

# TECHNICAL JOURNALISM



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*By*

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(A revision of *Technical Journalism*, by Beckman, O'Brien, and BLAIR CONVERSE, formerly head of Department of Technical Journalism, Iowa State College, deceased, 1939)

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1927, when the first edition of this textbook was published under the title of *Technical Writing of Farm and Home*, instruction in journalism in land-grant and other technological institutions was largely confined to students of agriculture and home economics. In the years since, there has developed an increasing interest in the subject on the part of other groups of students, particularly students of engineering, science, professions, and business.

Because of this widening in the scope of instruction in technical journalism, the second, revised edition of this book, published in 1937, was rechristened *Technical Journalism*, and attention was given throughout to the writing problems of engineering, science, and other students, as well as those in agriculture and home economics.

In this third edition, there has been still further enlargement of the material dealing with engineering, science, and other phases of technical publishing. This particularly applies to technical news in its various fields and many ramifications. However, the basic plan and method of the book and its general principles remain the same. Some additional assignments appear with chapters. The stories and articles used to illustrate different types of writing are mainly fresh selections and from a wider range of class publications than in former editions.

The three authors of this book were at various times associated with the Department of Technical Journalism at Iowa State College. The volume represents, therefore, not only their personal experiences in newspaper and technical magazine work, but also the teaching techniques and course content developed through the years at Iowa State. To this is added the experience of one of the authors in more than fifteen years at Ohio State University.

The accumulation of teaching experience in technical journalism classes at Iowa State College covers a period of about thirty-seven years, from the time in 1905 when the first class in agricultural journalism was inaugurated at the instigation of the late John

Clay, of Chicago, and C. F. Curtiss, then dean of agriculture at Iowa State.

In this more than a third of a century of teaching technical journalism at Iowa State College and more recently at many other institutions, marked changes have taken place in the technical journals and in the attitude of newspapers and general magazines toward technical material. There has also been a steadily increasing demand for men and women trained in journalism and with a thorough background of education in agriculture, in home economics, in engineering, in science, in professions, and business.

They serve as agricultural editors of daily and weekly newspapers, as home economics editors and writers for newspapers and magazines, as science writers for press agencies, as editorial and advertising workers with technical and trade magazines, as publicity and information writers for commercial organizations and institutions.

The authors hope that this book will serve two purposes: to provide a text for classroom instruction in colleges and universities which are giving work in technical journalism, and also as a guide for the many men and women whose duties require them to write for newspapers and other journals, but who have had little training or experience in the technique of preparing news and magazine articles.

It is the sad task to record here that Prof. Blair Converse, one of the original authors of this book, died in May, 1939. Much of this text, especially the 1937 revision, was his work. In preparing this third edition, we have had the generous advice and help of Prof. C. E. Rogers, who succeeded Professor Converse as head of the Department of Technical Journalism at Iowa State College, and of members of his present staff.

F. W. BECKMAN  
HARRY R. O'BRIEN

August, 1942

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PART ONE

*News of Special Fields*



## CHAPTER 1

### THE WRITING PROBLEM

**T**HE ultimate purpose of any writing is to convey ideas. This is a trite axiom which is blithely accepted, but frequently forgotten by the one who writes. The axiom implies the association with any writing of at least two minds or groups of minds, and frequently there is a third.

Expanded, the axiom reads: The purpose of any writing is to put the ideas in the mind of one person into a verbal form which will render these ideas assimilable to the mind of another.

The ideas which are to be conveyed may be ideas in the mind of the author. In this case he must express these ideas in terms which will render them available to the minds of the particular group of readers for whom they are intended.

Again, the ideas, which it is the writer's problem to express, may be originally lodged in the mind of another. Now he has a double task: He must ferret these ideas out of the mind of the person to whom they belong, and he must clothe them in such verbal forms that a selected group of readers can acquire them.

Apparently a simple and even an easy undertaking. But the degree of the success of the writer is measured by the degree of similitude which the ideas, implanted by him in the reader's mind, have to the original ideas. In an ultimate sense, it is impossible to perform this task with absolute accuracy. It is the desperate elusiveness of this effort, one of the most difficult tasks that man has so far succeeded in setting for himself, that gives its challenge, its romance, to writing.

It is from this fact that one can distill another truism: The greater the writer—the more sincerely he envisages his problem—the less satisfied he will be with his writing. A writer must be vastly ignorant of his task who often feels that he has expressed an idea as well as it could be expressed. Conversely, it is when an author

has approached or touched the goal that we get the deathless phrase which illuminates an idea for all time.

The difficulties that stand in the way of good writing involve two processes, one psychological and one technical. Because he cannot see or hear accurately or cannot comprehend ideas completely, the writer is unable to give to his reader a veritable picture of the things he has heard, seen, or attempted to understand. Again, the problem of knowing the mental capabilities and processes of his readers is one with which the writer has always to wrestle.

Technically, he has to deal with the problem of presentation—how most effectively to clothe thoughts in words. He has as the primary tools of his craft a dictionary full of words and a great variety of sentence structures.

Words lead double lives. They have, on the one hand, a humdrum, every-day, utilitarian existence and on the other a life that is romantic and imaginative. A word both defines an idea and suggests other associated ideas. The point for the writer to remember, in this connection, is that words vary both in their denotative and connotative powers. He will wish to choose, for the expression of any given idea, the words which in that connection have the highest power of defining the idea and suggesting appropriate associations with it.

Trite words and phrases are bad, not because they are old, but because they have lost much of their power of defining and suggesting. With the loss of this power they acquire an air of insincerity. The phrase, "rooted to the spot," was at one time a strikingly original and graphic figure of speech. But it has been used so often that the reader accepts the words without investigating the idea. It has become insincere and ineffective.

A writer has an almost unlimited number of sentence forms at his command. Count over a few of the possibilities. He can cast the simple sentence, by means of inversions and the use of prepositional, participial, and infinitive phrases, into eight or ten forms. He can express three different shades of thought with combinations which he can make with three words: They laughed heartily, heartily they laughed, heartily laughed they. The possibilities for

variety are tremendously greater in the compound sentence. Here one has not only the combinations that can be made with subject and verb and their modifiers, but with groups of subjects and predicates. Further intricacies are provided by the complex sentence.

Another type of vitality—and variety—can be put into writing: that supplied by rhythm. One can secure a certain effect with sentences that are long and easy and smooth of movement; he can secure other effects with short sentences, inverted sentences and sentences in which the characteristic rhythm is broken.

Words and sentences, then, offer the writer, if he apprehends their use—and that is his business—a very fine set of tools for expressing the subtle tones of ideas. He may not always be able to give to words and sentences the absolute reality of thought as it existed in his mind, but he will be able to go very far in that direction if he knows the refinements of their use.

The basic problem of writing, then, to convey ideas in words, is common to the two great fields of writing, literature and journalism. There is an essential difference in the two, however, in spite of the fact that some journalism takes on the qualities and characteristics of literature and some putative literature is journalistic. Literature is typically suggestive. It is the re-creation of life as filtered through the mind and the personality of the writer. Journalism, on the other hand, is typically objective, concerned for the most part with the transcription into words of current events and ideas without their being first transfused and individualized by the mind and emotions of the writer.

This fact implies a difference in technique. With one of these techniques this book will have nothing to do. The other, the technique of journalism, and especially its application to technical subject matter, it will attempt to analyze.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. List all words in a column of a newspaper which you think are markedly ineffective because of triteness or markedly successful because of their appropriateness to the idea they are intended to illuminate.
2. Repeat the above assignment with a column or article from any current issue of a class, trade, or technical magazine.

3. Explain briefly the essential difference between subjective writing and objective writing. Find and clip an example of each and discuss their respective characteristics and differences.

4. Find ten sets of synonymous words which express different shades of meaning and use them in sentences to illustrate their variations in meaning.

5. Find ten sentences in any newspaper or periodical article which seem poorly written, either in structure or wrong words. Re-write these to make them more effective.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FIELD OF TECHNICAL WRITING

**JOURNALISM** is a broad profession. It deals with many fields of human activity and interest. Most people, when they think of the press, think of the daily newspaper, the weekly newspaper, the magazine. They do not always sufficiently realize the wide scope and the importance of the journalism of specialized fields, its bearing upon the life, the education, the industry of the nation.

These specialized aspects of journalism are usually referred to as the technical journalism field. In this field the writer deals with the technical materials in agriculture, home economics, engineering, science, industries and trades, business and the professions. He deals with them both through specialized journals and through the medium of more general publications, such as newspapers and magazines.

**Training for technical writing:** Men and women who plan to do more or less writing along these technical lines need in their equipment three things: a knowledge of the basic technique of journalism, a knowledge of their special technical field, and a training which will show the relation of the one to the other—which will give them the power to handle journalistically their special technical material.

This book will deal with the technique of journalistic writing as it is applied to such subject matter as agriculture, home economics, engineering, and the sciences.

**Breadth of the technical journalism field:** Training in technical journalism may lead to a wide variety of journalistic employments. The following list is not complete, but it contains the more important kinds of positions into which men and women with training in technical journalism have gone.

*Journalists with agricultural training:*

- Farm editorships with daily newspapers and news agencies.
- County newspapers.
- Editorial and advertising positions with farm journals.
- Publicity positions with farm organizations and agricultural industries.
- Editorial and publicity positions with agricultural colleges, state departments of agriculture, and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Positions with advertising agencies.
- Radio positions with chains or stations which maintain agricultural programs.

*Journalists with home economics training:*

- Positions in the women's departments of daily newspapers.
- Editorial staff positions with women's magazines and farm journals.
- Publicity positions with women's organizations and industries.
- Advertising positions with magazines, agencies, and industries.
- Radio work.

*Journalists with engineering training:*

- Editorial staff positions with engineering and business publications and house organs.
- Editorships of special departments of daily newspapers.
- Publicity and advertising positions with engineering societies and associations.
- Advertising positions with engineering and business magazines and with advertising agencies.

*Journalists trained in science:*

- Editorial positions with magazines and scientific journals.
- Positions as science writers with news or press agencies.
- Editorial and publicity positions with scientific societies and organizations and with business firms.
- Advertising positions with magazines, agencies, and industries.

Such a list, in itself, indicates something of the breadth and variety of technical journalism. But consider also for a moment

the way in which matters relating to agriculture, engineering, home economics, and science permeate American life.

Writing about agriculture deals with the farms, their operation and management, with rural and community life, with the farm home. Farm people comprise more than one-third of our population. Count those who live in the rural community centers and in the smaller cities—agricultural capitals for surrounding farm regions—and who are directly dependent upon farming, and perhaps half our population has direct contact with agriculture.

Being as it is the greatest abstractive industry and second only to manufacturing in the total value of its annual finished product, agriculture is woven into the warp of life through the use of food and clothing and into the woof of most of our industries through the transportation, marketing, and processing of wheat, corn, cotton, tobacco, wool, flax, hides, hemp, fruit, vegetables.

So not only are the farmer and his family interested in any writing which relates to things agricultural or rural, but almost as vitally, the host of merchants and bankers of town and city and all those everywhere who have to do with the handling of agricultural products as they move from the farms to the ultimate consumers. Besides all these, in the cities are many men and women, country reared, who retain an active interest in rural affairs and agricultural problems.

Writing about home economics has as a primary reader group the millions of women who manage homes, rear children, and supervise the expenditure of a large share of the domestic budget. Increasingly in recent years the job of homemaking has become the subject of study and research. Most high schools and many colleges now give instruction in home economics, and research in this field is supported by college experiment stations, by the United States Department of Agriculture, by a number of research organizations, and by private industry.

Out of this new emphasis on home economics as a science and a profession comes a mass of news and information which, through newspapers, magazines, and other channels, is made available to women readers.

It is scarcely necessary to point out how squarely modern civil-

ization is based on science and perhaps particularly on the applied science of engineering. A tremendous volume of news about scientific discoveries, inventions, and engineering achievements is coming daily from the laboratory, from industries, and from government agencies—news which must be reported technically in the scientific and professional journals and popularly in the newspapers and general magazines.

**Wanted, interpreters:** The field of technical writing is, then, far broader than at first appears. It needs men and women trained to put into words, clearly and effectively, the day-by-day story of accomplishments in agriculture, home economics, science, and engineering.

Fundamentally, the press, whether it be agricultural, newspaper, trade, or magazine, has its economic and social excuse as an element, and a most important one, in the educative process. The press *is* because it serves. And it serves primarily in two ways: first, in the conveying to the rank and file of an industry, a class, or a profession, the ideas, the discoveries, the advances of the leaders in industry, class, or profession; second, in providing a mechanism by which the isolation of individual industries, classes, or professions can be broken down and ideas of common interest exchanged.

This is a job so fundamental, not only to individual groups but to society as a whole, that it should be served with the best intelligence and the best training. It should be served by men and women who have both a thorough training in the technique of the profession and a broad and firm conception of the nature of their task.

Specifically, the agricultural industry and mode of life are in need of interpreters. The problems of agriculture, both economic and social, are becoming more and more complex. Agriculture needs spokesmen; not only to its own folk, but to those others who need to know and understand agriculture's point of view.

In a similar way the home, the family, need their commentators and interpreters. The recognition of homemaking as a profession worthy of the best training and the most thorough study is a comparatively new one. In the very few years that serious study and

experimentation have been carried on in this subject, a vast bulk of material has been accumulated, which must be carried, largely through the printed word, to every homemaker, into every home. Clearly, the writer on homemaking has an important and worthwhile task.

What has been said applies with equal force to engineering in its many ramifications in industry. Nothing short of marvelous has been the extension of power and the machine into every field of life, and this development is only in its beginnings. It needs greatly the interpretation of the journalist fitted for the task.

A course in technical writing has the basic purpose of training men and women for these very important objects. It must give them a very thorough technical training in agriculture or home economics or science or engineering, it must base them in the technique of writing—for farm papers, household magazines, bulletins, trade papers, community papers, daily papers—and it must give them underneath all of this a high sense of their calling in the scheme of modern life.

**Journalism training serves three groups:** Training in technical writing will be useful to three groups of students:

1. A limited number who expect to follow some phase of journalism as a profession.

2. A larger group of men and women who can make good use of skill in writing for the press while working in other fields where the success of their labors depends quite largely on competent cooperation with the press. (County agricultural agents, home demonstration agents, extension and experiment station workers are of this group.)

3. Those who may be moved to use their education and special advantages for community leadership or who, in other occupations, find themselves at the sources of news which ought, for the advancement of agriculture, the home, or industry, to be widely disseminated.

What are the opportunities for the members of these three groups to put into practice the training they may receive in technical writing?

These opportunities are two-fold. For the man or woman who

intends to make journalism his life work, there is a wide variety of editorial and publicity positions. For those more casually interested in journalism there are inexhaustible avenues for service as contributor or free lance writer.

**Value of journalistic training in other professions:** Only a limited number of students who take a course which combines a technical training with journalism will look forward to a lifetime of work in an editorial or advertising position. A far greater number—those students belonging to groups two and three referred to on page 11—will use writing as a means to one of the following ends:

1. As a means to carry to others the practical knowledge of agriculture, science, engineering, and home economics which they have acquired.
2. As a means to advancing themselves in their profession or business.
3. As a means of adding to their income.
4. As a means of carrying on more successfully an integral part of their business or profession where either has important public relations aspects.

The agricultural college, extension staff, or experiment station worker will find that an important part of such an occupation is the preparation of bulletins, circulars, and publicity material. After a piece of research work has been done or a field survey completed, a bulletin or circular must be prepared setting forth the results. Often, in addition, an article can be written for a magazine.

The college man or woman will want to furnish information to the farm or scientific or women's magazines regarding his work. Practically all of the technical magazines are open to the college worker who wishes to submit articles. Contributions for these publications are welcomed and frequently sought after by editors.

There is no quicker way for a young college scientist or technician to make a name for himself than by sound writing. If he can write worthwhile bulletins or contribute to the farm papers or technical journals, he can gain recognition much earlier than the man who does not write. There is an especial opportunity for extension workers, who, through their travels, come in contact con-

stantly with the farmer and the homemaker and their problems, to keep their fingers on the pulse of actual conditions and gather a wealth of concrete material. This experience provides highly valuable subject matter for articles.

County agricultural workers, soil conservation specialists, home demonstration agents, and club leaders have found that one of the most potent aids in reaching their constituents with the material which they wish to emphasize is the writing of articles for the papers of their counties, both daily and weekly, and contributing an occasional article to the farm and other magazines.

More than one county agent will testify that one of the bug-bears of his job has been the writing of these articles. Often, feeling himself unqualified, he has left this very important work to his secretary or the local reporter or editor. On the other hand, the county agent who has been fortunate enough to have had a course in agricultural writing while in college declares that it has made easy and much more effective the task of handling the publicity of his office.

In recent years the development of vocational teaching of agriculture, home economics, and industry has opened up another field for college graduates and another opportunity to write. The teacher of vocational agriculture, for example, is frequently called upon to write farm news or conduct a department in a local weekly or daily paper. The same is true of the teacher of vocational home economics.

This writing consists first of news dealing with the vocational work, the student projects, the special night classes, and work with adults. Often, too, it includes informational writing about current problems of the community farms and homes. The vocational teacher who has had some journalism training is likely to find that he or she is the only member of a high school staff who has had such training. In that event the vocational teacher may be called upon to write other school news and to supervise school publications.

These tasks give the vocational teacher an opportunity to enhance his or her value to the school, and render a service to the local newspaper and to the citizens of the school district and com-

munity. It also helps the teacher to become established, and it brings home to the community the value and importance of vocational teaching.

In other fields of educational work the value of training in news writing is of similar value. That is true of public school superintendents and high school principals, but especially of athletic coaches who find it important to keep in contact with local newspapers and to aid them in securing news of athletic activities. Physical education "majors" are now electing a course in journalism as a part of their training for coaching success, and properly so.

A field open to graduates in home economics is that of a home service worker for public utility companies such as the electric power company or the gas company. These home service workers are called on regularly to write. Stories of meetings are written for use in local newspapers. Some are called on to prepare weekly columns on foods and household equipment for use in newspapers. Often leaflets of an instructional or advertising nature must be written for distribution. There may also be articles for house organs or for trade magazines.

Graduates who are employed by wild-life conservation departments of state or Federal government soon find that part of their work is supplying news and information stories to newspapers, and writing articles on game, game management, hunting, and fishing for farm papers and outdoor magazines. A number of states issue monthly conservation magazines, which must be edited and for which articles must be prepared. Many students who are preparing for conservation work are taking a course in technical journalism as an essential part of their training. That has for years been true of forestry students, many of whom find after they are out in professional forestry work that writing is a part of their job.

An ability to write is often a means to reach a better position in the commercial world. An agricultural college graduate, who had taken some work in journalism and who is now with a large firm which handles a specialized farm product, secured the attention of the company officials in a short time through the articles he wrote for the house organ of the company. Thus singled out, he was watched, promoted, and within a few years was made manager

of a branch house, a responsible place. Any number of such examples could be cited.

Graduates in engineering, science, and business often find themselves in positions where either there is writing work to be done or good public relations to be maintained through newspapers or the trade and technical press.

Graduates in medicine, bacteriology, and veterinary medicine who enter the public health field find that publicizing their activities plays an important part in their work.

In numerous other lines of work where it is important to maintain good public relations and inform the public about industries or utilities, or other businesses which serve the people, some training in technical news writing is certain to be of value. The man or woman who understands what news is and how to write it is better equipped to cope with whatever circumstance may arise than one without such preparation.

**Writing for money:** Many men and women with understanding of news and a good measure of writing skill find opportunity to make some money by writing for publication as a sideline. What they earn is not always a great deal, but it is enough to be worthwhile. How much is earned in this way depends upon the individual, and especially upon his industry. Much depends also upon his good situation in a reasonably good news center.

Many magazines and periodicals pay outsiders for contributions. Often newspapers, too, pay someone who handles news assignments or who regularly contributes to a department, and who does this work as a sideline to some other activity.

Both farmers and homemakers have experiences or make discoveries which they would like to share with other farmers or women, if only they knew how to write them up and submit them to a paper. There is no reason why a farmer should not do this—or his wife, son, or daughter. Some of the most fluent writers who have contributed to farm papers have been men earning their living on farms.

Any or all of these individuals may have the urge to add to their incomes by writing for sale, beyond the necessary writing which they do in connection with their routine work. More than

one agricultural college man has added materially to his income by writing for farm and other publications. Women who have had work in journalism have written articles relating to experiences in their own homes and added to the family income without having to leave the home and family to do it.

In exactly the same way anyone in any technical or professional field can write on the side for publications. A construction engineer or an architect may contribute news articles to engineering or trade papers. A salesman on his trips can frequently pick up material for business articles. A scientist in his laboratory has a fund of information which he can translate into valuable articles for the general reader. Many news notes, feature articles, and informational articles in trade and business journals are contributed by writers who carry on full-time work but who write in spare time, on the side, to earn money.

**The free lance field:** Finally there is the free lance field. A free lance writer is one who, unattached to any publication, writes and sells wherever the best market can be secured. A large number of men and a lesser number of women devote their entire time to writing in this way. Perhaps a score could be named who live in Washington and depend upon information from the Department of Agriculture and other government departments and bureaus as sources of material.

Some free lance writers in reality have other positions which furnish them with the backbone of a salary, but they write constantly on the side as professional rather than occasional contributors.

For those who write for money, whether just occasionally or as a livelihood, the field for contributions is large. The farm papers, the women's magazines, feature pages of the daily papers, trade papers, and a large number of national general magazines are open for articles dealing with technical subjects.

There are in addition the technical and professional journals in the fields of science and research. These do not offer much of an opportunity for editorial positions or for contributing for money. They do, however, offer opportunity for a writer to make a professional name for himself by contributing to them.

**The writer's equipment:** There are normally four types of equipment prerequisite to success in technical writing. These are:

1. A practical background of experience on the farm, in the home, the laboratory, industry, business, or profession.
2. A thorough scientific training in the field of one's specialization.
3. An understanding of news and information values.
4. A training in the technique of writing.

The ability to write is purposely placed last in this list. Technical writing is a trade rather than an art. While the tools of the craft are words, the words and their combinations are not an end, but a means. It is the stuff that goes into the technical article that is the biggest determinant of its value. It must of course be well written, but what is said is more important than how it is said.

