

More Papers Hire Church News Editors

By **GEORGE W. CORNELL**, Associated Press Staff Writer
 A new, sharper spotlight today is being turned on religious activity in this country.
 Sometimes the church leaders are glad to have it, and sometimes it makes them flinch.
 The increased public surveillance of religious affairs comes through a relatively new breed of news specialist, the religion reporter.

Maynard Kniskern, editor of the Springfield, Ohio, Sun, says: "Probably the most important editorial development in American journalism since World War II is the rise of the religious news editor or reporter. He has attained the status of a full-time newspaper specialist."
 It's not so long ago that many publications were inclined to bypass digging into the intimate doings of religious institutions, their methods, tensions and developments. Some still are wary of it. The notion behind this seems to be that religion is a private spiritual matter, on which people have highly sensitive feelings which should not be subjected to possible offense through open, full-scale coverage.

Basic Factor
 But religion also has been a basic factor in the story of man — his wars, rebellions, progress and attitudes, and American publications are stepping up efforts to cover it in their job of recording history-in-the-making.

Religion has been admitted to page one, observed Dr. C. Penrose St. Amant, church history professor of New Orleans Baptist Seminary.

An indication of the expansion in this field of information came this week at a meeting in Minneapolis of a seven-year-old national organization, the Religious Newswriters Assn.

It now has about 70 members, one-time sportswriters, police-beat legmen, state-house reporters or general newsmen most of whom in the last half dozen years have been put on a new specialty — "the church beat."

Church Editors
 Robert D. Whitaker, association president for two years and religion editor of the Providence, R.I., Journal and Evening Bulletin, said "many dailies across the country have added full-time church editors."

"The church desk no longer is assigned to the newest man on the staff with instructions to telephone around to the churches and see what they are doing," he said. "Religion coverage today calls for specialists."

It has, he said, become an "exact and important" job of sitting in on all sorts of religious meetings, digging into projects and plans and shades of viewpoints, in order to serve "the people's right to know."

When the association was founded in 1949, there was only a handful of qualified members in the country, an estimated 20 or 25 regular religion editors, most on larger metropolitan newspapers. Now the estimate is around 150.

Caspar H. Nannes, newly elected president of the association and religion editor of the Washington Evening Star, said that up to the late 1940's, "religious news, especially on the national scale, had been a hit and miss affair."

Keep Close Tab
 But a new, expert corps of religion reporters is developing, he said, specialists who keep close tab on religious affairs, thus being alert to motives, background, goals and nuances of thought — and able to tell about them.

These reporters, he added, are not "propagandists or evasions" in any sense, but nonpartisan, straight-writing newsmen, with a necessary comprehension of the subtle currents of their subject.

To stimulate high-quality religious reporting, the association in 1953 set up the James O. Supply Memorial Award, in memory of the late top-flight religion reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times. A \$100 cash prize goes with it.

It was awarded this week to Kenneth Dole, of the Washington Post and Times Herald. Previous winners for excellence in religion reporting are Willmae Thorkelson, of the Minneapolis Star 1955; Ora Spaid, of the Louisville Courier-Journal, 1954, and Marilyn Gilbertson, of the Winona, Minn., Republican-Herald 1953, now Winona Daily News.

Founders of the association were a small group of reporters covering a Presbyterian meeting in Buffalo, N.Y., in 1949.

Subways to Carry Mail

NEW YORK (AP) — Mail will be carried by the city's subway trains on an experimental basis this summer.

The Post Office Department and the New York Transit Authority said the plan would expedite the mail, reduce the number of mail trucks on crowded streets, and provide revenue for the transit authority.

Air mail will be carried from Times Square terminal to Willets Point in Queens for delivery to LaGuardia Field.

Later, mail will be carried on interborough rapid transit lines along the east and west sides of Manhattan for delivery to substations along the route.

NO COMMENT
 TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — When Mrs. Alice Hilton celebrated her 100th birthday, she did not give the traditional advice. A reporter asked her: "How did you do it?" "Because I couldn't help it. I just lived that long. I wouldn't know how to tell you to live to be 100," Mrs. Hilton said.

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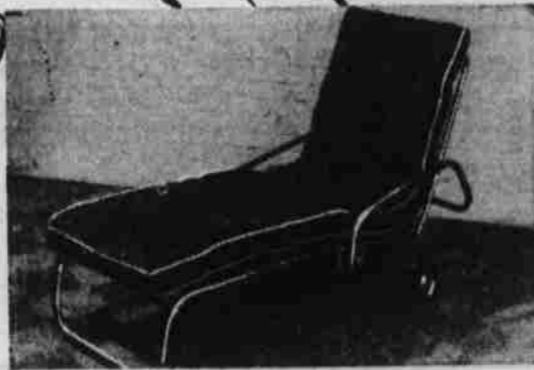


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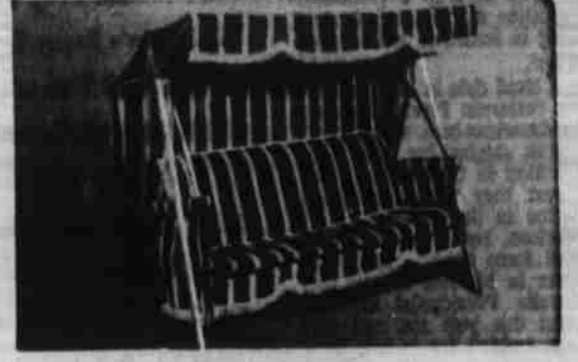
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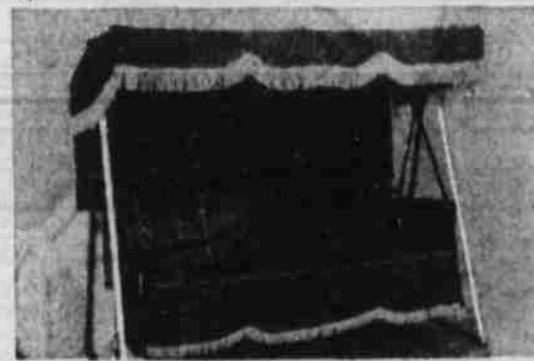
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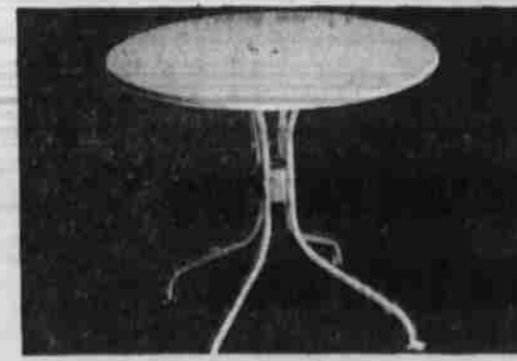
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