one-armed man with a stubby lead pencil on filmy paper. In those days the telegraph editor kept himself so well posted on world events that a key word would

be the subject matter for a quarter column of descriptive matter. One thousand words were generally the basis of the whole telegraphic news service which would fill several columns when the proper recipe of imagination, coloration and exaggeration had been applied to the original.

Some time before The Observer was sold to Bruce Dennis, a typewriter was installed in the Western Union and immediate improvement was noted. For several years Miss Elsie Leadworth copied the press.

In the very early days of dailies here, a friendly printer in the Portland Oregonian, for agreed stipend, would copy verbatim the early Oregonian edition front page heads and wire them through to La Grande where Fred Currey's ingenuity and imagination would produce news classics. Thrills, adventure, hardships, glamour—all were present in daily paper life in La Grande then even more than in the prosaic present.

SPRINTER STAYS BY WORK SAYS SUCCESS LIES THERE

SYDNEY, Australia (AP)—"My work comes before play, my career takes precedence of the track," says Jimmy Carlton, the Australian champion sprinter, who declined to represent Australia at the British Empire Games in Canada.

Carlton, holder of the Australian 100 yards record (19.4 seconds), and 200 yards record (21.3-10 seconds), says that he has noticed that two members of the last Australian Olympic team are unemployed.

"It would be an honor to represent my country in Canada," he says, "but if I stick to my work instead of the cinders I am more likely to be a good citizen and a successful citizen."

GALLERY TAKES SERIOUSLY GOLF'S SMALLER BROTHER

LONG BEACH, Calif. (AP)—The final stamp of approval has been placed on miniature golf courses by this city. No longer is there laughing and joking during play. Several hundred of the faithful watched the finals of a city tournament on a miniature course here and maintained the same strict silence observed on larger courses when a contestant addresses the ball.

GRID COACHES TO ANSWER CARNegie REPORT CHARGES

ATLANTA (AP)—The football coaches, irked by the Carnegie Foundation's famous Bulletin 23 of last fall, are preparing a broadside of their own in reply.

Questionnaires have been submitted to coaches at 17 leading universities. A report probably will be made public this fall.

BORDER RADIO STATION IN OPERATION AUG. 1

MALLEN, Texas (AP)—The Texas-Mexico border's most powerful radio station will be in operation by August 1.

The 5,000-watt station is being built in Reynosa, Mexico, across the Rio Grande, because the federal radio commission was unable to issue a license for operation of such a unit in this section of Texas. Studios will be maintained in McAllen and Reynosa. Programs will be broadcast simultaneously from each.

RADIO POLICE CATCH CRIMINALS IN ACTION

DETROIT (AP)—More than 1,500 arrests have been made with radio-equipped scout cars here since Detroit installed its police radio station a little more than two years ago.

BELOIT TO SEND MORE STUDENTS TO WILDERNESS

BELOIT, Wis. (AP)—Beloit college authorities have decided to continue to send its students of anthropology out on real work in the field.

Wade Sends Aides To Duke

DURHAM, N. C. (AP)—Wallace Wade will not take over the gridiron reins at Duke until 1931, but two of his assistants at Alabama, Herschel Caldwell and "Pumpy" Barker, are on deck here already. They will build the foundation of the Wade system at Duke next fall.

Women's Tourney To Ireland

PORT MARNOCK, Ireland (AP)—If Glenna Collett wants to try for the British Women's championship next year she will have to make the journey to Ireland. For Port Marnock, just outside Dublin, has been selected as next year's battleground.

'Plug' Wins \$5,000

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (AP)—A horse that its owner bought for \$70 has won the Autumn Handicap with a purse of \$5,000. An Auckland business man bought the horse, called Kasek, as a back for his young son. As a prank the boy entered his mount in a picnic race, and to the surprise of everybody, won the event.

Glenn Harneson, graduated from Purdue University this year, won three letters each in football, basketball and baseball.

Chas. B. Miller

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