It is the experience of the writer, his judgment of the material whereof he writes, his ability to know where to find information, how to get it, how to size it up, to know what is essential and what is not, how to interpret his background of experience and knowledge, that make him the competent technical writer.

A course in technical writing, then, should first of all provide for a thorough grounding in the technical subject chosen by the student. The journalism instruction itself should be primarily concerned with the gathering of news and information and secondarily with the transposition of these into the written form.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. List by occupation or group the people in your home town or community who have a close interest in the affairs and information of one of the following: agriculture, home economics, women's organization activities, automobile business, construction, public health, chemical industry, processing or handling agricultural products, athletics and outdoor activities, transportation, highways and traffic, electrical equipment and appliances.

2. Count the number of stories in three issues of the same daily or weekly newspaper which have either a direct or indirect connection with your major interest as a student; for example, dairy manufacturing, farm crops, clothing, electrical engineering, highways, foods, vocational agriculture, social service, or bacteriology. Compute the total space in column inches devoted to such articles in each issue studied.

3. Write a discussion of about 300 words, amplifying the text, on why interpreters are needed in your own major field.
4. Make a list of all the publications in your state, excluding weekly and daily newspapers, which might be expected to print material on technical subjects. Give exact names and addresses. (Ayer's Newspaper Annual and Directory is the most convenient source of such information.)
5. Through an interview, ask someone who has contact with the public to describe for you as specifically as possible the publicity aspects of his or her position, and make a report on what you learn. An extension worker, a county agricultural or home demonstration agent, a county engineer, a public health officer, a school superintendent, a football coach, a local architect, a farm organization secretary, community fund secretary, or the manager of a local public utility company would be suitable, if the interview can be arranged.
6. Assume that you are engaged in some other work than journalism (as a teacher, farmer, research worker, and so forth) and discuss how you might find skill in journalistic writing of use to you.

## CHAPTER 3

### NEWS

You see lads walk the street  
Sixty the minute; what's to note in that?  
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;  
Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands!  
Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.  
The honest thief, the tender murderer,  
The superstitious atheist, demirep  
That loves and saves her soul in new French books—  
We watch while these in equilibrium keep  
The giddy line midway: one step aside,  
They're classed and done with.

—*Browning, Bishop Blougram's Apology.*

**T**HE primary function of journalism is to convey information. Journalism is an expression, as every living and acting element of civilization must be, of a need. It has its being—its excuse for being—in the answering of that need, in the performing of a function which civilization has found necessary or desirable.

Journalism performs subsidiary—and sometimes parasitic—functions, but its essential excuse for being today, as throughout its history, is the bringing to people, by means of its organization and technique of news gathering and writing, information which they need or desire.

**Forerunners of journalism:** The Greek runner who bore to Athens the news of the victory at Marathon was a reporter—in a literal sense of the word—performing a function comparable to that of the modern newspaper. His memory, his voice, and his sturdy legs were the ancient equivalents of paper, press, telegraph, radio, and postal service.

The bulletins which Caesar posted in the forum were an answer to the same demand which drives the giant presses of the modern day. In the same line of descent are the Roman news letters, the yearbooks and chapbooks of the medieval years, the first periodicals in Italy, France, Germany, England, and that abortive attempt

in 1690 of Benjamin Harris to start a newspaper in the uncongenial environment of Puritan New England.

**Function in a democracy:** The especial function of journalism in a democracy has been clearly discussed in recent years, particularly by Walter Lippmann in his book called "Public Opinion" and by Nelson Antrim Crawford in his "Ethics of Journalism." The journalistic function is enhanced and intensified in a democracy because of the fundamental conception of democracy that all who have the suffrage may pass judgments on public affairs and public men. If a man is to exercise his right of suffrage intelligently, he must have the data for the forming of intelligent judgments. These the journals attempt—and must attempt if they are to be "live" and "acting"—to give him. That they do it imperfectly or that the reader is unable always to assimilate the data presented does not invalidate the essential importance of the function: It merely points the direction which more competent journalism must take.

But the function of journalism is not so simple as this more or less diagrammatic exposition would imply. Journals are not the fulfillment of a "finished" sociological or economic or political need. They are intrinsically a device which society has invented for the satisfaction of a very deep human want—a device which works imperfectly and incompletely, but which has evolved and is evolving a more and more competent technique.

**Fundamental service of journalism:** This human craving which journals attempt to satisfy grows out of the most fundamental qualities of human nature. Perhaps the greatest battle of the human being is against isolation. One of his strongest fears is the fear of being alone. It is this fear which is the motivating force behind many aspects of human life. It drives men into groups, it has its place in the impulsion to family life, it is one of the bases of religion. Whether or not it gives rise to or grows out of the herd instinct is difficult to say, but at any rate that instinct is a very potent one. Man is afraid, in other words, of the unknown, the physically unknown and the intellectually unknown. Because journalism, in disseminating information and bringing men together, helps to break down this isolation, it is a great social force.

Very closely tied up with the fear of isolation, and with its bearing on the journalistic function, is human curiosity. It is probable that curiosity is the weapon with which men have tried to conquer isolation. If one considers curiosity in a broad sense, he sees that it is the characteristic of the human mind which drives it to the acquirement of knowledge, and that it plays, therefore, a most important role in the evolutionary scheme.

If one could trace curiosity back through human experience, he would no doubt find that it once played an almost exclusively protectionist part. The prehistoric man was curious to know the cause of a noise outside his hut, for the noise might be that of a human or animal enemy; he was curious about the weather, for it would affect his hunting or fishing.

Modern man is curious for the same definitely vital reasons. He wants to know whether his neighbor's child has chickenpox or smallpox. He is interested in the fall of a foreign government for that political event may foreshadow a world catastrophe, or the avoidance of one.

But modern curiosity is not solely protective. The instinct itself has evolved much wider uses and implications. We have now a desire to know for the sake, apparently, merely of knowing. This disinterestedness is probably only apparent, but at least it is not by any means so definitely protectionist as the limited curiosity of the child-man. A desire for knowledge, for culture, does not serve directly in the safeguarding of the physical man but is a method for the amplification of the ego, for the development of the spiritual or intellectual stature.

Journalism is then an organized attempt to do efficiently and economically what men have more or less always done—satisfy the instinct of curiosity and thereby ameliorate the fear of isolation. And, incidentally, it will be well to remark that just as curiosity has many manifestations, from, for example, the dispassionate and altruistic inquisitiveness of the seeker after scientific truth, to the trivialities of the smallest and coarsest gossip, so journals vary in the types of material which they offer to the curious.

**What is news?** These basic considerations lead to the questions: What specifically is news? What are its qualities or characteristics?

No definition of news is quite satisfactory. It is something which cannot be confined by formula or boundary.

What constitutes news is something a reporter and writer must know and understand instinctively or acquire through experience rather than by reading or study of textbook material.

To be news an event usually must have one or more of the following characteristics, regardless of the field in which the event may occur or the type or class of publication concerned:

1. Something that actually happens.
2. Unusual, out of the ordinary.
3. Important, not trivial.
4. Near to point of publication or to readers of the publication.
5. New, recent or timely.
6. Something that interests us.

This analysis is stated dogmatically for the purpose of making an understanding more simple. It must be remembered that we are dealing with a question complicated by the subtlety of the human mind, that no arbitrary classification can indicate all of the shades of significance which are embodied in the idea of "news value." It should also be kept in mind that the fundamental characteristics of news are exactly the same, wherever news is used. News is news, be it in a daily newspaper, a trade paper, a technical journal, although the way of writing it may vary widely in different classes of publications. These various characteristics of news need to be discussed in some detail.

**1. Something that actually happens:** News, first of all, is neither fiction nor something imagined. If a house burns down, that is news. But a vivid, imaginary story of such a fire would not be news. The reporter must write only of something that has happened, that is happening as he writes, or that is scheduled or expected to happen in the future.

A student in a technical journalism class wrote a story for a class assignment of how a research worker in veterinary medicine on the campus had discovered a cure for tuberculosis in humans. If true, this would have been news of world-wide importance. On checking it, the instructor found that the student reporter had merely drawn on his imagination and enlarged upon what was

only a minor bit of research about tuberculosis in a farm animal. His story most decidedly was not news.

**2. Unusual, out of the ordinary:** The college faculty member who daily meets his classes in the same routine way, day in and day out, may go on for years and not be news. But if he dies, becomes seriously ill, has an accident, gets a promotion to higher rank, writes a book, concludes an unusual experiment, is elected to the local school board, takes a trip to Australia during his vacation, goes to a national convention, is elected to office in a scientific or professional society or is awarded a medal for research, he then becomes news. It is the thing he does, or which happens to him, that is unusual or out of the ordinary that is news.

A farmer living on an average farm, with a wife and children, who grows the usual crops of the community with average yields and who has just average livestock and farm equipment, may not be news in his home neighborhood for years. But if his house burns down, or he builds a modern barn, or buys a new type of corn picker, or is elected master of the Grange, or wins in a corn-growing contest, or exhibits winning livestock at a fair, or takes a cross-country vacation trip, he becomes news.

The house built just like a dozen other houses in a community is not much news, but a house built of prefabricated material and the first such in a city is news.

The bridge built according to a stock plan of the state highway department, just like dozens of other bridges, is hardly news; but the bridge which embodies a new principle of design, or has the longest span, or is the highest, or which collapses and falls in a short time after it is finished, or is washed away by a flood or torn off its foundations by an ice jam, becomes news.

Just so, in every walk of life, in every business, industry, or profession, and with any individual or institution or organization, it is the unusual happening which makes news, and has news appeal.

The known, the commonplace, the usual is that with which we have already made contact. The unknown, the strange, the unusual, offers, then, opportunities for new experiences and on this basis strikingly attracts our interest.

To put the idea in other words, the abnormal, from the very fact that it is strange, has strong elements of appeal. A farmer produces a hundred bushels of corn to the acre or a ton litter of hogs. A story about either of these facts will have some value in a local newspaper or a farm journal, partly because the achievements are important, at least insofar as they stimulate other farmers to go and do likewise, but more because they are unusual. If most farmers raised a hundred bushels of corn to the acre or litters that weighed a ton, there would no longer be news in these facts.

"The honest thief," "the tender murderer" of whom Browning writes are objects of curiosity primarily because most thieves are not honest and most murderers are not tender.

This element of unusualness permeates, more or less strongly, practically all news.

The arrest of a college student in Evanston, Illinois, for driving through a red traffic signal, is news of such minor importance that it might hardly be carried in an Evanston paper and surely would not be news in a Chicago paper. But because it was an unusual happening and not common and ordinary, the following story appeared in the *Los Angeles Examiner* on a June 19:

#### SHE'S SWEETHEART OF COURTROOM, TOO

CHICAGO, June 17.—A judge, a city attorney, a college junior and a co-ed joined in a quartet for a new version of an old song in Evanston. Robert Mitchell, Northwestern student, was in court for a traffic violation. He said:

**"We were parked, talking—you know, judge—and I was just hanging my Sigma Chi pin on her. My foot must have slipped or something. Anyhow, the car started, and we went through a stop light."**

Crittendon C. Jarvis, city attorney,

coughed a bit and looked down at the Sigma Chi pin on his vest. He said:

**"I know all about it, judge. 'The gold of her hair, the blue of her eyes, she's the ——'"**

Judge James M. Corcoran felt beneath his robes, touched the Sigma Chi pin on his own vest, and finished:

**"She's the sweetheart of Sigma Chi."**

She was, too, for Judge Corcoran dismissed the case, while Miss Ciesta Kramlich, the co-ed, looked on, very prettily.

Construction of just another freighter for Great Lakes use may be news only to those directly concerned with such type of transportation. But when a new type of vessel is built, then it makes news, as did the following, which appeared in a Toronto daily paper:

**NICKEL-LINED VESSEL SCOURS LIKE A DISH**

PORT WELLER, Aug. 6.—En route through the Welland canal today on her maiden voyage is the 5,500-ton nickel-lined cargo carrier, Dolomite IV, unlike any other ship sailing the Great Lakes.

Built secretly near Rochester, N. Y., in an abandoned lock of the old Erie canal, and launched by syphoning in enough water to float her, the Dolomite is carrying a bulk cargo of kerosene to Chicago.

She is 300 feet long, twin screw, Diesel-powered and built to full ocean classifications.

Dolomite IV will pick up a return cargo of wheat. The ship has specially-installed scouring equipment which with her nickel linings, enables her to be quickly cleaned and take on a grain cargo immediately with no danger of damaging or tainting it.

Engineering, surgery and human interest combine to make this happening in Egypt an item to be published in the Cleveland, Ohio, *News*.

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—R.A.F. doctors, forced to improvise in a western desert first-aid station, have performed four delicate spinal operations with the aid of a five-ton crane.

Readjustment of spinal bones without paralyzing the patients, a medical officer explained, required that the injured men

be raised gently, with even pressure, to positions in which they were suspended by the feet.

Lacking a special table and pulleys, the R. A. F. doctors requisitioned the crane, normally used to lift engines from damaged aircraft.

**3. Important, not trivial:** Just because something happens, even though it be unusual, does not necessarily make it good news. Many things happen that are not news. A news happening must be something that is in itself important or about an important person. The more important the happening, the more prominent the person, the greater the news value.

The intrinsic importance of an event is one of the greatest determinants of its value as news. The more deeply and the more universally an event will affect the lives of the readers of a paper, the more significant it is as the material of news. The election of the president of the United States is a great news story because that election may very closely and immediately affect the lives and fortunes of all the people of the country. This election may lead to financial economies or extravagances, it may lead to foreign difficulties and even war. Because of these potentialities and a thousand others, this event is "big" news. The passing of an ordinance by a city or town council may be correspondingly important to the citizens of the city or town. The news that a cow of a particular breed has broken the yearly butterfat production

record for her breed is important news for the owners of cows of that breed. The decision of a state highway commission to build a paved highway across a county has importance to all who have been driving over a worn-out gravel road.

A corollary to this idea is the fact that news which involves people of prominence is "better" news than that about people who are unknown. We are interested in the trivial doings of the great, not because of the importance of the events but because of the prominence of the actors in the events. Two men die, one a state official of the farm bureau, the other an unknown farm laborer. The death of the official will be an important news story, the other may not even "make" the paper. Although, presumably, both men regretted the event with equal intensity, they have not provided equally good material for the curiosity of the newspaper's readers. The death of the official is of intrinsic importance, but its news value is enhanced by the mere fact of his prominence.

**4. Near to point of publication or readers of the publication:** If one should draw concentric circles upon the point representing the office of the journal, the first interior circle incorporating the town or city, the second the county, the third the state, the fourth the nation, the fifth the world, he would have a chart showing in a rough way the zones of decreasing local news value. Events will have news value in proportion to their approach to the center of the circles, insofar, at least, as the point of publication represents the center of circulation of the journal. In the case of magazines of large sectional or national circulation, this statement needs modification, although it is true in principle. Also, remember that even though news may happen far away, its magnitude (and importance) may push it so far above the horizon that it comes near. War news affords an example.

Of all of the people in the world each individual is most interested in himself. He is next most interested in his family, his neighbors, and associates. He has beyond this a feeling of municipal pride, of state pride, of national patriotism.

Of all of the news stories in a journal, then, the one about "me" will be the one in which "I" am most vitally interested. But I shall also be strongly drawn to any story dealing with people

whom I know, with places with which I am familiar, with events in which I have some part, even a most casual one. For instance, one will read the story of an accident which he has witnessed with more avidity than one of an incident which he has not seen. If one has heard a speech, he will read the story of that speech with greater interest for having "had a part in it" though that part was merely one of auditor. The death of some boys who drowned in a Canadian lake interests you because you once camped at that lake.

From this it is apparent that a local story, that is, a story about an event which occurred in the town or city where the paper is published, is by all odds the best news story if it has other requisites of news value.

Because we have an emotional as well as practical response to the idea of statehood, we are more interested in news which originates in our state than in news from without. For the same reason we are more interested in news which originates in our country than that from foreign countries. Obversely, news stories other than local must be very strong in other news values to be able to compete with the local story.

This factor of news value has most weight in the case of daily and weekly newspaper stories and correspondingly less weight with stories for magazines of extensive circulation. In many of the latter, however, another kind of "nearness" than the geographical comes into play. The subscribers to a livestock breed paper, for instance, are attracted to stories in their magazine about animals of the breed which they themselves raise or about the breed organization to which they themselves belong. Although these ties are not geographical they have nevertheless a potent influence on news values. In the same way a farmer is drawn to farm stories, a woman to stories which bear on her interests, an engineer to stories about engineering developments and enterprises in his special line of work, a scientist to stories about research in his field.

**5. New, recent or timely:** News is something that has just happened, is happening right now, or is expected to happen in the near future. So history is not news. The blowing up of the Maine in Havana harbor, discovery of hog cholera serum, stand-

ardization of the width of railway tracks, discovery of vitamins, creation of the first hybrid tea rose, invention of rayon, discovery of insulin, learning that bacteria can cause plant diseases, finding of corn borers in Ohio—these were all news events at the time. But they are by now history. News must be new or timely, and the newer, the more recent, the better news it is.

“Have you heard the latest,” the arresting phrase with which the gossip introduces his story, is an unconsciously scientific device to secure interest, to arouse curiosity. News, as well as gossip, to be “good” news, must be new. The more recent the events with which the news deals, the better news it is.

How old may an event or incident be and still be the material of news? The answer depends upon two considerations, the type of publication in which the news story is to appear, and the familiarity of the reading public with the event. An event, the facts about which have not “leaked,” may be news for a considerable period after it has occurred. The fate of an exploring party in the Arctic may not be known for months after the event has transpired, but the story of the expedition will be news whenever it is available. A new variety of oat may be developed at an agricultural experiment station, but the announcement of the discovery withheld until the station is able to supply seed for trial plantings. When the oat is announced, even though this may be months or years after its discovery, it will provide important news. Of course, even in cases such as these, there is an element of timeliness: While the events to be described are old, their availability is new.

Obviously, the news stories which appear in a weekly newspaper cannot all deal with events as recent as those which are recorded in the daily paper. For a weekly, events which have transpired in the week preceding publication will be news. Even in this case, however, the better stories are those dealing with events near to the time of publication.

For a daily paper, news must deal with events of a much more recent occurrence. Roughly speaking, the news in such a paper will deal with events which have transpired during the 24 hours preceding publication. In a town where there is both a morning and an evening newspaper, the time will be still more contracted.

The best news for each of these papers will be about events which have happened since the other paper was printed. A still greater emphasis is put upon recency in a city where there are both morning and evening papers and where each of these papers has several editions coming at intervals from the presses.

Suppose that a convention is being held in a city where both morning and evening papers publish several editions. The morning paper will carry stories of the activities of the convention on the preceding evening. The afternoon paper, which has editions at periods from the middle of the morning until 6 or 7 p. m., will follow the events of the convention, remodeling earlier stories to include the most recent activities of the convention.

This process of getting the latest, the newest, the "hottest," material is going on continually on every publication, although the effort is speeded up to its highest rate in the case of the daily newspapers in the larger cities.

Many stories, especially those dealing with technical material or which also have informational value as well as news quality, are news only if they are published at the particular or appropriate time in the year. In these cases news value is enhanced by the seasonable publication. While this factor of timeliness in news value operates in all kinds of publications, it is especially important in the farm field, women's magazines, garden magazines, hunting and fishing or other outdoor activities magazines, and to such trade and technical journals as are closely tied in with seasonal activities. Stories, for instance, about seed corn testing, sowing wheat to outwit Hessian fly, a luncheon for the June bride, concrete mixing and pouring methods in freezing weather, fly fishing for black bass, and propagating chrysanthemums by rooted cuttings would depend for their news quality largely on the time of year when they are published.

**6. Something that interests us:** News must in final analysis be something that we want to hear, something in which we are interested. Running through all news is what the newspaper man calls human interest—an intangible value which appeals to our emotions; makes us laugh or cry or be indignant or become curious. Or it may interest us for some of the reasons already set forth. It

comes near to us. It may concern our work or profession, our home, our savings account, our family living. It may be just plain information of which we are in need that becomes news when it is made available to us.

Before going into details as to things which interest us, let us take a look at human interest more carefully.

**Human interest:** This characteristic of news is the most difficult of all to define or explain. All of the others, newness, importance, locality, unusualness, seasonableness, are news characteristics which make their appeal primarily to the intellect. Human interest—and perhaps this is the best way one can find to define it—is that characteristic of news which makes its appeal to the emotions of the reader.

The term itself is in a measure misleading, for it would seem to imply solely an interest in human beings. It is so firmly fixed, however, in journalistic speech, that it is hard to avoid its use. We must keep in mind that any event which attracts because of its appeal to the emotions has human interest.

A human interest story may make its appeal on the basis of one emotion or a combination of emotions—mirth, pathos, sympathy, horror, anger, hatred, and so forth. The emotions growing out of the sex instinct are among the strongest to which appeal is made in many news stories.

Drama is one of the surest avenues of approach to the interest of people. By drama we mean here, of course, not only the formal presentation of a human struggle upon the stage, but rather the element of the dramatic which permeates all human activities. Because, no doubt, of a deep race memory of strife as the dominant factor in race survival, as well as the part it plays today in all of our adjustments to our environment, we are inevitably intrigued by the spectacle of conflict. A hero, a villain, and a prize for which they fight, in whatever transformations these may appear, are a sure machinery for arousing emotion.

It is this element of conflict which is largely responsible for our interest in many kinds of news stories. A farmer, starting from scratch on a rented farm, meets and conquers obstacles—the weather, lack of capital, poor equipment—and wins a gradual

success. There are several elements of news value in such a story, but perhaps the predominating one is human interest. The story of the home economics teacher who extends her influence through the high school classes to many of the homes they represent to bring about changes in food preparation, is full of human interest. Sports stories, stories of court trials, of scientific investigations which have been pursued in the face of infinite difficulties—all of these lean heavily for their appeal upon human interest.

This factor of news value is present in more or less degree in many news stories. When a story depends largely upon this factor for its value, it is called a human interest story.

**What interests us?** Let us consider further, and in a different approach, the things which interest mankind most. A somewhat arbitrary, perhaps illogical but yet useful, classification of interests would be as follows:

1. Life and death.
2. Fight or struggle.
3. Crime.
4. Women, children, and home.
5. Adventure and romance.
6. Unknown or mysterious.
7. Information.
8. Weather.

*1. Life and death:* Any death is news to somebody. The more prominent the deceased, the more important in news value a death becomes. Equally true is that the death of an individual to whom the term notorious would apply, rather than prominent, is news. The nearer to us of the person dying or the more unusual the death, the higher the news value.

Likewise, human life endangered has strong news appeal. Sometimes the story of a person otherwise unknown, endangered in an unusual way or saved by a striking or startling way, gets far more news space than if the same individual had been killed or had died in a normal manner. So there is news in motor accidents, fires, train wrecks, floods, and many other happenings which may endanger human life.

News, too, is concerned with the beginning of life, and for a

newspaper births are important news items. Likewise, there is great news value in sickness, diseases, public health, sanitation, medicine, drugs, cures or remedies, serums, and preventive measures. An epidemic of spinal meningitis, typhoid fever, infantile paralysis, or undulant fever may be the biggest news story in a community, at the time. Much of this kind of news is not only of interest to the general reader, but has technical news value of importance to doctors, druggists, bacteriologists, pathologists, sanitary engineers, and others.

From the standpoint of the farmer, anything which kills or endangers the farm livestock becomes news. Thus, at times farm news concerns such matters as hog cholera, eradication of tuberculosis in cattle, or death of stock from poisonous weeds.

2. *Fight or struggle*: Anything which involves a fight or struggle, as already suggested above, has news value. The greatest fight is a war. So news of our own country at war, and preparedness and defense measures at home is of greater importance and interest than any other.

There are, however, many other kinds of struggles which make up the day-by-day run of news.

All athletic contests are of this class. Day in and year out, football, baseball, basketball, prize fights, wrestling matches, and other more minor sports, are a large part of the news in the daily papers.

Elections, all the way from that of the President of the United States down to choice of the home-coming queen on the campus, or of officers for poultry science club make news. Strikes in industry have been important news events in recent years. There has been news in strikes of field workers in California, in Ohio onion fields, of milk truck drivers; likewise in a revolt of share croppers in a recent year, and raids of the night riders in tobacco districts some years ago.

So, too, judging at any show or exhibition is a contest. This may be concerned with livestock, dairy products, grains, apples, flowers, photographs, architect's plans, landscape designs, or retail store show windows.

The field of agriculture and farm life has many types of contests

which supply news. Spelling, hog-calling, husband-calling, horse-pulling, canning, milking, cornhusking, and sheepshearing contests are all in this class. So, too, are selection of master farmers and master homemakers. Extension work has been dramatized by hundred-bushel corn-growing contests, kitchen-scoring, potato clubs, and many kinds of 4-H club and FFA contests.

3. *Crime*: The constant struggle between the forces of the law and criminals supplies frequent news. Daily papers carry stories of murders, burglaries, raids on gambling joints, arrests, trials, jail breaks, foreign spies, the activities of the FBI and other angles of crime.

There are, however, in more technical and special fields much news that comes in this same classification. Arrests for adulteration of foods, fabrics, seeds, and drugs belong here. Violation of housing ordinances by contractors or rooming house keepers, of weights and measures laws, of fish and game regulations, of health measures, or of quarantines are news. Violation of sanitary regulations in a dairy barn or a restaurant kitchen is news. Likewise is an arrest for cruelty to animals. So, too, is the bringing before a Federal court of a large corporation for a practice that involves an anti-trust law.

4. *Women, children, and home*: Love, marriage, society functions, divorce, all make news. Some daily newspapers may be more interested in that which is of a sensational nature. But others prefer to give space to the more substantial side of news which has to do with women and their activities. Children are frequently in the news. Often human interest stories in newspapers are of a child or group of children. In recent years newspapers have been giving much more space to news of club activities, schools, parent-teachers' associations, home furnishings, food, styles, clothing, 4-H club work, and many other allied interests. Home economics students and those majoring in sociology and social welfare work will find much news which can be classified in this section.

5. *Adventure and romance*: Anything which savors of adventure catches the attention of many people. A flight up into the stratosphere, a startling airplane flight, a trip over the North Pole, an expedition to the South Pole, climbing a high mountain, an ex-

ploring expedition to the Amazon jungles—these make thrilling news stories, when told.

What the beginning reporter may not realize is that some of the most thrilling news stories lie within the field of technical journalism. Adventures of plant explorers to find a new fruit or crop, the struggles of an engineer to build a road or drive a tunnel under a river, the scientist who conquers a disease, the struggles of a housewife on a lonely ranch in Montana, make thrilling stories, if only the reporter can find them.

The late William Vaughan Moody once wrote a poem, of which the following is a part:

Survival of the fittest, adaptation,  
And all your other evolution terms,  
Have omitted one small consideration, to wit,  
That tumble bugs and angleworms have souls.  
There are souls in everything that squirms.

Change that word "souls" to "news" and then it would read that there is news in everything that squirms. There is romance in the control of insect pests, in plant diseases, in developing new plastic materials, in creating new plants by hybridizing and selection. There is romance in bridge construction, in kitchen planning, in raising purebred livestock, and in farm implements. Many a good news story can be found in a laboratory. The good reporter is the one who understands all this, finds the story, and writes it.

6. *Unknown or mysterious:* Most people are interested in anything they do not understand or which surprises or frightens them. So ghosts, haunted houses, sea serpents, hermits, strange places or peoples, discoveries in archeology, unsolved crimes, and buried treasure make news stories. There are at times stories in the technical world which sound just as strange, if ferreted out and related. Wonders of science, science baffled, inside the atom or beyond the stars, are of this sort. Some of these are material for feature articles, rather than news stories, of course, but often a spot news story may have this same mysterious quality.

7. *Information:* Many a time; just plain information is the thing we want to know. When this is so, this information is news. The cook wants to know the correct temperature for roasting a turkey. We may want to know the best route to get to the football game.

A farmer wants to know the best way to control bacterial ring rot of potatoes, or apple scab. Many people want to know markets—prices of hogs, or turpentine, or cotton, or steel bars. People want to know when ships sail or when the tide will be in tomorrow, how to get a duplicate driver's license, or how to go about securing a permit to build an apartment house. A woman wants to know what dress styles will be in the fall. So newspapers and magazines publish much information of this varied nature because it is of news value. It is better news, however, if it is linked up with something that is spot news or that is timely.

8. *Weather*: Weather is the most universal news in the world, considered over a long range. Just how weather makes news and its many ramifications will be discussed in a later chapter.

**The expected and the unexpected:** These many kinds of news fall into two general classifications: the expected and the unexpected. They need merely a bit of comment by the way.

Expected news is usually lacking in the element of surprise, but none the less, it has its interest and importance. It arises in such sources as meetings, ranging from national to local; stated events, as the opening of college, or the gathering of a local, state, or national society; it is found in reports submitted by bureaus, committees, organization officers, governmental officers of all degrees. Market reports, news of scheduled athletic events, and a host of other related happenings are included.

The unexpected news has a more exciting interest, of course. It may come out of any field, but most often we think of it in terms of deaths, crimes, wrecks, fires, explosions, earthquakes, floods, storms, and other events that break without warning.

**Two characteristics of news:** There are two further qualifications of news that must be pointed out. They are not characteristics that determine news value for they are fixed essentials of news:

1. News deals with facts.
2. News is objective, that is, free from editorial bias or partisanship.

The first of these seems so obvious as to be unimportant. It is obvious, but it is the most important thing that a beginner has to realize about news.

"I saw it in the paper." This phrase, familiar to everyone, is pronounced with two different inflections. In one case it means, "Oh, yes, I saw it in the paper and therefore I can't tell whether to believe it or not, and I'd better not." Again it means, "Yes, I saw it in the paper, and so it must be true."

The ideal of the paper is to reproduce facts. Every story that appears in a paper carries with it the assumption that it is fact. Toward the realizing of this ideal the journal bends every effort. On the other hand no paper reaches the goal of absolute accuracy, and many, which are poorly or carelessly made, fall far short of it. In the complicated making of a newspaper or magazine, it is inevitable that some mistakes should occur, but this makes only more strenuous the efforts of the conscientious journals to make errors as infrequently as possible.

The first lesson a reporter for a paper or a writer for a magazine must learn is the lesson of accuracy. He must learn to check and recheck his facts, to verify names and to avoid the subtle errors of false implications, which so easily slip into his transcriptions of the words of others. Accuracy is an absolute essential to success, its absence a sure prophet of failure. And it is never too early to learn to be accurate.

When one reads a news story he expects to find facts, but he expects something more than this. He expects that these facts will be presented without editorial bias or comment. Whether he realizes it or not, he has a feeling that there are two distinct divisions to the editorial portions of the paper: One is the news columns and the other the editorial page.

In earlier times there was little or no distinction made between the news and editorial functions of the newspaper. Even today much of the foreign press does not make this distinction. In America, however, the theory has steadily developed that the news columns should be devoted to an objective presentation of a picture of current events; that they should contain unprejudiced data, from which readers can draw their own conclusions. The editorial function of comment, interpretation, and argument has been allocated to the editorial page proper. There we expect to find opinions, and to the editorial page we turn for the opinions of an

editor whose position is a vantage point for observation and interpretation.

The writer for the news columns of a paper must realize the difference between news and editorialization and must keep his copy free of his own opinions, must make his reports cover all sides of an event, must keep out anything that would blur the sharp edges of the objective facts.

Some modification of this principle is permitted in certain cases. The signed article frequently does, and may legitimately, carry not only fact but the opinions of the writer. In this case we know, as we do not in the case of the ordinary news story, who is responsible for the opinions expressed. Many farm and home economics stories may carry opinion and comment, on the theory that they are written by specialists and that the opinions of these specialists have news value. Certain types of information and scientific stories, as well as sports stories, may be free of the ban on editorialization. Magazines as a rule do not maintain the distinction between news and editorial, largely because most magazine stories are signed.

**Evaluating news:** The preceding analysis of the factors in happenings that make them news provides a practical method of measuring or evaluating news. All who gather, write, and edit news for publication have continually to decide whether a certain event is news and to determine its relative importance. With an experienced journalist this evaluation becomes almost an instinctive process. His training enables him to feel the value or lack of value in a piece of news. But for the beginner in the journalism field this problem of measuring value will be one of the hardest of his problems. Lacking experience as a guide, he will need to make conscious evaluations, basing them on such an analysis as has been presented in this chapter. By conscious practice he will develop his nose for news.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. List 20 important ideas in the field of technical journalism which papers and magazines are attempting at this time to inject into the minds of their readers.

2. Pick out of the current week's newspapers the story which you consider to be most remarkable for human interest; a second for unusualness; a third for importance. Discuss each example.

3. Clip five stories from a newspaper or magazine and "score" them for news value. Consider 60 a perfect score, 10 for each of the six news qualities discussed in the earlier pages of this chapter.

4. Go through one issue of a technical magazine and analyze the news values in each news story.

5. Make a list of tips for local or campus news stories of interest to faculty and students. Include events that have happened since the close of the previous term, of future events this term that you can find out about readily. (Two or three students may work together on this and turn in one report, with names of students who did the work.)

6. Read through one issue of a daily or weekly newspaper and check all statements which you think are inaccurate or misleading.

7. Have another person relate to you an incident, real or imaginary. Without his assistance, write a story of this incident, conforming as nearly as you can to the facts as he gave them. Check the story over with the narrator and note any discrepancies.

## CHAPTER 4

### CAMPUS NEWS

**W**HAT news is cannot be learned by studying a book or hearing lectures. The beginning reporter-writer must acquire that knowledge by gathering news and writing news and doing it again and again.

For a student in a journalistic writing course, his laboratory is the college or university campus and the surrounding community.

Fortunately for that student, the campus and community provide an excellent field for gathering and writing news of any kind, either general or technical in character. This is particularly true on a campus where there are different schools, colleges, or divisions, agricultural and engineering experiment stations, and research in technical and science fields.

To make sure that the student understands these possibilities of gathering and writing news on the campus, this chapter is included in the book as a brief inventory or guide.

Considering news, first, as something that happens, then almost any kind of news under the sun may be found at one time or another on a campus or in its surrounding community and having some connection with faculty and students. A college is in itself a rather complete community, made up of many kinds of people with widely diversified interests and activities.

To illustrate, a college or university is a center of amateur athletics affording a considerable wealth of news. The community is highly organized, with many faculty and student groups which meet and carry on diverse activities in which there is news. The campus has its social life, its contests and rivalries, its movements, welfare campaigns, politics, elections, crusades, religious enterprises, business undertakings—all providing happenings without end. Even such a thing as how students dress becomes news on occasion, and leading women's magazines consider that news of

sufficient importance to go to unusual lengths and expense to report it. A campus is also a meeting place for many important state and interstate conferences and conventions dealing with a wide variety of interests.

If it takes happenings out of the ordinary to make news, then they may be found on a campus in abundance, in its student life, in its work and play, in its laboratories, in its convocations, in its extension service, in its experiment stations and research departments.

Often the scientific and technical news that is found on a campus is of highest importance and of wide interest and far-flung consequence. College and university presidents, deans of colleges or divisions, heads of departments, research investigators are often individuals whose fame is nationwide or even worldwide. Their work, their discoveries, their views even, are often out of the ordinary and make news.

An analysis of the news of a campus and its immediate community will make it plain how different types fit into the different classifications of interest discussed in the preceding chapter.

*News of life and death* is found, of course, in a college or university as well as elsewhere, and often it involves unusual circumstances which give it special value. For example, faculty or research men may contract fatal disease in the course of their work. Laboratory explosions have seriously injured or even killed students and instructors working in them. Epidemics sometimes involve college communities, while college and university hospitals may provide a considerable grist of news.

The news interest that lies in *fight or struggle* is found in football and other athletic events, of course, but it may also be found in that less spectacular but equally interesting struggle of individual students in getting an education against difficulties; for instance, there is the young fellow who covers a dairy route early in the morning, or cares for children in a well-organized way, or holds a run as a Pullman porter. Then there is the struggle that sometimes comes when educational institutions happen to get involved in politics, and a governor takes measures to oust a college head,

as has been done, or displace a faculty member who has displeased some political big gun.

News with *crime* interest that is more than local is not frequent on a campus, but it does happen. Minor crime may not be as common in a university or college community as elsewhere, but it is there in petty thefts, occasional burglaries, prowling, peeping. On one agricultural college campus a student reporter uncovered the fact that the college dairy which sold milk in the community was violating a city ordinance governing the butterfat content of milk sold.

Not many items of college crime happenings are published. Campus newspapers do not often publish a story that reflects upon the good name of the institution or its students. The authorities handle such matters as quietly as possible. Daily newspapers in a college town more often than not refrain from publishing stories of this sort. If it is used, the name of the student involved may not be printed. On the other hand, if the happening is something in the nature of a student prank, done in a spirit of fun, perhaps mistaken fun, but not maliciously, the news is likely to be given large space.

Students in a course in technical journalism may never have to gather and write stories of politics and crime. Yet a student reporter never knows, when he goes to work on a routine story of some technical experiment, say, when he will come across something entirely different. The good reporter will get the facts if possible and report to the instructor, or if working for a publication, to the editor. The instructor or editor must decide whether it is a story to be written and printed, or not.

The gathering and writing of a story of this classification may give the student reporter some valuable experience, even though he is looking forward only to technical writing.

News that deals with *women, children, and the home* may be found on any campus and often is highly interesting news. People generally are more than usually curious about the doings of co-eds. What faculty women do has interest, whether it be in the field of instruction, writing, speaking, or in research. If a young woman

takes a course in animal husbandry or civil engineering or veterinary medicine, she becomes news. The faculty woman who secures a leave of absence to spend a year in exploration in connection with research work is news. Where there is a nursery school on a campus or where home economics students in the home management house adopt a baby, this makes news.

News with the appeal of *adventure and romance* is plentiful on the college campus. There are stories of unusual ways in which students earn their way through school. Students from foreign lands often furnish a news story of entrancing interest. Hobbies of faculty and students often involve adventure. Faculty men often have adventures in connection with their field work or while on vacation. Maybe it is the janitor who has the adventure to tell.

A fascinating type that a student reporter may dig up is one concerning the work or adventures of a graduate of the college. A graduate leaves the campus to grow cotton for the Soviet government in Siberia, to work on a rubber plantation in Liberia, to work on a banana plantation in Central America. Or he may have done engineering work on the Burma Road in China, or prospected for gold in northern Canada, or worked on a bridge-building job in some foreign jungle. Often faculty members can give the facts for a story about such a graduate. A graduate returns to the campus, for a visit or to take graduate work. The good reporter sees a news story in this visitor and gets it. Again, the news story may be secured from a casual visitor to the campus, perhaps for a lecture before some campus group. Many of these are handled best when written as interviews.

The dean of agriculture goes to a sheep ranch and culls 15,000 head of sheep. A professor of economics buys a new station wagon and spends his summer following the trail of migrant farm laborers. An instructor in engineering begins a class in blacksmithing and wrought iron work for women students. Folk songs are gathered in the Kentucky mountains by a teacher of music. An engineer and a soils authority together invent a new way to make bricks. On the campus of the University of Louisiana is an old iron kettle which is a memorial of the man who made Louisiana's sugar industry possible.

Happenings such as these make news for daily newspapers, and they make news and feature articles for other publications, too. They are to be found on every college and university campus by student reporters.

**Some campus news tips:** In the following paragraphs are listed tips for campus news stories that were turned in by a class in technical journalism, which illustrate further the great variety of news that can be found by looking for it:

Several years ago a woman graduate student in agricultural chemistry secured nationwide publicity when she invented a synthetic cracker that was a perfect food, containing all needed food elements. This cracker never appeared on the market because manufacturers of regular crackers would not take it up. The inventor is now married and does not feed her husband synthetic crackers.

A junior agricultural student who took a truckload of corn to Florida during spring vacation was wrecked in Kentucky mountains while returning with a load of oranges.

Black and white fox terrier attends nutrition class in school of home economics—maybe wants his rations up to home economics standards.

Floriculture Forum appropriates \$100 for improvements and equipment for University greenhouses. Money earned by sale of candy, flowers, and succulent plants at florists' short course and Farmers' Week.

Graduate student in home economics just back from six years as missionary teacher in Japan. Came back on Danish cargo boat.

Student confined to bed with supposed mercury poisoning in foot after working during vacation in treating seed with mercury dust at seed company warehouse.

Student has saved 5,347 pennies for his wedding—as yet an entirely theoretical future event.

Of 100 students who took proficiency examination in English to escape fundamental course, only one passed—a graduate of a high school in Shanghai, China.

Local florists to teach flower design to students in floriculture on campus.

Students earning meals at University hospital by work in linen room ousted to make room for WPA workers.

University 4-H Club to entertain older rural youths from seven surrounding counties with folk dances, games, and a floor show.

Agricultural chemistry class feeds white rats.

Rural electrification is new course in agricultural engineering.

Bird census taken again in University woodlot.

Rural homemakers' chorus groups in thirteen counties have accepted invitation to participate in concert to be given by a state chorus during Farmers' Week.

The state land use planning committee has been enlarged to include four farm women and the state home demonstration leader in extension work.

New polishing equipment, run by electricity, has been installed in the quantitative chemistry laboratories to clean apparatus formerly cleaned by hand.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. List briefly the news and feature articles in an issue of a daily newspaper which have some relationship with some college campus here or elsewhere. Do the same in one issue of a farm paper, trade magazine, or a magazine in some special field.

2. Find out and report—either in a news story or otherwise, as instructor may ask—on one of the following as it applies to your own particular major field or department: Location of graduates from most recent commencement. Faculty changes made since close of previous term. Repairs, improvements, or changes on campus, in buildings, in class or laboratory equipment, in experimental plots, on university farms, and the like. Books, bulletins, or articles written recently by faculty. Where or how faculty spent recent vacation period. Anyone recently injured or seriously ill. Any marriages, deaths, or births. Any recent news of prominent graduates. Honors awarded to faculty members or students recently. Students recently pledged to social organizations or elected to honor or professional societies.

3. Find out and report on what part students and faculty took or will take in some recent event or one to occur this term off the campus, or in an event on the campus which brings off-campus groups to it. A state or regional fair or exposition, National Dairy Show, International Livestock Exposition, American Farm Bureau convention, National Grange convention, rural electrification conference, Vegetable Growers' Association of America convention, state ceramics

association meeting, annual convention of state home economics association, annual extension conference, or farm and home week are examples of these events.

4. Gather facts about one of the following: Trips faculty men expect to make this term. Trips to be made by student groups during term, as tour of coal mines or chemical plants, or visit to a central market, or practice judging by livestock judging team. Conventions to be attended by faculty or students off campus in near future. Major programs being carried on now by some member or division of extension service.

*(Note. These assignments indicate some of the easier assignments with which a student reporter may begin his work. These may be expanded as instructor desires. They will, of course, be continued as students go on to cover material discussed in future chapters.)*

## CHAPTER 5

### NEWS OF SPECIAL FIELDS

**W**HILE news is news, and all news possesses the basic qualities discussed in the preceding chapters, yet all news matter is not made of the same sort of stuff; its subject matter varies widely.

Just as we may say of all good building material that it has strength, durability, and adaptiveness, but that it may be stone, brick, wood, or steel, so we may say of all news stories that they possess certain characteristics in common, but that they vary in substance. The story of a crime, the story of a new method in farming, of some new short cut in homemaking, of some new device for moving materials on a great construction job are similar in that each contains some measure of those qualities of newness, importance, nearness, human interest, and so forth which are basic, but they are widely different in subject matter. Because of their basic news qualities they have a modicum of appeal to all persons, but the largest interest in stories arising out of agriculture, women's activities, engineering, industries, and trade is for certain special groups whose activities in life link up closely with the subject matter.

**Two broad divisions of news:** Therefore news may be divided into two very broad divisions as to its *common* or *general appeal* and as to its *special* or *limited class* or *group appeal*. *News with a common* or *general appeal* is the news that fills the daily or weekly newspaper; *news with a limited class appeal* is the news of the class or trade publications, such as the farm journal, the women's journal, the engineering magazine, the merchants' trade journal, the drygoods trade journal, and so forth.

It must be borne in mind, of course, that the *newspaper* does not ignore the special fields of news; on the contrary, an increasing proportion of *newspaper* space is devoted to departments for news

of special fields, but for the most part it gathers and presents only the immediate phases of the happenings in those fields and usually only the surface phases. The thorough, technical handling of the news or information of the special fields of agriculture, home economics, engineering, science, industry, and trade is the definite and more or less exclusive function of the class publications. Because of difference in fundamental appeal of the newspaper and the class journal in their respective fields, the former is quite likely to rely for its handling of news in special fields upon writers without technical training in these fields, whereas the class publication demands writers who combine technical training and experience with their ability to write. More and more newspapers, however, are attaching to their staffs men and women who are specially qualified to gather and write news relating to these special fields.

This book deals only in a secondary way with news of the first broad division just suggested—the news of accidents, crimes, disasters, sports, and the like. It gives some consideration to the gathering and writing of this general news because it affords an abundance of laboratory material for the beginning reporter and good practice in acquiring facility in the use of fundamental news writing forms.

The main emphasis of this text is upon news in the second division just defined—technical news. It concerns itself principally with news in the special fields of agriculture, home economics, engineering, and the various branches of science, but news in any other technical or special field is within its scope.

**Technical news:** Agricultural news is news that pertains closely to agriculture as an art and as an industry as well as the activities in the lives of people engaged in agriculture. Home economics news is news that pertains closely to the activities of the homemaker in the operation and management of her home and family. Scientific and engineering news pertains, likewise, to the special concerns of people engaged in scientific and engineering occupations. A marriage of rural people, or crime or disaster among them, is not agricultural news as it is now being defined; nor is news of a society event home economics news; nor is a story tel-

ling of the ceremonies which accompany the opening of a great bridge engineering news; for in none of these cases does the story pertain to the practice of agriculture, home economics, or engineering.

If a farmer develops a specialty of bluegrass seed production and makes a success of it through the use of special methods, that is agricultural news; its subject matter relates to agriculture as an art and industry. If a homemaker works out a way to arrange her kitchen to save both time and labor, that is home economics news for it relates to the art of home economics. Likewise, when an engineer develops a method of building concrete highways of standard strength with the use of less reinforcing steel, that is engineering news, for it deals with the technique of highway construction. These simple distinctions are fundamental.

An examination of these very simple illustrations of technical news reveals quickly that they have in them the basic qualities of news (discussed in Chapter III). They have in greater or less degree, newness, unusualness, importance, human interest, nearness, and seasonableness; they do not necessarily have the quality that demands immediate publication, but recency is not a *sine qua non* in these special fields of news. The examples do have most of the essentials of news, and it is important to re-emphasize that news is news, wherever it may be found, whatever its subject matter may be, and for whomsoever it is written.

It must not be understood from what has just been said that recency is not an element of value in gathering and writing news of the special fields. It is. If the story of the farmer's bluegrass seed enterprise can be told while it is "live" and still has in it the vitality that is inherent in events that are current instead of long past, it will be that much more interesting and valuable.

**Spot news and time copy:** In the daily newspaper field it is common to refer to news that is told immediately after it happens as "spot news." It has a particular value because it is "spot news." In contra-distinction there is the term "time copy," applied to news stories that may be deferred for a time to give way to the stories that press urgently for immediate publication. These

terms have application in the news field of the technical or class journal, as well as in that of the daily newspaper.

A meeting of a scientific society or an agricultural organization is spot news. The dedication of an engineering structure or a speech by a famous nutritionist is spot news. So also are, for example, observations of an eclipse, the promulgation of new animal quarantine regulations, the announcement of specifications for an engineering enterprise.

Stories about the following would ordinarily constitute time copy: the grasshopper situation, women's fashions for fall, the relative merits of various types of road surfacing materials, a research into the commercial uses of furfural.

**Technical news in the daily newspaper:** Obviously the "best" newspaper story is one which will vitally interest all of the readers of the paper. It is equally obvious that very few stories meet this specification. The newspaper has an unselected audience—one made up of all kinds of people, with all kinds of interests, but it is able only rarely to find a story which all of its readers will read with interest. In other words, much of the news in the daily paper is directed primarily toward sections of its circulation. The sports news, for example, is directed primarily toward the men; the women's page, obviously, is primarily for the women. The market and financial news is primarily for business men. A story about a suburban improvement association will be of interest to people of the suburban area concerned. A story of a state convention of the hardware dealers' association will be of interest to hardware merchants, their employees, and friends.

Some technical news is, of course, so important, vital, and dramatic that it will be read by a large proportion of the newspaper's subscribers. Much more often, however, technical news is printed because of the special interest certain groups will take in it.

For many years newspapers have recognized the value of news material especially designed for women readers. Practically all of our larger newspapers have women's departments, directed by a women's editor. Frequently she has under her women who are

especially trained in foods, fashions, interior house decoration, child care and training, and other subjects of paramount concern to women readers. The material in these departments consists largely of time copy. Spot news of primary interest to women is usually handled in other parts of the paper and in the same way that other spot news is handled.

Special attention to agricultural news is a more recent development in daily newspaper making. During the past twenty-five years a number of daily papers have employed farm editors. On some papers these farm editors run a farm page or farm department. On other papers, while they are not assigned special space, they cover the farm news of the paper's territory. In this case the farm copy is judged for its news value just as any other copy is judged and placed in the paper according to its reader interest. The farm editor is frequently an advisor on editorial policy, as related to agriculture.

Daily newspapers carry much scientific news. They are particularly interested in scientific material dealing with health—medicine, surgery, dietetics—and with chemical research, especially as it is related to industry. Some larger daily newspapers employ special staff members to handle scientific news. They also depend largely for this kind of material upon the press services and syndicates. The Associated Press, for example, has a science editor and a correspondent who devote all of their time to the covering of scientific news. Science Service is a syndicate, founded and endowed by the late E. W. Scripps as a non-profit corporation, which supplies to subscribing newspapers wire and mail coverage of science news.

Daily newspapers deal with engineering news in a less organized way than they do with the other subjects in which we are interested here. Although some newspapers have automobile and aviation departments, these emphasize the commercial aspects of these fields rather than the engineering. While a newspaper is not likely to employ a reporter specifically to cover engineering news, the ability of a reporter to do so may be an added qualification.

**Handling of technical news is different:** There is a fundamental difference between the way general news is usually written

for a daily newspaper and its typical reader and the way technical news is written for the reader who has a technical or special interest in the story. The latter wants to know more about what happened, the exact details involved, the background, the interpretation of the facts, the consequences, and so on.

To illustrate, the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station some time ago announced a new tall fescue developed jointly by that station and the United States Department of Agriculture, and promising to be of importance as a new pasture grass. This much was news for daily newspapers.

But a farmer would want to know more details: where seed could be secured, on what soils it could be grown, just how and when it should be sown, when livestock could be turned onto it, how the crop would withstand winter temperatures, what kinds of livestock could be pastured on it, what its feeding value would be in comparison with other pasture grasses, and so on. A story giving these details would be a technical news story of the sort that a farm paper only would want to carry.

Then agronomists in other states, interested in the subject would want to know the botanical history of the new seed, the facts about the work of breeding or selection, the detailed records of the plots in the grass nursery, and something about the other strains or varieties tested and discarded. The telling of these more technical and scientific facts would be a story to be written for a journal read by agronomists and other agricultural scientists.

A large seed company introduced a vegetable new to the United States, bringing it from China. Its leaves resemble the leaves of lettuce, while its stalk is similar to celery. That much about this happening makes a good newspaper story. But the vegetable grower or the home gardener wants details about how to grow it. The woman interested in foods wants to know how to prepare, serve raw, or cook this new vegetable. The general newspaper story may not include the fact that the thick stem must be peeled before it can be used as a salad green or cooked, but this technical detail is all-important in a story for the information of readers interested in foods.

Some time since, a big story, carried by newspapers all across

the country, dealt with the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows bridge. This was general news, of widespread interest because of its unusual features. To the engineer, however, there were many details which the daily papers did not carry. The reasons why the bridge failed were of course a part of the general story, but the engineer wanted to know all about the original plans, the mathematical and mechanical calculations involved in the planning, the structural details, the materials used, construction methods, and changes to be made in the new bridge to be built. Such things constitute technical news for the engineer.

**The country or community weekly:** The weekly newspaper published in a small town has a much different field and function from the city daily, farm journal, or any other publication. While its constituency is comprised of people with a wide variety of occupation and interest, yet they have so much in common that they are united as city people are not united. They live closely together; they are all neighbors; they know one another's names and more or less of one another's business. Whatever may happen to one member of the community has deep interest for all the others. Therefore we shall not expect to find the same news content in a country weekly that we do in a city daily.

Rather than events of intrinsic importance in the world at large, the newspaper will play up the happenings of its community—happenings which have significance and universal local interest because of the closeness of the readers to one another. On occasion the country weekly may give space to happenings of state or national importance, but as a rule its concern is with the events of its own immediate community.

That is true of local news about farming as well as of social or other news. Whereas the writer of agricultural news for the farm journal or city daily must always weigh each item to determine whether it has sufficiently wide interest and importance to appeal to his publication's larger and more heterogeneous audience, and eliminate much of detail, the writer for a weekly paper may feel assured that any agricultural event that has a reasonable measure of news value will appeal to the readers of his publication, and he may profitably include most of the intimate details he can gather.

John Brown's purchase of a new bull to head his dairy herd, the annual picnic meeting of the Center Township Farm Bureau, the experience of Albert Smith with his crop of Sudan grass, the topping of the Chicago market by Henry Thompson—all these events may be of too little importance in the estimate of the journal published for a state-wide constituency, but they are the kind of news stuff that makes the local country newspaper a success. There was a time when country newspapers did not fully recognize the value of this local agricultural news, and they made no particular effort to get it; but that has changed and some of them employ special reporters to gather and write it. Many of them maintain special farm departments.

**Technical material in magazines:** Many different kinds of magazines use technical material—and in many different kinds of ways.

*General magazines*—Magazines of very general circulation, such as *Harpers*, *Atlantic*, *Saturday Evening Post*, frequently run articles about agriculture, home economics, science, and engineering. Such articles must, however, be interesting because of their wide significance, their importance, or extreme unusualness. The *Saturday Evening Post* might very well run a story about a great engineering project, such as Grand Coulee Dam. *Harpers Magazine* might run a story which would describe and evaluate the work of the Farm Security Administration. In these cases the articles would deal with technical subject matter, but they would be presented to a nontechnical audience because of their general interest.

*Farm journals*—The great bulk of the material in farm journals is technical in subject matter in that it deals with the science of agriculture. It is written for the most part, however, in a popular, nontechnical manner. Among the farm journals are the national and regional magazines, most of them monthly publications, the state farm papers, most of them weekly or bi-weekly, and a large group of magazines which deal with particular phases of agriculture, such as the breed publications, horticultural magazines, dairy papers, etc.

The farm journals usually contain departments for farm women which are filled with home economics material.

*Women's magazines*—Most of the women's magazines are national in scope, have large circulations, and present home economics material in a popular form.

*Engineering magazines*—There are many engineering magazines devoted to the different aspects of the engineering profession. Because the subscribers to these publications are, for the most part, highly trained technicians, the material which they contain is much less "popular" than that in the women's and farm magazines.

*Scientific journals*—At one extreme, among scientific journals, are the very highly technical publications in the various fields of science, publications designed primarily for research workers in those fields. These journals, with their small, highly selected reader groups, make no attempts at all to be either interesting or intelligible to the layman. At the other end of the spectrum are the "popular science" magazines. These appeal to the curiosity of the layman by recounting the unusual and the romantic developments in science and invention. Between these two extremes are many publications with varying degrees of popular appeal.

*Trade publications*—To this category belong many hundreds of magazines which serve the interests of particular trade and professional groups. It would be difficult to name a business or trade in the country which does not have a publication to recount its news and discuss its problems.

*House organs*—Many commercial organizations and trade associations publish magazines, usually for free distribution, which have either or both of two purposes: to inform the employees of the organization of its news and policies and to build employee good will and cooperation; and to reach prospective customers of the organization with the story of the organization and its products.

*Wide scope of technical news:* When we use the terms agricultural, home economics, and engineering with reference to news of the technical field their connotation is much more inclusive than may first appear. The sources of news within their respective fields are correspondingly more numerous.

Agriculture has to do with soils, farm crops, animal husbandry, poultry, entomology, plant pathology, pomology, vegetable gardening, floriculture, farm management, rural economics, rural

sociology, dairy manufacturing, genetics of plants and animals, engineering, veterinary medicine, vocational education, extension, and the basic sciences that relate to them.

Engineering has its many branches also—civil, mechanical, electrical, chemical, mining, ceramic, architectural, industrial, and still others.

Home economics has to do with foods, nutrition, clothing and fabrics, home furnishings, household equipment, home service work, child care and training, vocational teaching, design and decoration, institutional management, home planning.

Closely related to agriculture, engineering, and home economics are the major sciences—chemistry, bacteriology, physics, mathematics; likewise manufacturing, selling, advertising, and economics are a part of many of these various subdivisions.

Technical news is sometimes cumulative, extending over a period of time. As each new stage develops there is more news to tell. As a broad economic movement unfolds, a piece of scientific research is carried forward; as a great construction job proceeds, the story of each phase is news. Sometimes the final story may be written as a general feature article.

Agricultural news in recent years has dealt much with widespread movements, such as the land boom of 1919 and its consequences; cooperative marketing and other farm organizations; efforts toward national farm legislation; the Agricultural Adjustment Administration; the soil conservation programs. There has been widespread planting of pasture and winter cover crops. Corn Belt farmers have turned to the use of hybrid seeds, cut down their corn acreage and adopted such new crops as soybeans. Cotton acreage in the South has decreased and livestock has increased. Specialty crops have spread through the Intermountain states and along the Pacific Coast.

New varieties of grain have been developed by state experiment stations and the United States Department of Agriculture. Plant diseases and insect pests have been attacked on a wide front. Power machinery has reached every section of the country. Rural electrification has spread. Agricultural extension has gone into every area, and the teaching of vocational agriculture has been

set up in most rural high schools. Population has flowed toward cities when times were good and back again when the depression came on. Great mass movements of farm people have taken place, especially toward California and the Pacific Coast. Government programs, such as the Farm Security Administration and land use planning, have made big news.

Among the outstanding new events in the engineering field in recent years has been the construction of great dams, such as Shasta, Grand Coulee, and Norris. A number of gigantic bridges have been built. The nation has been crisscrossed with a network of paved highways, and new super-highways, such as the Merritt Highway in Connecticut and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, are now coming into the news. Skyscrapers in cities, new types of factories, housing for low income workers, and all kinds of defense program structures have made construction news.

The development of the automobile industry, motor truck transportation, airplane building and travel, motor buses, Diesel-electric engines, streamlined trains, operation of freight trains on passenger schedules, and the passing of electric interurbans—all these have made transportation news.

The field of engineering has also been concerned with air-conditioning, insulation, utilization of by-products, solvents, lacquers, plastics, essential oils, alloys, synthetic materials, high compression motors and photoelectric cells—to mention just a few more outstanding developments. The whole task of providing war materials and defense supplies has been largely an engineering task.

Coming within the scope of home economics have been the discovery of various vitamins in food, synthetic fabrics such as rayon and nylon, and new types of foods such as tenderized hams. Frozen foods, boneless meats, and power household equipment have made news.

Under the heading of scientific news would come many discoveries in fields of research, such as cyclotrons, cosmic rays, new drugs, such as the sulfa compounds, ultraviolet light uses.

*Technical news available to students:* Important technical news stories in the fields just reviewed are not beyond the possibilities of students in technical journalism courses, with limited time available to find

and write them. Fortunately, as explained in a previous chapter, a college campus offers adequate material.

In the assignments listed below is one to secure a list of ten tips for technical news stories. To illustrate what may be found we present here some of such tips secured by members of one class recently, given just as the students brought them in:

Research is being carried out on consumer preference for grade labeling on canned goods and vegetables by Department of Rural Economics.

Animal husbandry section of Experiment Station has been conducting an extensive experiment to determine the relative efficiency of crossbred and purebred steers in feedlot, using Hereford and Angus cattle.

Agricultural Engineering Department has been conducting tests for some time to determine rate of drying of grains in bins and cribs.

Home Economics nutrition staff is making plans for a study of the food intake of college men.

Study of social development of young child being made through observations at nursery school.

Experiments on grass silage and alfalfa hay for sheep.

Campus agricultural engineers devise new corn grader and sizer to facilitate grading of hybrid seed corn.

New cart dynamometer, only one of its kind in world, developed by graduate student in agricultural engineering, which measures both take-off and draw-bar power requirements simultaneously.

Extension entomologists are collecting scab-infested apple leaves in fall to use in predicting spraying dates next spring.

Extensive study of college girl's wardrobe to be made by clothing division of School of Home Economics.

Experiments this year confirm theory that there are varieties of hybrid corn resistant to aphids.

Control of aphids on brussels sprouts in early fall effected by new spray tested in university vegetable garden.

New type dairy herd improvement testing, on Wisconsin plan, known as owner-sampler, introduced into state.

An adult evening school in nutrition called "bride's course," being given by member of Home Economics staff.

Yearly summary of farm home account records completed by Home Economics Extension workers.

Photoelectric cell used to control light intensity in floriculture greenhouse.

Experiment in Agronomy Department being conducted in which an electron microscope which magnifies 100,000 times is used to test clay minerals which come from all over the world.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Analyze the news content of a daily newspaper to determine which stories have general appeal and which have a class or group appeal. Measure in column inches the amount of each kind of news. (A basis for interesting comparisons will be secured if different members of a class use different newspapers for this assignment.)

2. Count and measure the agricultural, scientific, engineering, and home economics stories in a week's issues of a daily newspaper; in a weekly newspaper. Compare the totals with the totals for all news carried.

3. Compare the handling of market reports, crop reports, and weather news in a daily newspaper and a weekly farm journal. Write a 300-word analysis of your findings.

4. Prepare a list of 10 tips for technical spot news stories, material for which you could get and write up.

5. Take an exceptionally good news tip, involving matter of more than ordinary interest, and outline how you would develop a story about it for (a) a farm or technical or women's journal; (b) a county seat weekly; (c) a daily newspaper.

6. Prepare an outline report on the important news events in your major field, both locally and nation-wide or world-wide, within the past five years or so. Consult members of the faculty and others and literature as necessary, in getting these facts. Two or three students may work together in preparing this assignment. (Note: Oral reports before the class by students in various lines of work have proved interesting and valuable in a class taught by one of the authors of this text.)

CHAPTER 6  
NEWS AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS

**I**N a class in technical journalism which included persons enrolled in various technical and professional courses, an advanced student in ceramic engineering made a report on important news in that field. It might seem that such news would have no relation to the interests of the students of agriculture, home economics, pharmacy, and other subjects who were in that class, but it soon appeared that the opposite was true.

One item of ceramic news presented had to do with the development of a new type of milk bottle by glass manufacturers. This happening was also news to the dairy manufacturer who bottles milk, to the dairy farmer who retails milk in bottles, and to students who were preparing to enter these fields. It was also news to the home economics students majoring in foods, for a more sanitary container for milk is of concern to them.

In another similarly mixed class a pharmacy student brought in the story that because war had cut off foreign sources of certain drugs and herbs, the College of Pharmacy planned to investigate the possibility of growing drug plants in the United States through the establishment of an experimental garden on the University farm.

It developed that the Department of Horticulture was cooperating in the investigation. It appeared also that a major student in floriculture, a member of this journalism class, had been detailed to make a study of methods of growing sage commercially to replace the supply formerly brought from Europe. Sage is used in large quantities as flavoring in the manufacture of sausage, and also in cookery. So the shortage of this herb had news interest for the animal husbandry student majoring in meats and the home economics students majoring in foods, as well as for others along the line of the news story's development.

What no one in the class knew was that in a western intermountain state a well-known electric light and power company was actively promoting the experimental growing of sage and other herbs by farmers in its territory. The company sells current and electric equipment to farmers who need new cash crops. If sage could be grown profitably, the farmers would have more money to spend for power and equipment, and that was why the power company had a vital interest in the growing of sage.

These examples illustrate the fact that a piece of technical news is not likely to stand alone, by itself, in the particular field in which it happened, but is probably of concern in several other fields, and of interest to many different classes of readers.

**News has many aspects:** An item of news may be said to have a good many facets of interest, and each facet or aspect may be presented to a special group of readers with special interest in that aspect.

As the reporter puts it, he may write the story "to play up" either this angle or that, according to the publication in which it is to appear and the readers to whom it is to appeal. Certain details may be "played up" for one type of journal and "played down" for another. One aspect of the news may be amplified for the farmer, another aspect for the engineer, still another for the homemaker, and so on.

And that may be done with most happenings of consequence. They cannot be labeled for this or that group of readers only. They can be written with variations in emphasis on and selection of details and in approach to the reader. Important news in one place is likely to be of some importance in other places.

**The weather an example:** Take weather for a good example. Day in and day out weather has the most nearly universal news appeal of all the news in the world. It is not only of general interest, but of high importance in the technical, trade, and transportation fields.

Rain means that the college student wears a raincoat. The merchant displays waterproof garments and umbrellas. The taxi-cab business picks up. People who are caught in the rain send their clothes to the cleaner for pressing. The fair and the circus

may take out rain insurance. The same rain that may mean the failure of a church social to raise money for the preacher's salary may also ruin a Grange picnic, a political rally, or a department store sale. It may bring trouble to the state highway department in maintaining roads.

Excessive rains may bring news of floods, sometimes of nation-wide and world-wide interest. Or lack of rain may bring a drouth, such as the dry periods of 1931 and 1934 in the Great Plains. That drouth, with the help of winds, created the "Dust Bowl" and dust storms, compelled migration of farm population, selling of livestock, and abandonment of farms, and set in motion economic forces that are still potent.

An early fall frost in Iowa is big news. It may cause serious damage to the corn crop and bring an immediate upturn of prices on the Chicago grain exchange. Meat packers take note, for soft corn will likely change the feeding plans of livestock producers. Manufacturers of and dealers in farm implements and other goods bought by farmers take note, for sales may be reduced.

A frost in a vegetable-growing section may bring an end to the crop and its harvesting. A sharp jump in vegetable prices may result, and family food buying is likely to shift to other products. Canneries may shut down and discharge workers. To the florist the freeze may bring increased sales of cut flowers. Fog may disrupt traffic on land and sea, and railroads may get an increase in passenger business as motor travel by highway decreases.

Zero temperatures and blizzards are news of wide ramifications. The November blizzard of 1940 in Minnesota, Iowa, and other states caused death for many persons, killed much livestock, destroyed hundreds of thousands of turkeys which were ready for Thanksgiving markets, stopped all traffic in country and city. The storm killed fruit trees in a wide area, stopped the movement of fluid milk into St. Paul and Minneapolis. It threw a tremendous burden on state highway organizations and city street maintenance crews.

These happenings were news not merely for newspapers, but also for many trade and technical publications.

The following story which appeared about twelve days after the

blizzard, in "The Florists Exchange," published in New York City, illustrates how this specialized journal dealt with the news:

#### TWIN CITIES' SNOWSTORM PARALYZES BUSINESS

Nov. 16—The Twin Cities are gradually digging out of one of the most severe snow storms ever experienced. Nov. 11 and 12, all street cars were stopped and most stores were closed. All kind of traffic was halted. On Wednesday some street car service was resumed so that stores able to get their employees to work were able to carry on. Some damage was done to greenhouses, but with ample warning given, most houses were specially propped up to meet the onslaught.

Business, of course, has been at a standstill. All mums will be scarce for Thanksgiving, and roses decidedly tight. Mums are selling at \$1 to \$2.50 per dozen. Carnations are plentiful at 3 to 4 cents; glads now arriving make 6 cents. Orchids and gardenias are quiet. Finch roses make 3 to 4 cents; California violets, \$1.50 to \$2.50 per dozen bunches. Heather sells at 60 cents to \$1 a bunch.

The most severe damage experienced was by E. C. Brown, Minneapolis, who had twenty feet of one greenhouse cave in. Albert Farmer's smoke stack blew down, fortunately without breaking any glass.

Holm & Olson experienced no damage, but had to use props. Tuesday morning some of the employees had to walk as much as five miles to get to work. The firm had two big funerals that day, and it was necessary to get a \$500 blanket at 11 a. m. besides many other pieces. They were able to deliver all orders, and Holm & Olson feel very proud of their employees' loyalty.

Hans Rosacker Co. reported snow had twisted one of the purlines in one house but it was propped up safely. They were up all night Monday. On Tuesday no employees were able to get to the store and no deliveries were made. They were, however, able to take care of a large wedding on Wednesday.

This is only a portion of the story, which continued at length to give similar details about other establishments in the blizzard area.

**Rural electrification's scope:** The advance of rural electrification was attended by a news sequence of high importance. It began soon after the discovery of a satisfactory method of transmitting high voltages by wire over long distances. The "high lines" brought current to smaller towns and to the farms. That fact concerned engineers and experiment stations. When electric power was made available to the farm and farm home, it brought the need for wiring and equipment and prompted application of electricity to farm tasks in a new way. It meant electric lighting in the home, electric ranges, washing machines, mixers, and a long list of other devices which the farm home had been denied. This development opened great new opportunities for engineers and designers, architects, contractors and builders, manufacturers,

and distributors. At the same time, it gave rise to much additional news.

**Fashion news ramifications:** News of fashions is of great interest to women. It appears in the daily newspapers, in the monthly women's magazines, and elsewhere. Here such matters as length of coats, long skirts for party gowns, rayon dresses, nylon hose, feathers on hats, or costume jewelry are fully presented. What women will buy and wear is vital news also to the retail merchant, the wholesaler, and the manufacturer. But fashions often have far wider interest than that. Consider the length of women's skirts, for example. The following news story, sent out some time ago by the United Press, will illustrate some of the ramifications of fashion news:

#### **SHORT SKIRTS FOUND TOUGH ON FARMERS**

Washington, D. C. (U.P.)—Uncle Sam—not Confucius—say “Women's short skirts add to farmer's troubles.”

That, explains the Census Bureau, is because it takes less cotton to make a short skirt than a long one. It would take a million bales of cotton to cover women's legs from the knees to the ankles. So, the surplus of cotton goes up and down with the hem of women's skirts. The city man's gain is the farmer's loss.

Uncle Sam—in a pamphlet issued by the Census Bureau—also say “fat woman make farmer happy, thin woman make him sad.” Every time a fat woman diets

off a pound she takes money out of farmers' pockets.

“Dieting has hit hard some of the important farm crops,” says the bureau.

#### **Lament Passing of Corn Meal**

The bureau advises its public speakers to lament the passing of “good old corn meal mush and corn bread” and to view with alarm the sad plight of “the good old buckwheat cake” that used to grace the breakfast table.

Back in the gay eighties, when bustles were in fashion, the average consumption of corn meal was 117 pounds per capita. Fifty years later it was down to 21 pounds. Buckwheat has suffered a similar fate.

The length of women's skirts not only has an influence upon the cotton market but affects the wool market in the same way. Also, when America began to ride in closed autos and live in houses heated with hot air or steam, with doors and windows weather-stripped and walls and roof insulated, people began wearing thinner clothing in winter. Less wool is needed to make them.

Thus agriculture, engineering, and styles are involved. How far afield these influences spread is illustrated by the following story which appeared some time ago in the *Chicago Daily Drovers' Journal*:

**STEAM HEATING AFFECTS AUSTRALIAN WOOL SALES**

Melbourne, Australia—The perfected systems of central heating in the United States and their extension to England are having a serious effect on the sale of Australian wool, according to Prof.

L. M. Giblin of Melbourne university.

Inhabitants of both countries, he said, are counting more and more on central heating to keep themselves warm instead of on Australian wool, as formerly.

There is a good reason why *Women's Wear*, a daily newspaper read by department store buyers, wholesalers, and manufacturers, publishes farm news dealing with cotton, wool, and flax. Wool and sheep are good news in Boston newspapers because that city is a great wool market. Any farm news is important in Hartford, Connecticut papers, because life insurance companies located here have large investments in farm mortgages. A florist trade paper carries news of women's styles because these have their effect upon corsages and other floral adornment women buy from florists.

**Interrelation of other news:** The building of a great structure, such as the Golden Gate Bridge, illustrates how news in the field of engineering also creates news in many directions. The construction of the bridge itself furnished a long chain of technical news stories which involved design, steel and other materials, painting, floor surface, approaches, and streets and highways to direct traffic flow to and from the bridge when completed. There was news concerning tolls, policing, parking space near ends for walkers across the bridge, and electricity which gave a shock to the toll-takers when their hands touched the hand of a car driver.

Such a bridge changed the traffic flow northward from San Francisco. It shifted industries and built up new ones, particularly roadside industries to the north. It had a wide effect on tourist traffic and on hotels, restaurants, and motor courts. It led to housing changes and building of new homes. Farmers north of San Francisco were able to get their produce into the city markets much more readily. In time, the bridge will have wide effects on schools, churches, and social life of communities.

The architectural engineer reads about real estate transactions for tips that may mean new work. The real estate man reads architectural and building news for word of the building of a new factory which may mean increased values and sale of houses and lots. The same news to a contractor means a possible chance to

bid on the construction. The house builder sees new homes to be built. To an engineer it may mean new streets, new traffic problems, and new sewage lines to be designed and constructed.

A graduate in home economics who goes to work on the staff of a woman's magazine or the women's department of an agricultural publication or a daily newspaper soon discovers the ramifications of news in the field of women's interests. She may have to visit the Furniture Mart in Chicago, a style show in New York City, or a rural electrification conference. She will find that her news concerns clothing manufacturers, equipment manufacturers, advertising agencies. She will discover that there is much to curtains, soap, paint, varnishes, cleaning fluids, drugs, disinfectants, packaged meats, and cheese besides their use in the home.

This graduate will soon discern that her range of activities goes far beyond the obvious interests of women in styles, food, clothing, furnishings, equipment, and the like, and extends into business, engineering, industry, and industrial chemistry.

Even news in one particular field frequently has ramifications and angles elsewhere in the same field as when disease-resistant head lettuce in California practically wiped out lettuce growing in Florida. A large increase in the growing of sweet yams in Louisiana which the market liked brought a sharp decrease in sweet potato acreage in Delaware. The tremendous increase in growing of forage and grass seed crops in Oregon in recent years is a result of government soil conservation programs in the South and sowing of winter cover crops over millions of acres.

The foregoing is not an analysis of the subject. It would take a whole book to do that adequately. But it is hoped that it will suggest to the student many things and stimulate his or her imagination.

For the student who wishes to pursue this further, a reading of *The Next Hundred Years*, by C. C. Furnas, associate professor of Chemical Engineering, Yale University, will be of interest.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Clip a news story of technical content from a daily newspaper or from a farm paper or trade publication. Write out a list of the various classes of people who would be directly interested in this news as a whole or in some part.

2. Write a careful report, either in discussion or outline form, of the ramifications involved in some rather recent or current technical news. Some possibilities for this would be rubber tires for farm machinery, quick-freezing of fruits and vegetables, sale of frozen fillets of fish (find out what happens to the rest of the fish), federal numbered highways, radio quiz programs, corn pickers, indirect lighting in homes, insulin, sulfanilimide, substitutes for arsenate of lead, standardized light bulb sizes, small combines, small tractors, home insulation, oil furnaces, sliced bread, adding vitamins to foods, homogenized milk, photoelectric cells, ultraviolet light, continuous freeze ice cream, state highway police, rayon or nylon, All-America seed trials, prefabricated houses, glass fiber, Grand Coulee Dam, TVA, direct marketing of livestock, cutting of cotton acreage by AAA, planting tung oil trees, mechanical sugar cane cutter, cotton in California, gravel culture in greenhouses, hybrid corn, Vitamin B, cod-liver oil, grass silage, government corn loans, paper milk bottles. Many angles of the Second World War and National Defense could be used, as steel, aluminum, Roquefort-type cheese vegetable seeds, Dutch bulbs, or silk.

CHAPTER 7  
THE SOURCES OF NEWS

**N**EWs is such eerie, uncertain stuff, likely to spring up here, there, anywhere, at any time, expectedly or unexpectedly—how do news writers and newspapers and magazines manage to gather it as completely as they do? How do they make contact with the events of the world, how are their staffs able to find out what is going on, get in touch with the people concerned, and collect the information for publication while it is still fresh? What and where, in other words, are the sources of news?

To the uninitiate there is always more or less of mystery about the process, and it isn't strange that there should be. Will you not try to conceive for a moment the intense activity which goes on in any community during a given period of time, say an hour. Imagine the innumerable words that are spoken, the goings and comings, the emotions given vent to, the decisions reached, the enterprises set under way, the uncountable expressions of human energy. All of these are happenings, although only a small fraction of them is news. If it were necessary for the reporter or editor to acquaint himself with all of these activities in order to be able to sort out those of significance and news value, he would have an impossible task. The uninitiate sees only this complexity, and that is why there is for him a degree of mystery about the gathering and publishing of news. Yet there is really nothing mysterious about it but merely thoroughgoing system, intelligent understanding, industry, and perseverance. Fortunately, too, the significant activities of community, state, nation, and world rise to the surface of the welter and make themselves known through various machineries of society.

**News centers:** Corn is being bought and sold in nearly every community in the country, but it isn't necessary, in order to print the news of the corn market, for a newspaper to survey the selling

and buying operations of the entire country. This task is done by machinery erected for the purpose, the grain exchanges and boards of trade, and all the newspaper has to do is to get in touch with the *news center* where this information is accumulated and made available. It may do this directly or through its press association.

Many varied activities of a public or quasi-public nature are always under way in every county, so many and so varied that no one individual, without assisting agencies, could hope to gather the news of all of them. But in very large part these activities originate in or find their way to the county seat and its courthouse and public offices. The news gatherer need merely make contact with that center to tap this important supply of news, much of which will have an agricultural bearing. Sometime or other in the year a great many citizens of the county make their way to the courthouse to transact business, and often they leave the kernels of news stories of value with the courthouse attaches, with whom the reporter makes regular contact.

So with the great majority of the significant activities which the newspaper or magazine is called upon to report, whether in the small local field or in the world field. News concerning such activities has almost a canny way of accumulating in *news centers*. These centers may be individuals as well as organizations. They are sources of "unexpected" news as well as "expected" news—in fact, these centers furnish the best insurance that "unexpected," spontaneous news will be secured.

It must not be assumed from this discussion that the tendency of much of the news to accumulate in centers relieves the reporter of the necessity of initiative and creative effort. He must always be on the lookout for tips; he must even conceive and develop stories, especially of the experience and information type. But even then he will usually make his way to the news centers to get much of the material with which to construct his story.

What, from the point of view of technical news, are the chief news sources and centers? No list can, of course, hope to be complete, because of the variety of local conditions; much less can one hope to enumerate all the stories that may be secured at each

source. But the list which follows will suggest some important news sources and a few typical stories which may be secured there.

**News from individuals:** Certain persons in any community, small or large, because of their positions, political, financial, or social, and their daily activities, are inevitably in touch with important developments. Among these are:

*Organization officers:* Information, especially advance and inside information, about organization activities, meetings, policies, resolutions, and political and legislative programs. This applies to any field but is especially important in agricultural news. Farm business organization officers and managers are especially good sources of news. So, too, are officers of a county AAA organization.

*Extension workers:* County agricultural agents supply news covering the whole range of agricultural activities in their county and frequently of other fields as well. Home demonstration agents know of the organized and individual activities of women. State extension workers in agriculture, home economics, and industrial arts are in daily contact with matters and activities in their particular fields which make news.

*Field or service workers:* Agricultural and home economics supervisors for the Farm Security Administration, representatives of Federal Farm Loan banks, agricultural agents of railroads, field men for such rural industries as dairy manufacturing or sugar beet factories, home service workers for public utility companies, and rural electrification fieldmen for a power company are individuals who are valuable sources of news.

*Public officials:* Many transactions affecting agricultural, engineering, business, and home interests must pass through their hands, and they have many contacts. They also can supply statistics, laws, regulations, and other information. The county engineer has news of engineering projects in a county. The auditor knows of county supervisor activities. Health officers, livestock regulatory men, inspectors, and others know what is going on. This extends from local and county up to state and national officials.

*Teachers:* The college teacher often has knowledge of new developments in technical matters, but a research worker or extension worker may be a more valuable source. Local public school teachers have contact with both school and civic matters. The vocational teachers of agriculture and home economics are especially good sources of local news in their fields.

*Research workers:* These are the best sources of information on new developments of a technical nature. Included are not only workers in agriculture, home economics, and engineering at state institutions, but workers in the United States Department of Agriculture and all other government research in any line. Workers in privately endowed institutes and foundations and in the experimental and research laboratories of industrial firms are excellent news sources.

*Business, industry, and professions:* Bankers, business men, officers or managers of business or industrial firms, physicians, lawyers, engineers in charge of construction jobs, department managers and buyers in stores, managers of markets and auctions, veterinarians, and architects are further examples of individuals who are in constant contact with news.

*Prominent people:* In every community there are prominent farmers, outstanding women, leaders in various activities, and the like who can often furnish many tips for news.

*Cooperators:* The active news gatherer will find sooner or later some man or woman in his field who has an extraordinary faculty for knowing what is going on in that field. He may or may not be named in the foregoing list of persons, but seemingly news inevitably finds its way to him long before it becomes general property. Every experienced reporter finds such a man and will testify to the value of his cooperation, usually given without any motive except possibly to secure the satisfaction there may be in knowing that he is in a way responsible for the publication of big news.

**News of organized activities:** Important community affairs are often the work of established organizations. That has become increasingly true with the development of organizations to do almost everything imaginable under the sun. Again any list can

be only suggestive, but if the reporter will supplement the following list and keep in touch with the organizations named, he will tap important sources of news:

*Farm organizations:* The Farm Bureau, Grange, Farmers' Union, breed associations, rural social organizations, conference groups—these are some of the organizations which help to make agricultural news through their activities. Practically every kind of agricultural news will find its way into the business of these organizations or into the informal talk of their meetings.

*Women's organizations and clubs:* These are as fruitful of news in the homemaker's field as the men's organizations in theirs. Garden clubs, Parent-Teachers' associations, home demonstration groups, and other types belong here.

*Engineering societies:* Each field of engineering has its national society, many of them with subordinate state branches.

*Scientific societies:* As with engineering, each of the sciences has a national organization. Each state, also, has a number of scientific organizations.

*Schools:* The public schools have increasingly become centers of community life and spirit; that is especially true of the consolidated schools and those having vocational agriculture and home economics departments. The boys and girls in the agricultural and home economics classes, in club work and projects, are alert, and there is almost universal community interest in what they do.

*Churches:* Often a rural church sees its responsibility and opportunity in the rural field and lives up to it, and then it becomes a profitable center of news.

*Nonagricultural groups:* Chambers of commerce, various civic organizations, community center activities, rural Y. M. C. A.'s, and other youth groups frequently maintain a strong cooperative relationship with agricultural and home life.

*Farmer business organizations:* The development of cooperative marketing associations has opened up an entirely new field of news.

**News of state-wide interest:** News of state-wide interest is quite likely to find its way into certain centers, such as the state capital, the city where the state agricultural college is located, and

the headquarters cities of various organizations. The more important state centers of technical news are:

*State agricultural organization headquarters:* A great variety of important information passes through these offices, both from over the state and from all parts of the country. They are all gathering statistics, miscellaneous data, facts about legislative matters, and farming experiences; through them it is possible to get a state-wide view. This also applies to state AAA offices.

*State experiment stations:* Invaluable centers for technical information.

*State colleges of agriculture:* Literally, most of the things of general interest in agriculture either originate here or center here.

*State department of agriculture:* Such a department is charged with the gathering of much agricultural data, with enforcement of regulatory measures, with the conduct of many promotional enterprises.

*Offices of state government:* From the governor's office on down, the state government headquarters are in considerable measure dealing with matters that concern agriculture, engineering, and industry.

State highway commission, state railroad commission, state architect's office, state industrial commission, and state tax commission are other examples.

*State department of education:* The state director of vocational education is usually connected with this department, and his office is a center of valuable news on vocational education.

*State legislative reference bureau.*

*Legislative bodies:* In an agricultural state a very large proportion of proposed legislation affects the farm. Much legislation is engineering news.

*Shows, fairs, expositions, short courses of state-wide interest, and farmer's institutes.*

*Banking, financial, commercial, and trade headquarters:* News of banking and finance, general agricultural conditions, and similar information of agricultural news value are certain to center in these offices and in the offices of bank examiners, officials of state banking organizations, boards of trade, and the like.

*State weather and crop bureaus:* The agents of these bureaus touch practically every rural community of the state, and what they gather in the way of statistical and other information is brought together in the state headquarters. Every farm journal issue is quite certain to carry more or less news from this source.

**News of national and international affairs:** Just as the community and the state have their organizations and leaders, who are the chief sources of community and state news, so in national and international affairs technical news develops in well-defined places:

*United States Department of Agriculture:* This includes the bureau of home economics and is the center of so great a wealth of news that it cannot be enumerated.

*Weather bureau.*

*National and international farm and women's organizations:* Such as the National Grange, American Farm Bureau Federation, Federated Women's Clubs, and so on.

*Promotional activities:* Business and industrial groups maintain research, publicity, and promotional bureaus, associations or foundations which supply technical news, often of high value.

*National farm business organizations.*

*Market and financial news* from the great boards of trade and exchanges, national and international banking houses, the United States Department of Agriculture.

*Legislative news* from national legislative bodies and heads of government departments.

*Transportation,* from the Interstate Commerce Commission and railroad and ship company officials.

*Commerce and trade,* from the Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, and national and international trade bodies.

*Shows, fairs, and expositions.*

*Education,* from the federal office of education, educational foundations.

**Surveying the news field:** If the news gatherer will make a careful survey or analysis of his field, he will find it very helpful. In such a survey he should list systematically every news source

and the kinds of news or information he may expect to get from it, the person who should be called on, the meetings or conferences regularly held in connection with it, and such other facts as are likely to prove helpful to him. If he makes it of permanent record, to be added to or modified as need be, from time to time, it becomes a guide to systematic, thorough news gathering. Experienced news editors and reporters may record these facts in their memories, but many of them compile a complete black and white record for filing and use.

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read through one copy of a weekly newspaper, a daily, and a farm or women's or scientific magazine. Write across the face of each news story what you think was the source of the material contained in the story.

2. Imagine that you have just been appointed farm news or women's editor of your home-town paper. List the centers of agricultural or women's news which you would plan to cover. Suggest one or more stories that you think you might get at this time from each of these news centers.

3. Imagine that you are a reporter on your local daily newspaper, with the job of covering local engineering, industrial, and business news. List the important places and people you would call on regularly to secure this news.

4. List all the important sources of technical news in your own major field to be found in your state, being specific as to departments, organizations, and names.

5. Analyze your own campus as a source of news for a state farm paper, being specific as to names, places, and departments. Or make such an analysis for a trade paper in some other field—as engineering, home economics.

6. List ten faculty men and women on your campus or in your college or division who, because of their prominence, are good news sources.

7. Find out where the outstanding or predominant market for five of the following is located: livestock, range steers, kosher beef, wheat, sudan grass seed, cotton, cottonseed cake, soybeans, soybean oil meal, wool, mohair, naval stores, fish oil meal, anthracite coal, cheddar cheese, butter, alfalfa hay, tobacco (any type), bent grass seed (United States grown), red clover seed, cabbage seed, Iceberg type lettuce, Idaho potatoes, sunflower seed, flour, peanuts, Portland cement, paving bricks, road oils, wire nails, steel rails, clay drain tile, long leaf yellow pine, plywood, 40% ammonia gelatin, white lead, sulfate of copper, porcelain bushings, electrolytic copper, aluminum ingots, sulfur, fuller's earth, stainless steel kitchenware, linoleum, coffee, tea, rock wool insulation, rosebushes, chrysanthemums (cut flowers), dusting sulfur, *Asparagus plumosus*.

8. Find out by interviewing faculty members where you could secure the most recent news developments in connection with one of the following: Acala cotton, well irrigation, bucket-line dredging for gold, farm home zero cold storage, new uses for glass wool, growth-promoting substances, producing certified alfalfa seed, sugar beet seed, insulation for electric refrigerators, preparing hybrid seed corn for marketing, where and how California gets its dairy cattle, preventing irrigation channel waste, relation between power farming and size of farms, direct marketing of hogs, hardy garden chrysanthemums, aluminum production, earth-cement roads, home garden tomato varieties, spinach production in winter, vitamins in pork. (These are suggestive only. The instructor may see fit to prepare his own list, suited to members of the class and to sources of special interest in a state or region.)

## CHAPTER 8

### ORGANIZATION OF NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

**I**T MUST be obvious to one who has gone into the question of news sources that news gathering by newspapers, farm journals, magazines of other types, news and press agencies, and syndicates is a highly organized business. Although any one issue of a journal may depend quite largely for its freshness and compelling interest upon what happens spontaneously in the world in time for that particular issue, it is never the mere creature of circumstance; it has not, Topsy-like, "just growed." It has been made, carefully, thoroughly. Nothing is left to chance. Every possible source of news, expected and unexpected, near and far, is known to the editors; regularly, from day to day or week to week, the paper's news-gathering forces go out to every source and gather and bring in to the editor's desk, or send in by mail, telegraph, telephone, cable, or radio, the great harvest of material, which is there sifted and sorted for publication. As a result the world's intelligence can be periodically presented to the reader for the price of a few pennies.

It is of course essential that anyone who expects to make a staff connection with some newspaper or other publication should know how this news-gathering machine functions. But it is equally important that anyone who expects to contribute to a publication should understand its workings.

The manner in which individual magazines and newspapers tap the sources of news depends upon the scope and character of the publication and the organization of its staff. Since we are dealing here with three general groups of publications, the farm, women's, and technical magazines, the daily newspapers and the weekly newspapers, we shall discuss each in turn, briefly, and see how each connects with its news sources.

**The magazine:** Between the covers of a typical magazine one finds the following kinds of material:

Editorials

News articles

Short informational and experience articles

Feature articles

Fiction and entertainment features

Correspondence

Illustrations

Advertisements

The material of these sorts must be secured in an organized, reliable way if the journal is to cover the important aspects of its field. We are not here concerned with advertisements, and for the other types of material than news articles a few words of explanation will suffice.

The reading material is gathered by the editorial department, which is presided over by an editor, who has general supervision of the journal's policies and contents, does more or less writing of editorials, occasional news stories and feature articles, and makes decision on more or less of the material prepared by other writers for his publication. The publisher sometimes also carries the title of editor, but even then a sub-editor is likely to be in active charge of the editorial content.

The editor's staff, small as compared with that of a daily newspaper, consists of a variable number of associate and assistant editors. These staff members are really reporters, who cover the news field of the publication, although some of them are also likely to be copy readers and have charge of the makeup of the magazine. Usually the different members of the staff are specialists in particular subjects.

This staff is supplemented by correspondents, contributors, and free lance writers, well distributed throughout the field of the journal, who are paid for such material as is accepted by the editor.

With this organization of staff members, correspondents, and contributors, the journal "covers" the various news sources in its field and combs them thoroughly. Staff members look after the

various centers which constitute their "runs" and also special assignments, which are given them by the editor, who keeps a record of meetings, conferences, and many other prospective events as well as of news and feature article tips and suggestions. To cover distant events or assignments a staff member may be sent out or some nearby correspondent or free lance writer may be asked to write the story and send it to the magazine.

The editorials, in which the policies of the journal and the opinions of the editor and publisher are presented, are usually written by the editor or his associates. Infrequently they may be bought from men or women who are not on the staff.

Much of the correspondence and contributed material comes from the readers of the publication, from college and experiment station workers, and from others who are in position to write about worthwhile subjects. A considerable amount of feature material, including short informational and experience articles, news stories off the routine paths, and photographs, is bought from free lance writers, men and women who make a business of writing articles for sale wherever they can find a market for them.

Through many channels, "free stuff" comes to the journal. Government departments, experiment stations and agricultural colleges, farm organizations, women's organizations, industries, all have their publicity or information services which send to farm and other journals free material concerning their activities. Much of it is disinterested and of corresponding value to the journal. The editor, of course, exercises his liberty in using or rejecting this material. Many times he will not publish it but use its tips for getting stories through his own staff writers or contributors.

When departments are maintained, such as junior club or home departments, a staff member is usually placed in charge, and the material for the department is written in part by that editor and in part by contributors and correspondents. Sometimes departments are conducted by part-time editors, who do their work in their homes, and sometimes such departments as that dealing with markets are syndicated.

**The daily newspaper:** Serving as it does all the people in its field, and that field often extensive, a daily newspaper must fill

its columns with reading matter that has a wide appeal; in some way, every day, it must interest every individual reader. Some papers make a special appeal to a class of readers, such as farmers, but even then they do not lose sight of the importance of making this farm news department of interest to others than farmers.

Without going into great detail, it may be said that the daily newspaper is made up of the following types of material:

*Editorials:* Reflecting in discussion and interpretation the views and policies of the editor or publisher, and written by the editor and his associate editorial writers.

*Editorial miscellany and editorial correspondence:* Clipped material from the editorial utterances of other newspapers and correspondence from all kinds of people, setting forth their views upon nearly everything that goes on in the world.

*World news:* Received by wire, radio, or mail through worldwide news-gathering agencies, which in turn "cover" every nook and corner of the globe.

*National news:* Received by wire and mail from news agencies and special correspondents in important centers, such as the national capital; it gives a bird's-eye view of the bigger things that happen day by day in the country at large.

*State or sectional news:* Received by wire, telephone, and mail, secured chiefly from special correspondents (or reporters) in every important town within the circulation territory of the newspaper. In the case of large news developments, staff men are sent out to "cover" them.

*City or local news:* Dealing with the endless variety of things that happen daily, expectedly and unexpectedly, wherever population is piled up in city masses. This is garnered by the newspaper's own staff, with the frequent and considerable help given by persons who have some interest in seeing news in print. In large centers, city press associations are maintained cooperatively or otherwise to cover routine news and to provide tips.

*Sports news:* Secured by special staff writers, correspondents, and news agencies, covering the entire field of sports, local, national, and international. Syndicated material is also used.

*Society news:* Dealing with activities of "society" as it may be defined by the particular newspaper and written by the society editor and contributors.

*Financial, commercial, and market news:* Gathered locally in such part as the extent of local business and market conditions dictates, but largely through special news agencies and received by wire or mail from the greater business centers.

*Special department news:* This varies widely in newspapers. Most newspapers now have special women's departments with one or more reporters, or else someone is employed on a part-time basis for the work. Food news is usually featured in Friday papers. Shopping news is often carried as a department. Farm departments are now carried in many daily papers. In recent years, school and church news has been featured in departments. Likewise, flower gardening is now a department in many papers. Newspapers frequently have special departments devoted to oil, mining, shipping, railroads, lumbering, commercial fishing, automobiles, real estate, or other business or activity important in its circulation field. Other frequent departments deal with field and stream, hunting and fishing, amateur photography, real estate, radio, stage, motion pictures, travel, and hobbies. Much of this is gathered by the paper's own staff, but department material is sometimes bought from correspondents, agencies, and syndicates. Other publications may give special attention to some class of news but use it as general news, rather than in a special department.

*Features for entertainment or instruction:* Provided for the most part by special agencies and syndicates and including comic strips, cartoons, feature photograph pages, bedtime stories, fiction, and the like. The use of these features has increased greatly in recent years.

It is obvious that this wide range of material, reflecting what the world of the newspaper is doing, is not brought together by mere chance methods, but only by thorough news-gathering organization, covering all news sources and centers within the publication's field. At the writing end of every news story is a reporter

who has done his work more or less fully under the direction of one of the news editors of the newspaper or its agencies. In part the nature and scope of this organization have been suggested in the brief survey of newspaper content, but it will be both interesting and profitable to the man or woman who hopes to do something in the way of writing for newspapers, to know in more detail how one of the largest departments, the city news department, is organized.

At the head of the city news-gathering organization is an editor, usually known as the city editor. With him are associated copy readers, who edit and write heads for the news copy, and a staff of reporters and photographers. Special departments, such as sports, may or may not be under the city editor's jurisdiction.

The reportorial staff is organized first to cover the definite news centers of the city and then to provide assignment men who handle largely out-of-the-ordinary and emergency news-gathering tasks.

The principal news centers are grouped in "beats" or "runs," and one reporter is assigned to cover each run regularly and be responsible for the news that develops there. On occasion assignment reporters may assist with a run. Such news centers are the police station, courts, county courthouse, federal buildings, state capitol, hotels, clubs, important business and banking offices, railroad headquarters, churches, schools, municipal buildings or "city hall," hospitals, public libraries, colleges and universities, political headquarters, and politicians. The reporter who is assigned to a beat spends most of his time on it, gathering news, making news contacts with men who are likely to know when news is to "break," and renewing old contacts. He may come in to the city room to write his news, as he usually does on a morning newspaper, or he may write it in some convenient place out on his beat and send it in or telephone it in to be written by other reporters (rewrite men) in the city room, if time or distance makes that necessary, as it often does in the case of afternoon newspapers in larger cities.

That considerable proportion of the day's news which does not develop on some reporter's beat or run is usually handled by the assignment men. A train wreck, an extraordinary accident, the

visit of some distinguished man—these events are assigned to one of these men by the city editor. Besides, the assignment men secure interviews, report speeches, cover special meetings and conventions, help out other reporters on big stories, secure feature stories, and do whatever other jobs the city editor may plan for them.

The city editor keeps on his desk a date or "future" book, in which he sets down, whenever he hears of it, a tip as to an event which is to transpire. Dates of coming conventions, meetings of the legislature or city council, opening of the school year, beginning of the baseball or football season, the farmers' short course at the agricultural college, wedding of a prominent citizen or son or daughter of a prominent family, an interesting or important case in court, when annual or special reports of public officials or investigation committees are due, the coming of a famous lecturer or musician—all are listed in the future book. It includes, besides, clippings from other papers that suggest stories, tips from reporters, ideas for feature stories.

At the beginning of each day's work, he notes down on the day's assignment sheet, or on special assignment slips for the individual reporters, any of these tips which he wants investigated for stories.

Another important man on a newspaper is the "state" editor as he is usually called. This is the editor who directs the work of out-of-town correspondents in the state or, more accurately, within the circulation range of the newspaper. These correspondents are for the most part men or women who send in news on a part-time basis while holding some other job.

In many cases, this correspondent is someone on the staff of a smaller local daily or weekly newspaper. He gathers news for his own publication. Often the same story can be wired, phoned, or mailed in to the larger city daily. He frequently queries the state editor to ask if some story is wanted.

The state editor and his local correspondents are of particular importance in the handling of agricultural and technical or industrial news. If good farm news of value to readers, which rises above the commonplace, is secured, it takes more than ordinary skill in gathering and writing it. The same applies to any type

of news which has a technical aspect. It is also important for a newspaper which circulates over a widespread territory in more sparsely populated sections of the country.

A good example of how such news is gathered and used is the *Salt Lake Tribune* of Salt Lake City. This newspaper has a circulation that covers Utah, southern Idaho, Nevada, and western Colorado. It has what it designates its Tribune Intermountain Service. Through this service, it covers the leading news events in agriculture, mining, industry, and similar matters throughout its circulation field. Other dailies which carry news from a wide circulation territory are *Dallas News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *Denver Post*, *Portland Oregonian*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Kansas City Star*, *Des Moines Register*, and *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*.

**News sources for the weekly newspaper:** The news sources in the country weekly field are roughly those of the city field in miniature. The community has its news centers just as the city has. The members of the staff of the weekly paper, whether they number one or three or four, work in much the same way as the staff of the city paper. They are fewer in number, of course, and do a greater variety of tasks than the members of the city staff, and they need the "volunteer" helpers who offer their services in every community.

Editors of country weeklies depend upon local correspondents who live in the various communities within the circulation field of the publication. These correspondents are the reporters of the happenings in their locality. The wise editor trains these reporters to write good news copy and to recognize news as it happens.

**The news-gathering agencies:** Every daily newspaper of any consequence publishes regularly stories from distant sources. Stories of a flood in China, of a great drouth and famine in India, of a North Pole expedition, of a strike in London, of legislative action in Washington, or of a kidnaping mystery in California, will appear with as much certainty in even the smallest daily as the story of the automobile accident on the streets of the paper's own city.

That remarkable gathering of news in remote places, half the world away, and its transmission by messengers, by telegraph, telephone, cable, or radio, would not be possible except for such

news-gathering agencies as the Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service in this country. Europe and other parts of the world are served by other agencies. In recent years, however, war and censorship have disrupted much or almost all of the work of these foreign news agencies, and their place has been taken to a large extent by official government or military daily announcements.

Some of these news-gathering services in the United States were originally established by newspapers cooperatively; others are private enterprises. By gathering news for a great number of newspapers and thus dividing the cost among them according to the magnitude of their businesses, the expense is not prohibitive to even the smallest. The kind and quantity of news service are also graded to meet varying demands.

These agencies have correspondents or special representatives in every important news center of the world, and in these centers they have the cooperation of member or customer newspapers. They cover the news just as systematically as the city staff covers its field. Literally no event of world interest can happen anywhere that it is not promptly put on the wires.

These agencies are giving increased attention to agricultural and scientific news, and are beginning to carry on their staffs special writers to handle these subjects.

**Syndicates:** Syndicates, in newspaper parlance, are enterprises, either cooperative or private, organized for the purpose of supplying to newspapers in noncompetitive fields such material as cartoons, comic strips, photographs, fiction and feature articles, prepared by highly paid artists and writers, illustrations secured at heavy expense, and the like. Very few newspapers could buy this material if they did not cooperate with other newspapers in securing it and dividing the cost. Many free lance writers in such special fields as agriculture, home economics, and science find in the syndicate a market for their wares.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Go through four issues of a magazine, one each for winter, spring, summer, and fall, of the current year and measure in column inches the amount of space

devoted respectively to editorials, news, feature articles, fiction, correspondence, illustrations, and advertisements. Note and classify under miscellaneous any material which does not fall under one or another of these classes.

2. Make a similar study of corresponding issues of the same magazine for a period of twenty years back, compare results with the present analysis and discover what changes in content have taken place in the twenty-year interval.

3. Choose, for purposes of this exercise, a magazine with which you are familiar, and list, taking into consideration the time of the year and the characteristics of the publication's readers, the news sources which you think the magazine should cover.

4. List all of the news stories on the front pages of a week's issues of a daily newspaper. Describe for each of these stories the reader groups which you think would be primarily interested in the stories. Compare your results.

5. Examine one issue of a daily newspaper and analyse the straight news stories, including department news, and determine how many were written by local reporters, how many came from press associations, how many from out-of-town state correspondents, and from other sources.

6. Examine one issue of a farm paper, a trade paper, or a technical journal, and find out, as far as you can, how much of the material was written by the staff, how much by regular correspondents, and how much by other contributors.

(*Note:* Whenever possible, a class in journalism should be considered as the staff of a local paper. Members of the class should be assigned to beats on the campus or in the community or made responsible for preparation of copy for a department. This can often be done in cooperation with a campus newspaper or student magazine. Assignments from such beats should be required at regular intervals throughout the course. For a large class, or where there are several sections, competing staffs might be organized. Students can sometimes secure work as campus correspondents for out-of-town papers. Students sometimes can arrange with a home-town paper to prepare a weekly department of news from the campus or college town.)

## CHAPTER 9

### THE NEWS GATHERER AND HIS METHODS

**N**EWs is gathered and written by a reporter. He may have the city hall run or be the farm editor of a daily paper. He may be on the editorial staff of a farm paper, an engineering magazine, a trade weekly, or be the fashion authority on a women's magazine. He may be the college extension editor, the home demonstration agent who gives a story of a township canning demonstration to the local weekly, the reporter for the FFA or 4-H club who writes a story of a coming picnic, or the secretary of the garden club who writes a story of a flower show to be held in the near future. The reporter may be a Washington columnist, a foreign war correspondent, a magazine writer investigating some important development, or the humble chronicler of events in the Happy Corner community for the county paper. All these are reporters.

The daily newspaper reporter, about to go out to cover his beat or some special assignment, usually provides himself with conveniently folded copy paper. Magazine reporters who are likely to make more detailed or formal notes, often carry a medium-sized or small looseleaf notebook. Some magazine reporters, however, make notes in a stenographer's notebook. Women reporters usually carry copy paper or notebook in their handbag.

Reporters usually like lead pencils with a large, extra soft, black lead. They seldom use fountain pens in their work, though one nationally known magazine editor and writer, an authority in a special field of engineering, always makes his notes with a fountain pen.

A reporter approaches a story or an interview without anything in his hands. A man however might carry a folded newspaper, a woman carry her handbag. The student reporter, out to get a campus story from a faculty member, will be wise to put down

books and notebooks in the secretary's office, before seeking the interview. Magazine reporters frequently carry a briefcase or camera. These should be kept as inconspicuous as possible until needed. This applies, too, in use of pencil and notepaper or notebook.

These points may seem trivial, yet these little details may mark the difference between the experienced reporter and the novice—"cub" is the old newspaper term—who fumbles and hesitates in his first news-gathering attempts.

Let us see just how a reporter actually goes to work and covers his assignment. While this example is in the field of farm paper reporting, the principles involved would apply on any reporting job in any field.

**His first assignment:** When Thompson received his first assignment from the editor of the farm journal whose staff he had just joined—an assignment to cover a state Farm Bureau convention—he asked, "What do you want me to get?"

"I want you to dig up the news," the editor replied.

That answer wasn't so very helpful. The new reporter asked again, "Well—shall I write up the program?"

"Oh, yes," said the editor, with a bit of deprecation in his tone, "but that may not be the best news there. That's the most obvious thing to report and every farm journal man on the job will do that as a matter of course. But you ought to get something better than that. Get into the crowd, mix with the folks, seek out the farmers who are worth talking to, keep your eyes and ears open for the things that will interest our readers. I can't tell you just what to get. You'll have to use your news sense."

Of course, Thompson listened to the program and got out of it the things most valuable to his journal, but before he was through he had done much more than that. He found a little group of vocational agriculture teachers talking shop. He joined them, got acquainted with them, and in due time had a modest part in the conversation, which yielded him a good grist of material, to be developed later into incidental or independent stories.

As he was leaving the group one of the teachers said, "See those two men talking together over there? One is a county chairman

of the Farm Bureau and the other of the Farmers' Union." Thompson related that fact to his knowledge of the rivalries of these organizations and had not only something significant to add to his story, but later, when he found a chance to talk to both men, he learned that they had discussed the possibilities of closer cooperation between the two groups, and that promised the making of a good story.

He moved over to a group where an interesting debate seemed under way, shook hands with an acquaintance, met the others, and then in a friendly way fitted in and listened to what was going on—a lively back and forth talk about experiences with soiling crops. Modestly he injected a few questions of his own. Later he drew aside the most promising man of the group, and soon he had an abundance of material for an experience story.

He dropped into another animated group and found it discussing paved highways; still other groups were warmly debating the same question. In much the same way he found and talked to a man from the state agricultural college, a state Farm Bureau leader, a farmer who regularly topped the hog markets, a dairyman whose herd was leading the cow testing association. He knew something about the men he met and their relationships, and each new contact he made yielded him material, either to be written into his convention story or to be handled independently. His activities yielded more than that—they added to his background of understanding of rural people and rural life and work. While Thompson sat through the program itself, he was alert to see and hear other things than those that went on on the platform. He took what he wanted from the talks—the most significant things—but he watched keenly for what happened incidentally, for reactions and comments, so that when he wrote his story it would truly portray the event as it was.

Thompson had a notebook, but he did not use it constantly; rather, he used it somewhat covertly. He applied his memory as he talked with men, and when opportunity offered made his notes inconspicuously. Of course, he made note promptly of important figures, initials, oddly spelled names, and similar data, and if he secured a more formal interview with a man, he used his notebook more freely.

Very clearly, Thompson had the "news sense" which his editor said he must use. He had an ability to see in the convention and its attendant circumstances those things that would have interest for the readers of his journal. He had the ability to find in any set of circumstances the facts and incidents that make a news story. He would be limited only by the boundaries of his understanding of the subject matter and the conditions of life with which he would be called upon to deal.

**An analysis of news sense:** A little study of Thompson's news-gathering activities reveals that news sense is dependent upon several essential factors:

*Objective interest:* There must be an abiding attitude of mind that concerns itself with things outside of oneself, in people, in affairs, both large and small, which studies them, evaluates them, relates them to each other.

*Curiosity:* There must not be a mere prying, but a wholesome, intelligent, ever-active desire to know the who, what, when, where, why, and how of things and activities around you.

*Observation:* You must be everlastingly alert. You must see! see!! see!!! details, the whole, the interrelationships of the details to the whole, and of the whole to other things and events. Not even the smallest thing must be allowed to escape you, for in it may live the germ of your best story. Time and again novices fail in writing a satisfactory news story because they have not secured essential details.

*Understanding:* A general understanding of the particular field and its affairs makes it possible to interpret correctly what is seen and heard, to gather information intelligently, to relate it to other events, to interpret and present it accurately. This general background of understanding is of utmost importance to the writer of news in special fields, such as agriculture, home economics, engineering, finance. A keen reporter may write some sort of a story without this background, when he gets into such a special field, but it is quite likely to reflect his lack of understanding and be unacceptable to those who do know.

*Memory:* There must be ability to store away things seen and heard and to fit them in correctly with the new experiences and observations of tomorrow.

It is an old "city room" question whether news gatherers with adequate news sense are born or made. It will be passed with this comment: Through intelligent effort, whatever news sense one may have, whether much or little, can be developed and made better. By conscious exercise, one's objective interest, curiosity, observation, and the other factors can be made increasingly more effective.

**A score card for rating reporters:** But there is a difference in news gatherers, a marked difference in their ability to gather news. They range in quality all of the way from the "star" to the hopeless individual who manages to get together from issue to issue enough "stuff" to hold precariously his place on the staff.

One does not inherit reporterhood any more than one inherits business ability or musical virtuosity. In other words, one can, on the basis of his general inheritance, develop those qualities of character and mind which go into the making of a good reporter. And too often, it might be added, this side of journalistic training is neglected. A young man or woman is taught the technique of journalism but is allowed to overlook the development of those qualities of character and temperament which are requisite to success in journalistic work.

No group of newspaper men would, probably, agree as to just which qualities are most essential and as to their relative importance. In a general way, however, they would all subscribe to the importance of the qualities listed below, some of which have already been inferred from the Thompson illustration.

It might be well for the student to go so far in self-analysis as to rate himself on the basis of these qualities. Thus he could determine in which respects he is weak and set about through conscious effort to correct his weaknesses.

*Curiosity:* An endless desire to know what is happening of news value.

*Alertness:* A mind with a hundred antennae reaching out to sense what the crowd never knows is happening until it is told.

*Knowledge of men and affairs:* The more thorough a reporter's interest in and understanding of his field, the more significant becomes everything that men say or do in that field. The scientific discovery of an individual research worker isn't news

in the fullness of the term until it is related to other things; the meeting of two men doesn't seem of any significance until after their positions and relationships are understood and the possibilities of their conference are surmised. Making two and two add up to four is an important part of the reporter's work. And with knowledge must go good judgment both of men and their activities.

*Breadth of sympathy:* In a degree a reporter must be all things to all men. That is, he should not habitually approach any news situation with indifference to or scorn for the men and women he will see or for what they are doing. Instead, he should seek to know their viewpoint and insofar as possible deal with the news in his better understanding of their purposes. When a reporter becomes cynical, hard, unsympathetic, he needs to beware; that attitude will interfere with his usefulness.

*Friendliness and adaptability:* The knack of "mixing" well with people without overdoing it.

*Modesty and tact:* The good reporter does not seek to impress himself unduly upon people with whom he comes in contact; cocksureness is usually offensive. He may know much about the things with which he happens to be dealing, but he isn't out to tell what he knows but to find out what others know; and then in his writing job he relates what others give him to what he already has. To give an impression of knowing enough and not "too much," to talk enough and not too much—that marks a good news gatherer.

*Accuracy:* Getting things straight; setting forth facts precisely; drawing conclusions, if they are to be drawn, with utmost care; checking up and verifying with persons concerned—all these are essential. The good reporter is never indifferent to accuracy; he never permits himself to accept as a final excuse for misstatement that the haste of news gathering made it impossible to get the facts.

*Industry and perseverance:* In the very nature of things the news gatherer must range over a wide field and see many people; he must keep at the task to the end. He must get news whether conditions are propitious or not. He must stick.

**Surveying the field:** Every reporter will develop his own technique in news gathering, according to his own individuality, but there are some factors that are essential in any system.

A study and organization of his more limited news field are just as essential for the individual news gatherer as they are for the staff of a journal in its comprehensive field. He may well make such a survey of his particular territory as is suggested in the preceding chapter for a journal's complete territory. The farm writer or the independent contributor, who may cover a portion of the state or even several states, or who may be assigned to an entire phase of agriculture, cannot hope to gather news certainly and adequately without such a survey.

**Establish personal relationships:** In connection with this survey, a thorough news gatherer will establish personal relationships with the men and women of affairs throughout his territory and renew contact with them by visits or correspondence as frequently as may be necessary.

"I have a definite list of men and women who know what's going on in their various fields of activity," says one experienced farm journal news gatherer. "I cultivate their friendship; I get them to understand what my journal considers good news; insofar as I can I get them to take an interest in the game of digging up good stories and getting them into print; I try to get them to see that it's helping along the chariot of progress to get the right sort of stuff into print; I try to secure friendly cooperators and never fail to express my appreciation of their cooperation; I never violate their confidence. When occasion offers, I see that they get certain credit for their cooperation. I get out of this policy an assistance without which I could not do my job right."

There is a suggestion of the value of "tippers" in what this experienced reporter says, which every news gatherer will confirm. Back of many, perhaps most, of the stories that are published is such a "tipper," a man or woman who happens upon a good story, recognizes it, and tips it off to the news writer who has won his friendship and confidence. Usually these people remain in obscurity; they are anonymous like most news writers, but when the story they tipped off is printed, they seem to get as much of a thrill out of seeing it on paper as the news writer himself.

**Keep informed:** A persistent, faithful reading of newspapers, magazines, bulletins, pamphlets, and books that have a bearing on one's work is invariably recommended by experienced news gatherers. As explained in more detail in connection with the methods of getting feature articles, this practice is invaluable. One very large daily newspaper is said to assemble the novices in its advertising department for regular lessons on advertising solicitation and requires of each man and woman a brief written synopsis of the important news in the issue of that day. It does this on the theory that any individual who represents a newspaper in any contact with the public ought to know what is in the newspaper he represents. Logically that practice would have even greater value in the editorial department. The managing editor of another large journal made complaint that reporters are usually woefully ignorant of what enters into the making of their newspapers in all departments and that their lack of interest and knowledge on this score stands in the way of their advancement.

**Develop your own interest in subject matter:** It is axiomatic that one writes best about the things in which one is most deeply interested. It follows that a part of a reporter's or feature writer's preparation for writing a news or feature story is to arouse within himself some interest in and enthusiasm for the subject matter. "I never undertake to write about something that I am not interested in," says a feature writer on agricultural subjects who has regularly "made" the best national magazines during the past ten years. "It would be futile for me to do so. I would be certain to fail to write anything worthwhile. While there may be a great many other rules for good writing, I have only this one: Find something that interests you as a normal human being, learn all you can about it, develop your enthusiasm about it, and then write out of your interest and enthusiasm. If a fellow has normal interests and enthusiasms, he can count on other folks having them too, and he has through them an easy approach to his readers. Whenever I feel that I may be losing my understanding of what my readers are interested in, I get out where they are, in the rural communities and the villages, and visit with them until I feel assured that I know them."

**Put aside your prejudices:** Neither a news writer nor a feature

writer has a right to carry prejudices into his gathering of material or the writing of his stories. He should be big enough to put them aside where they will not influence him in finding and selecting his material and in putting it into his story. His readers have a right to expect him to be honest and sincere in his work and to give them as fair a picture or statement of what has happened as it is possible to give. Write your stories so that you may go back among the people concerned in them and feel that you haven't lost their respect or confidence.

**Make approach with tact and self-confidence:** In making his approach to persons of consequence, the reporter needs to keep in mind the value of making a good first impression. Neatness and good taste in attire, courtesy of manner and speech, a recognition of whatever dignity may rest in the individual because of his position or achievement, a proper degree of friendliness, a suitable opening of the conversation, a tactful bringing in of the news quest, a reasonable self-confidence based on the self-assurance that he isn't a mere busy body, but that he stands for a journal which is a highly essential institution in its field, and that his particular mission is important in its many bearings—these should be the attitudes of the reporter.

“I don't want any of my staff to go to any man for news in an apologetic way,” says an editor of note. “I don't want him to feel that he is begging a favor when he seeks information from anybody. A magazine or a newspaper is a quasi-public institution, absolutely essential in our scheme of democracy and education for democracy. It is essential that it have the right sort of accurate news and information to print, and it is in a way the responsibility of men of affairs to cooperate in getting that news or information to the people. I don't mean that we as newspaper men have the right to pester folks, needlessly, but we do have a right to expect reasonable cooperation when we go to them on worthwhile news missions. If a reporter will get that into his thinking, it will do a lot to help him make the right approach in confidence and self-respect.”

**Make preparation for your interview:** “I like to know something about the man I'm going to see when I'm after news, although

it's not always possible to have that information," said another experienced newspaper worker. "And then if I know in a general way what I want to get from him, I like to figure out in advance the most important questions I ought to put to him. I'll have to supplement them, and sometimes I'll have to abandon them, because of unexpected circumstances of my interview, but the fact of my having in advance gone over the details of my interview fortifies me greatly and helps me to meet emergencies. I have on some occasions actually written out my chief questions, especially in very important interviews. A well-planned question impresses upon the man you're seeing that you know what you're doing. A foolish, vapid question suggests an ignorance with which the interviewee can have no patience.

"Then, too, this planning ahead helps me to keep command of the interview, and that's especially important if I want certain specific things which the person interviewed may not be so willing to give me. If I'm just visiting with a man to pick up whatever he may happen to have, or to get tips, what I've just said doesn't apply. But it does apply otherwise. Not an infrequent problem is that furnished by the man who rambles around a lot when he talks, without getting anywhere, and another is furnished by the man who purposely dodges the main issues of the interview. The well-organized plan helps one to meet both of them."

This planning in advance applies to a student reporter working on a campus assignment just as much as to a newspaper or magazine reporter. What a home economics extension specialist once said to one of the authors of this text will illustrate what this means:

"When a reporter comes in to see me I can always tell whether she is one of your students or someone from a downtown newspaper or a visiting magazine writer," said this specialist. "Your student reporter comes in with her arms loaded with textbooks, and asks in a haphazard way, 'Do you have any news today?' But the off-campus reporter comes in with an alert manner, says, 'I'm from the XYZ,' and asks me a direct, specific question that has to do with my work."

In most cases, particularly in gathering of news or feature articles in the technical news fields, it is advisable in the first words of

your interview, to identify yourself, giving the name of your publication and your own name. Also, if there is likely to be any question as to your purpose, state your purpose in seeking the information and give some idea as to about how your publication expects to use it. Then the person being interviewed will understand, without question, that he is being interviewed and that what he says is for publication.

**Watch for developments in the interview:** It is important, also, to keep close watch on what is said and done by the man from whom you are getting your story. He may uncover some other story by a chance remark or an equivocal answer, or his manner may support or belie his statements.

“I was getting an important policy story from a farmers’ organization official,” said a farm journal staff man in telling of an incident which illustrates these points. “When this man qualified one of his important statements with the phrase, ‘at least I guess so,’ I was aroused by his manner as well as his phrase. I jumped to the conclusion that maybe there was something in the whisper I had heard that this man might not be reelected to his executive job. I decided to put my surmises to the test, and I said rather suddenly, ‘Jim, what is there to this story about your getting out of your job?’ He hesitated a bit and then said, ‘Well, I’ll tell you about it; it might just as well be now as later.’ And then I got a big story that I hadn’t counted on getting. The experienced news gatherer is always on the lookout for significant signs along the way of his interview.”

**The man who doesn’t see news in his work:** A puzzling problem for the news gatherer is the man of affairs who is so deep in his work that he doesn’t see out of it and appreciate its relationship and interest to the world around him. He is likely to say quite positively and with an air of dismissal that he doesn’t know of anything of news interest in what he is doing. If the reporter is convinced that in the work of such a man there is worthwhile news, he may get it by loading himself with information about the man, what he is doing and its probable relationships, and then finding an opportune time for a long and intelligent conversation with him.

“One experiment station scientist regularly told me when I saw him that he wasn’t doing anything of news importance,” said a farm journal reporter. “I knew it couldn’t be so, because he was too good a man to be wasting his time that way. I made inquiry among his associates at the station about his work, read a few of his research papers, and otherwise informed myself on his subjects. When I went to him again I was able to talk to him intelligently about his work, and he opened up and gave me stuff that promised to bring about big changes in certain phases of dairy manufacturing.”

**Dealing with the indifferent or unfriendly man:** Another puzzler for the less experienced news gatherer is the man who is either indifferent about getting his work into the journals, or who has had some experience which makes him unfriendly to publicity, or who believes that there is something unethical in a scientist’s giving out to the lay press news concerning his work. Sometimes such a news prospect may be induced to “loosen up” by an appeal to his personal pride, through the suggestion that the journal will carry his name far and wide and extend his reputation and increase his good standing. Again, the appeal may be to his altruistic sense through the suggestion that while the giving of the news of his work to his scientific societies or his students in class is influential for good, he may through a journal reach and benefit hundreds of thousands instead of a few. Or it may be urged upon him politely that inasmuch as he is a public servant he has some obligation to the mass of people who make his research work possible through public funds. If the news prospect is suspicious because some unskilled news writer has made him appear ridiculous or has violated his confidence, then the reporter must first seek to win his confidence for himself and his journal.

**The technique of recording the facts:** As the reporter gets his facts he may rely upon his memory to retain them until the time comes to write his story, upon written memoranda or notes, or upon a combination of the two methods. Usually he will combine the two. He may eschew the notebook or note pad as he interviews his news prospect, because circumstances may make its use inadvisable or because it may be too cumbersome and incon-

venient to use, but as soon as possible thereafter he will make notes of the data and statements that he secured. Or he may use the notebook during an interview to record the things which demand very exact restatement, such as dates, names, figures, and important quotations, and rely upon his memory for the larger mass of related material which need not be restated so exactly. For greatest accuracy, notes need to be made immediately after facts are secured if they are not recorded at the time of securing them. To rely entirely upon the memory is dangerous for all but a few exceptional reporters; such practice is likely to result in unjustifiable inaccuracies. Some interviews demand the making of very complete notes through the progress of the interview, as when an important formal statement is made.

The notes made in connection with an interview are most valuable when they suggest an outline of what was said. If the reporter, through well-considered questions, develops his interview in an orderly way, his notations will easily be made in an orderly way. If the interviewee gives his information in an orderly way, again it is relatively easy to make notes. How much "fill in" material should be put into a notebook will depend upon whether or not the reporter can rely upon his memory to retain the essential details. But usually notes should carry an abundance of details—the most unlikely small point may be of value when writing the story.

It is not within the scope of this book to discuss memory at length or to suggest devices for making the memory more effective. This may be said, however, without encroaching upon the field of the psychologist: Your memory will be impressed by the facts or information that you gather as a reporter according to your concentration upon the task, according to your understanding of what is said and done, according to your own vital interest in the subject matter, and according to your ability to find in what you see and hear an orderly succession of significant things—an outline—and establish some kind of an association among them. As one experienced reporter expressed it, "If you understand, if you concentrate, if you fix the big things in your mind in order and then go back to the beginning again, you can unravel the whole yarn with surprising readiness."

**Accuracy:** Inextricably woven in with the subject of news gathering is the essential of accuracy. It has been discussed again and again. Its importance needs no argument. An error in journalism is not merely a matter of concern to the writer, nor only to the writer and the persons immediately connected with the subject matter. It is multiplied a hundred thousand, even a million times, as it is printed; virtually it concerns everybody.

Accuracy is important, not merely with respect to the larger information involved in a news story or feature article but also for the many bits of minor detail. Names, initials, places of residence, dates, locations, areas, yields, sizes, distances, costume, furnishings, incidental happenings—all these should be accurately recorded in notes or memory and accurately presented in the story, if they are used. For the principals in a story, it is marred if their initials are incorrectly given, or their home addresses are erroneously stated, or mistakes are made in the color of hair or eyes, or whatever other personal detail is involved. Other readers are also likely to note these minor errors first of all and to doubt the big facts because they know that the little facts are not correctly told. The distinguished managing editor of a great metropolitan daily used to say that if he had the task of training reporters he would first take them into a room and lock himself up with them until he had drilled into them the importance of accuracy in names and places. A reporter who is indifferent about having names and places and similar detail right is quite certain to be indifferent about accuracy in larger matters.

Many rules to insure accuracy might be given, but accuracy depends very largely upon the attitude of the news gatherer, so this suggestion seems most important: Take into your work an understanding of the high function of journalism, a sincerity of purpose, a devotion to truth, a care for detail that is painstaking, an industry that is tireless, and a desire to meet the men and women at the sources of news with a clear conscience and without apology, the day after publication.

One veteran teacher of technical journalism who has spent many years in trying to impress upon student reporters the necessity for

accuracy, sometimes talks to a student who has been careless in his facts, much as follows:

“Young man, if you are as careless in your chemistry laboratory as you have been in getting this story, you will blow your fool head off someday. Wrong details in a story may cause an explosion just as much as the wrong chemical in a test tube, but it will be a different kind. If ten years from now, you forget every other thing I’ve tried to teach you in this course but still remember that I told you to be accurate, the course will be successful.”

Checking up on what has been written is a valuable safeguard in this matter of accuracy. Check names with directories, check facts and figures with books of data and statistics, check statements with the men who gave you information, check events with those who had a part in them, check the whole with your own sense of the probability that the things set forth happened as you have recounted them. In writing on technical or scientific subjects, secure the fullest cooperation in checking your article of the men and women who gave you the material. Keep them in mind as a part of the audience for which you are writing. All this takes time, and time is often short in newspaper making, but this might be a good motto for the editorial rooms: *Better be right than rapid and wrong.*

**Adequacy:** When material is gathered and notes made, make certain that notebook or memory is well filled with facts. It is a good rule to get together more information than you can possibly use and upon all related phases of the subject. The particular bit that you did not record may be the bit that you need most of all when you come to write your story. Just as out of a full mind the mouth speaks best, so out of a full notebook the hand writes best. The reporter who has five times as much material as he can possibly have space for in his story will write a story which reflects the fact that he knew several times as much about the matter as he was able to give the reader. Just as the whole weight of an inverted pyramid rests upon its point, so the whole weight of a writer’s information about a subject rests upon the single fact or the few facts he may find it possible to present.

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Counting ten as a perfect score for each of the eight characteristics of a good reporter listed in this chapter, make a rating of your own qualities.

2. Over a period of a number of days, and subsequently from time to time, perform this exercise: Have someone read or dictate to you while you take down verbatim what is said. During the first few days have the dictation given very slowly. Gradually increase the rate.

3. Read through 500 to 1,000 words of a bulletin, text, or magazine article and attempt to reproduce in your own words the essential facts and as many details as possible of the material you have read. Compare, for accuracy and completeness, your account with the original.

4. Find a tip for a good news story; outline a detailed plan for covering the story. Then secure and write it.

5. If you have been assigned to a beat or preparation of news for a department, continue this as scheduled for you by the instructor.

(*Note:* It is a good idea to have student reporters who have checked and verified facts, names, dates, figures, and the like, to make note of this by some such device as "C-V" at the top of the right-hand corner of the first page of copy. A student reporter who neglects to do this should be given a failure on the assignment and required to do it before getting credit for the work.)

CHAPTER 10  
NEWS STORY STRUCTURE

**Y**OU have driven into town on a Saturday afternoon. As you cross the street from the grocery to the bank, you see the president of the bank in conversation in front of his place of business with a shyster stock salesman, who has been palming off fake stock on the farmers of the community. As you approach you hear angry words exchanged, and suddenly the banker lets fly with his fist and knocks the salesman down.

Or you drop in at the courthouse and hear some of the hangers-on talking of a suit that has been filed by the local cooperative tobacco association against your neighbor to compel him to fulfill his contract and deliver his tobacco to the cooperative warehouse.

You drive back to the farm, bursting with desire to tell your father what you have seen or heard—to tell him before anyone else has told him. You have news to impart. Now, how will you go about telling him your news? Will you begin:

“It was a mighty hot afternoon in town, dad. Streets were crowded with folks. I went to the grocery and got the things for mother. Then I strolled across to the bank corner. There were quite a few people crowding up and I wondered what the excitement was all about. All of a sudden—”

No, you won't tell your news this way, not if you are human. You will shout, almost before you have climbed out of the car, something like this:

“John Minnich knocked down that packing house salesman right in front of the bank this afternoon.”

Or you will blurt out without wasting unnecessary breath:

“Dad, the co-op's sued Jim Baker.”

**Types of literary form:** In imparting your news in this way you will be following an instinct almost as old as time. And you

will be following unconsciously the basic formula of news story form.

Any bit of prose writing that is intelligently done is cast in one or another of several literary forms. Broadly speaking these forms are those of the story, the argument and the essay. The evolution of each into a conscious literary model has been controlled by the effect which it endeavored to produce.

*The story or dramatic form* endeavors primarily to produce an emotional effect. It is normally a chronological narration of selected events leading up to a climax and through it to a denouement. Its purpose is not primarily to convey information, not to instill ideas, but rather to create a characteristic emotional reaction. To this end the story form employs a dramatic conflict, suspense, and a final solution on the basis of the premises laid down in the plot or characters.

*The argumentative form*—that employed in debate, oration, and many essays—is constructed on a logical basis. Its purpose is to convince the reader of the validity of the ideas dealt with. It may, subsidiarily, seek to arouse emotional reactions, but it strives primarily to appeal to the intelligence of the reader by means of its logical organization.

*The informal essay* is essentially subjective. Its form—or absence of form, for as the word informal implies it is unconventional—follows the vagaries of the writer's thought. It is concerned with the presentation of his ideas and emotions with the underlying purpose of revealing his particular personality, or ideas refracted through that personality.

**News story is different:** In these three types of writing are three different aesthetic or intellectual purposes, each finding expression in a fitting way. But there is another kind of writing with a purpose wholly distinct from any of these three—the presentation of news. Here one's purpose is not primarily emotional, nor aesthetic, nor logical, nor concerned with a subjective presentation of personality. It is wholly different and so requires, and has evolved, a wholly different technique of presentation. It is, therefore, just as reasonable to speak of the news story form as a distinctive type of writing as it is to speak of the story form or the debate form.

The news story, then, is different from other methods of writing in two major aspects. These are in the way the news story begins and in the structure of the story. This difference applies to news as it is written for newspapers. It applies to news as generally used in farm papers, trade and class papers, and the news sections of engineering magazines. There are exceptions to this. In strictly technical and scientific journals, a still different method of writing is employed as will be discussed in a later chapter.

**Evolution of the news story technique:** The news story form is not an invention of the newspapers. In fact, the newspapers have been strikingly slow in adopting it. In many European newspapers the news is not presented in the news story form at all, and the same is true of some weekly newspapers in this country. The reason for this situation is a historical one.

People from time immemorial have been conveying news information in the identical form in which the modern news story is written. The example with which this chapter begins is an illustration of this fact. When Nathaniel Butters issued the first regularly published English newspaper in 1622, he went for a model of the form in which he would present his information, not to the gossips of his time, who had, as the gossips of all time have had, the news story technique at their tongues' tips, but to the contemporary essayists and news letter writers. From that time forth for many years, and in the case of many European papers even today, the essay, in spite of its essential inadaptability to the purpose, was to a marked degree the model for news writing. This is strikingly illustrated, of course, in the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, so-called newspapers, in which Steele and Addison, so far as they reported the news of the day at all, did so in essays that were charming but singularly inutile for the purpose of conveying news. They were hardly news writers in the modern sense.

To such essays as those of the Sir Roger de Coverly series, news writers for years went, more or less consciously, for their models. The following from an 1833 issue of the *New York Sun*, while it is far from being an Addison essay, will show the affinity, in its indirect, commentative style, to the essay—an affinity as close at least as to a modern news story:

We learn from a correspondent at Columbus, that an occurrence of a most distressing nature, happened in that place last Friday evening, to a woman by the name of Wincup. It appears that she had partially recovered from a serious illness, and on leaving her bed for the first time to go to the fire, a spark lit upon her clothes, which being of cotton were immediately in a blaze.

But every new crisis—every case of a big news story in the field of any newspaper—more or less forced the writer of the event to adopt the natural method of telling news: the same kind of an impulsion which caused the boy in our illustration to blurt out the “big news” of what he had seen in town. A war would come along, and the newspapers would instinctively “play up” the outstanding events of the war. They would bulletinize the news of major engagements, consciously or unconsciously giving their readers the “big” news first.

This tendency became especially marked in this country during the War Between the States. Headlines which were bulletins of the news came into vogue. The stories themselves began to follow more or less an arrangement which would inform the readers first of all of the outstanding events at the front and leave the details and less consequential matters to subsequent parts of the story. In other words, the newspapers came gradually to comply with the unconscious demand of their readers that the essentials of the news be given first place in news stories. It became increasingly impolitic for an editor to ask the pardon of his readers—as an early editor did—for having got a few months behind with his foreign news, even though he promised to catch up with it soon.

This is an account, then, of an evolution. The account has omitted many of the minor factors in the process, but it has shown a steady tendency for the news writer to accommodate the form which he employed in his writing to what is obviously the natural and inevitable technique of the news story.

**Characteristics of the news story:** But what, in a little more detail, are the characteristics of this news story form, and why is it the logical method to employ in telling news?

The newspaper and many magazines must be thought of from a different point of view than that from which we regard a book. Most periodicals, and especially newspapers, are read hurriedly

and incompletely. They are great show windows of the world's events and ideas, into which the passerby gazes, letting his eye fall on this or that item which attracts his interest. In some things in the window he is not interested at all, in others only moderately, and at still others he will gaze with full attention. Whether or not one would wish it otherwise—and it would be a foolish waste of time for a reader to eye every word in a big modern daily newspaper—these periodicals are read smatteringly. More than that, they are read by people who bring to the task all degrees of ability for the assimilation of ideas. These facts impose certain characteristics upon the news story:

1. The bulletinization of news, in order to give the wandering eye of the reader the salient facts. This is exemplified in the headline and the beginning or lead of the news story.

2. Instant intelligibility—a style so simple, direct, and clear that it will make the news immediately available to all types of mind.

**The form of the news story:** The typical news story consists of a lead—usually the first paragraph—which gives in brief the gist of the news and, if the story is of any length, a body which goes into the details of the events described. Both the lead and the body of the story will be discussed in detail in succeeding chapters. It is enough here to say that the elements in the typical news story are arranged, not to effect a climax as in the fiction story, nor to adhere to a process of logic as in the argument, but in an *order of decreasing importance*. The more important elements of the story are put first, the *most* important in the lead.

What has been said previously in this chapter demonstrates the logic of this method. What is not so obvious is that the news story form can be used effectively not only in the presentation of spot news but also in writing of events which lack the spot news quality. Frequently the task of the writer is to give to material which is not obviously “newsy” an air of being so. And this can often be done by casting the material in the news story form.

**Analysis of the news story:** Everyone has read typical news stories, and a bit of reflection will bring to mind how thoroughly they follow the principles which we have been discussing. Consider the following illustration:

## FARMER IS SUED UNDER FEE RULE OF ASSOCIATION

Bedford, Ill., June 3—(Special)—Suit against Alexander Russell, local farmer and stock buyer, which will automatically test a bylaw of the Bedford Cooperative Livestock Association that members selling stock to others than the association must pay a penalty of twenty-five cents a hundred, has been filed by the association in district court here.

Judgment for \$52.25 is asked as due on two shipments made by the defendant to a party or parties other than the association.

Mr. Russell was manager last year, thus a member of the association and had signed the contract. The first of the year

the board of directors hired another manager and Mr. Russell began buying and selling stock on his own account, competing with the association. However, he failed to serve notice of withdrawal from the association as provided by its bylaws and is liable to the penalty, according to the petition.

Although the Bedford association appears as plaintiff, it is understood the action is being backed by the state organization which proposes to make a test case and carry it to the higher courts if defeated here.

The case is understood to be the first of its kind ever brought before the courts.

In what ways does this story follow the formula of the news story, and in what ways does it differ from other forms of writing?

We see at once that the first paragraph is a bulletin of the news. It gives the salient facts—that Russell is being sued for violation of his contract with the cooperative association and that this suit will test the legality of a bylaw of the association contract. These two closely related facts are the *big news* of the story.

The story contains, besides these two facts, the following points:

1. The judgment asked.
2. Resumé of Russell's connection with the association.
3. Statement of his failure to serve notice of withdrawal from the association.
4. Interest of the state organization in the case.
5. The fact that this is the first such case to be brought into court.

Now suppose we attempt to weigh the news value of each of these seven points, to determine their relative importance as news.

We would probably agree that the most news inheres in the point concerning the testing of the cooperative law. Rivaling this point in news value, on the basis, at least, of local news interest, is the fact that Russell is being sued by the association.

In naming the third most important point we might be tempted to differ with the writer of the story and say that the next most interesting point is that this is the first such case to be tried. If one were criticising the story, he would suggest that the last para-

graph should be made the second. Perhaps next in interest is the amount of judgment asked, although some of us might contend with good effect that the point concerning the participation in the case of the state organization is of more value because of its importance. Next perhaps in value are the details concerning Russell's connection with the association and the fact that he failed to serve notice of withdrawal.

While reporters might differ as to the exact arrangement of material to follow in writing this story, they would all agree as to the method of procedure—that the more important or interesting aspects of the story should be placed first and the less important and interesting later.

You will observe that this arrangement gives scant consideration to chronology or to logic and that it makes no effort, as would be the case in a fictional story, to work up to a climax.

While, as will be shown later, there are exceptions to this method of constructing the news story, it is typical of the great mass of news stories and the one which most adequately meets the needs of news presentation.

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Rewrite the following story:

Our friend H. D. Parsons, proprietor of the Malaka Stock Farm, had an escape from fatal or very serious injuries last Saturday evening, which seems almost miraculous. About five o'clock he left town for home with a load of shingles. Just after he had passed the Hatch farm, six miles north of town, his horses became frightened and tried to run. With his one good right arm—all he has—he managed

to keep them in the middle of the road, until they reached the corner about a mile north of Hatch's. There in the sudden turn of the road west, the wagon was upset and Mr. Parsons was thrown about twenty feet. He was unconscious for over an hour, when found by Mr. and Mrs. John Swihart, who happened to be passing, and was taken to his home.

2. Gather material for a local story. After outlining the material on the basis of the discussion in this chapter, write the story as you think it should be written for a local paper.

3. Find in weekly or daily newspapers three stories which you think are ineffective because of the form in which they are written. Outline the material in each of them as you think it should be presented. Rewrite one of these stories.

4. Find three stories which you consider to be effectively arranged and discuss why you think they are well handled.

5. Make a brief study of news material in one of the following magazines (or equivalent) and report on how many items or articles are written in news story form: *Country Gentleman*, *Successful Farming*, your state farm paper, *Engineering News-Record*, *Good Housekeeping* (or other similar magazines), *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Florists' Review*, *Hoard's Dairyman*, *Engineering and Mining Journal*, *Poultry Tribune*, *Milk Dealer*, *Drug Topics*, *Science*, *Printers' Ink*, *American Miller*, *Farm Implement News*.

6. Rewrite a short news story you find in one of the above listed magazines (or equivalent) to tell it more effectively in news story form.

## CHAPTER 11

### THE NEWS STORY LEAD

THERE is a logic of news presentation, and this logic has through the years gradually imposed upon the news story a definite technique. The previous chapter was given over to a discussion of that fundamental proposition. It is now necessary to study in detail the particulars of that technique.

A news story consists roughly of a lead, or opening section, and of a development of the facts or "body" of the story. (The headline is not part of the news story as written by the reporter.) News story leads are of two general sorts, one used normally on what we call straight news, and the other, borrowed and adapted from fictional forms, used normally upon feature material.

*The straight news lead* puts the news first. There are three general types of such news leads. One is a *summary lead* which summarizes the whole story. A second puts dramatic emphasis upon just *one outstanding fact* in the story. A third *groups together striking or important facts*, as well as summarizes.

*The fiction type of lead* also uses several different devices. It may *begin at the beginning* of the happening. It may play up some *human interest angle* or some unusual or curious feature. It may *group together* a number of unusual or striking features. But the distinctive characteristic in any type of fiction lead is that it does not give the reader the real news in the story in the opening sentence or paragraph. Thus such a lead is usually referred to as a *suspended interest lead*.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that a well-written lead is always important. That contains a suggestion for the beginning student reporter and to anyone else who writes copy for newspaper publication. The editor who hires a new reporter is delighted when that reporter turns in a story with a good lead. An editor is much more likely to use a story written by someone outside of

his staff if it has a lead that can be used as it is without rewriting it. A lead written with force and originality may get a story front page position, or be put on the Associated Press wires, when the same story with a stodgy, commonplace lead might be buried somewhere inside a daily newspaper.

**Summary news lead:** This summary lead does for the reader just what the name implies—it gives him at the beginning a rapid, clear, and often vivid survey of the essential facts of the story. It is often known as the “AP” lead because Associated Press stories usually start in this way. Other names sometimes given it are “clothesline” or “freight train” lead, because the whole story is strung together in one sentence. This lead, likely to be the first sentence or the first paragraph of the news story, tells the reader who, what, where, when, why, how, and sometimes how much. It puts first the most important or the most striking or the most unusual facts of the story in this first sentence, and if possible in the first words of the first sentence. If there is a climax to the story, that comes first.

But why do we begin a news story—and nine out of ten are so begun—in this way? Why is this type of beginning the *natural* way to open a news account? Because it enables us to do several things which are essential or desirable in the imparting of news:

1. It allows us to “blurt out” the important things in our story just as we would do if we were telling them.

2. It indexes our story by giving the reader at once a definite idea of what it is about, so that he can decide whether or not, among all of the stories in the paper, he wishes to read this one.

3. It enables the reader to get the gist of the story by reading only the first few lines if he does not desire to read further or devote more time to it.

4. It advertises the story by putting the most interesting, most unusual, and most important material first.

5. It facilitates newspaper makeup (as we shall see later) by making it possible to cut stories without rewriting them.

The summary lead, then, should contain a survey of the story embodying the most interesting or important points in the material. It will usually be a fairly complete survey if it answers the follow-

ing questions: who, what, where, when, how, and why. It must also give all possible emphasis to the high spot of the story—what newspapermen call the feature.

Now suppose that you have in your notes or in your mind the following material for a story:

Alberta Hoppe—score 98.92.

Van Kinney—score 97.2.

Seventy girls in 4-H health contest at Iowa State Fair. Twenty boys.

Health champions in the counties of the state competed in the championship contest at the fair.

Alberta 15 years old. Weighs 125. Five feet 5½ inches tall. Van is 17, 5 feet 7 inches, weighs 141.5.

Alberta—daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Hoppe. Lives four miles south of Cedar Rapids.

Van—son of Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Kinney, Davis County.

Judging completed last night. Prize a trip to the congress of 4-H clubs at the International in Chicago this fall.

The feature—the point that has, in the reporter's judgment, the greatest news value—must be decided upon. The story may have one outstanding feature, or there may be two or more points that are of almost equal news value. In this comparatively simple story what are the possible features?

1. Alberta Hoppe wins state girls' health contest.

2. Van Kinney wins state boys' health contest.

3. Combination of 1 and 2.

4. Girl made higher score in state health contest than boy.

It isn't always easy to say just which point is most important. And often it is possible, as indicated in No. 3 above, to consolidate two or more points.

The feature, whichever we may decide upon, wants to be thrown into the opening phrase or clause of our lead. Then we need to complete the summary by answering as many as possible of the questions—who, when, where, what, how, and why.

In this case the *who* will be contained in the feature—Alberta Hoppe and Van Kinney. The *when* is yesterday or last night. The *where* is the state fair at Des Moines. The *what* is the state boys and girls club health contest and its results. The *how* is, presumably, by making a higher score than any other of the competitors. The

*why* will have to go unanswered as far as our notes are concerned. We have no data on this point, although if we had asked the boy and girl to what they attributed their fine health we might have got interesting material as to the why of the story.

So with this analysis of the facts gathered, we would write a *summary or clothesline lead* for this story something like this:

Alberta Hoppe, 15, of near Cedar Rapids, and Van Kinney, 17, of Davis County, won the titles last night of healthiest Iowa 4-H club girl and club boy as a result of victories over 88 other club boys and girls in the state health contest held at the state fair in Des Moines.

If the story were for a paper outside of Des Moines, it would carry a date line, thus:

Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 3: Alberta Hoppe, 15, of near Cedar Rapids, and Van Kinney. . . .

**Importance of summary type:** It is important to study this type of beginning—this clothesline lead—with some care, because, as a glance at any paper will show, so large a proportion of stories begin in this way. There are two chief problems involved in the writing of good summary leads. These are:

1. *To make the lead complete.* This will usually be taken care of if as many as possible of the questions indicated above are answered. But the writer must prevent his lead from having any loose ends and must see to it that it is perfectly self-explanatory. To achieve this object it is necessary to identify any people who are mentioned and to explain any terms which would not be perfectly clear to the reader. In the health contest lead we identified the girl and boy by giving their age and residence.

2. *To give the lead interest.* Two methods will contribute to this purpose: the selection of the most interesting material, from a news point of view, for inclusion in the lead and the phrasing of the lead in a striking, original, and pointed way.

Success in the first depends upon one's sense of news value, his keenness in perceiving what will most greatly attract his reader. As to the second, the lead offers wide opportunities for the original and imaginative writer. The form is definitive and restricted, as "set," almost, as the sonnet form, but the content can be brightened and made attractive, primarily in two ways: through a careful and

imaginative choice of words and through variety of sentence structure.

Little need or can be said about the choice of words, except the general injunction that while the diction must be simple, straightforward, and instantly understandable, it should avoid the trite word and the trite phrase as it would the plague. To do this day in and day out in stories written in haste and under all kinds of conditions requires a large and flexible vocabulary and an unusual sensitiveness to word values.

**Summary lead examples:** The following examples, culled from a wide range of sources and types of news, will further illustrate how effective leads of the summary type can be written.

These leads, and others used through this chapter, have also been selected to illustrate what makes news in various fields; they can be considered as expanding the news discussions in previous chapters.

Take special note of the variety found in the sentence structure used by the reporters. They suggest again and again that there need be no dullness, no lack of vitality and interest in the opening sentence or sentences of a news lead:

Pennsylvania farmers, cooperating in a Federal program to hold the price of wheat up by storing surplus production, have placed 340,702 bushels of grain in storage already this year, the state agricultural conservation office reported today.

The 118 families of Hillsborough County who have rural rehabilitation loans canned 25,738 quarts of fruits and vegetables last year, or an average of 218 quarts to the family, and 40 quarts to each person, according to Mrs. Grace Ensign and Miss May Ola Miller, home management supervisors of the Farm Security Administration in the county.

Intercollegiate teams from 25 American schools and one Canadian university, and 4-H club members from 40 different states, matched abilities at the state fair grounds coliseum Saturday as hundreds of blue-bloods in the cattle world went on parade in the initial event of the National Dairy Show.

Production of a new type of glass, so closely resembling quartz in its properties as to constitute a form of artificial quartz, will be announced today by Amory Houghton, president of the Corning Glass Works. The new glass, made by an entirely new method, can be heated to a cherry red and then plunged into ice-water without breaking, it is said.

Batesville, Miss., June 1—Purchase by the Tallahatchie Valley Electric Power Association of the power distribution system of the Mississippi Power & Light Company in Crowder was announced here today by W. H. Saxton, project superintendent.

Electric service on the Utah-Idaho interconnected system of the Utah Power and Light Company reached an all-time high Monday when the company-purchased and generated power output totaled 3,001,823 kilowatt hours, it was announced Wednesday by J. A. Hale, vice-president in charge of operations.

Demonstrations of various tillage and soil and water conservation practices followed on the Dutton-Power soil conservation project were viewed yesterday by more than 100 farmers and business men of the Great Falls area who took part in the tour sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, county extension office and the soil conservation supervisor.

Approximately \$47,000 will be saved by farmers and stockmen of Dawson, McCone, Prairie, Richland and Wiboux counties during the next two years as the result of reduced interest rates on most types of Federal Land Bank and Land Commissioner loans, Knute Hustad, Glendive, secretary-treasurer of National Farm Loan Associations serving the counties, announced this week.

Plans for an all-day Guernsey tour sponsored by the Josephine County Guernsey Cattle Club for Tuesday, July 18, were completed Tuesday by the tour committee composed of Chairman Ben Nelson, Ray Johnson, Melvin King and Ernest Calhoun, president of the club.

Ground-breaking ceremonies for New York City's first "skyscraper" elementary school, an eight-story, \$2,000,000 building, will take place Saturday morning, James Marshall, president of the Board of Education, announced yesterday.

Ostrander, July 19 (AP)—Woods equipment of the Ostrander Railway Timber Company, which recently finished forty years of logging in Cowlitz County, is being moved to a new timber stand which the company will log near Dickey Prairie, Clackamas County, Oregon.

Members of the two McLean County dairy improvement associations sold 32 unprofitable cows during October, culling out low producers that promised little if any profit for the coming winter, according to H. Wayne Copenbarger and Walter Suntken, testers.

Iowa farmers received \$35,882,185 in agricultural conservation payments in connection with the 1940 farm program, according to an announcement by the AAA in Washington, D. C. Iowa payments ranked second in the nation out of a total of \$462,174,927 paid in the United States.

They looked, they saw, they talked, they questioned—those 250 junior and senior home economics students from Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan

and Ohio, who attended the annual Home Economics Women In Business Field Day November 14 and 15 at the Knickerbocker Hotel in Chicago to learn how home economics makes the wheels of business go round.

Berkeley, Calif. (UP)—A substitute egg white extracted from the soybean, cheaper than the real thing and not subject to spoilage, has been announced by two University of California women scientists. The product is tasty in cakes, candies, puddings and similar foods and produces an excellent meringue, Betty M. Watts and Doris Ulrich of the University have reported to the American Chemical Society.

Boston, Nov. 5 (Special to The New York Times)—A chemical manufactured to order by a "trained" soil bacillus, fed with a mixed diet of disease-producing bacteria, has proved itself in tests on animals and human beings to be 1,000 to 100,000 times more potent in the healing of local infections in humans than the drugs of the "sulfa" family. That discovery was reported before the annual clinical congress of the American College of Surgeons today.

Washington (Science Service)—Bad farming in past years, not bad flying, was the real cause of the fatal crash of a transport plane near Moorhead, Minn., Oct. 29, with the loss of 14 lives, in the opinion of soil scientists here, upon receiving the report that the plane was wrecked by running into a 25-foot deep ravine.

Cheyenne, Wyo. (UP)—Beaver is Wyoming's most valuable fur resource and the state Game and Fish Commission is launching an extensive long-range project to produce beaver on state and public lands as a crop, much in the same manner as livestock is produced by ranchers. "Present plans are to have Wyoming virtually a statewide 'beaver farm' by 1946," says Lester Bagley, game warden.

Tacoma, Wash., Nov. 7 (AP)—The third longest single suspension span in the world, the new \$6,400,000 Tacoma Narrows Bridge, cracked and fell with a roar 190 feet into Puget Sound today after swaying crazily in a high wind. It had a center span of 2,800 feet.

**Choosing a feature for the lead:** In nearly every set of facts that make up a news story is some one fact or group of related facts which may be used effectively in the opening words of the lead. This fact or a group of facts comprises the "feature," the outstanding "angle" of the story, and heightens interest of a lead. That feature may be the climax of the story; it may be some unusual thing, or some humorous incident, or an important local phase, or some one of various other angles.

Perhaps no other group of reporters exercises more ingenuity in getting a "feature" into the lead than sports writers, and so we

are presenting a number of leads of football stories which illustrate the endless variety that is possible in the choice of a feature. All but one are from the sports pages of a Sunday issue of the *New York Times*.

Note how the reporter in each instance selected some significant fact for a "starter" and then continued with the essential facts of the game. Possible bids to post-season "bowl" games, the weather, attendance, previous record of teams, outstanding performance of a player, and other features were selected and then each was woven skillfully into the story with a minimum of words.

Philadelphia, Nov. 22 (Special)—In a hopelessly one-sided game that contrasted with last year's thrilling spectacle, Pennsylvania today concluded its most satisfying season since 1924 with a 16-0 victory over Cornell before 73,000 at Franklin Field.

Athens, Ga., Nov. 22 (AP)—Frankie Sinkwich and the Georgia football team made twin bids today, routing Dartmouth, 35-0, before 17,000 fans to reassert Georgia's hope for an Orange Bowl invitation and Frankie's bid for an All-America rating.

Ann Arbor, Mich., Nov. 22 (AP)—Ohio State's Buckeyes and the Michigan Wolverines ran over one another, depending upon which team had the ball, to finish in a 20-to-20 tie today before a capacity throng of 85,753.

Pittsburgh, Nov. 22 (UP)—"Pepper" Petrella, a slippery little halfback from Downingtown, Pa., slithered through the hands of the Panthers today for three touchdowns to give a young Penn State eleven a 31-to-7 victory over Pittsburgh before 33,000 fans.

Memphis, Tenn., Nov. 22 (AP)—Mississippi's once-beaten Rebels rushed on toward a possible bowl bid today with a sloshing 18-0 victory over Arkansas before about 10,000 rain-soaked fans.

Ames, Ia., Nov. 22 (AP)—Iowa State's Cyclones, beaten four times by other Big Six foes, battled Kansas State's favored Wildcats to a 12-to-12 tie today in their final Conference football game before 6,000 chilled fans.

Bloomington, Ind., Nov. 22 (AP)—Purdue and Indiana, rivals of old, battled rain, snow and each other to a standstill for more than three quarters today but finally Sophomore Billy Hillenbrand, the "Evansville Express," smashed across the goal line, and Indiana captured its only 1941 Western Conference victory, 7 to 0, before 24,000 chilled and dripping spectators.

Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 22 (AP)—Minnesota's mighty tide of football empire—with Captain Bruce Smith brilliantly riding the crest of the wave—swept over Wisconsin today to carry the Gophers to the Western Conference and national football championship. With Smith ending his college career in All-America fashion, Minnesota rolled over the Badgers, 41-to-6.

Evanston, Ill., Nov. 22 (AP)—Robert C. Zuppke, the little man no longer there, ended a brilliant 29-year coaching career today emotionally watching his "Fighting Illini" go down to a crushing defeat before Northwestern, 27-to-0.

Nashville, Tenn., Nov. 22 (AP)—Once-beaten Vanderbilt enhanced its bid for a post-season bowl game today by burying Alabama in the quagmire of Dudley Field, 7 to 0, before a rain-soaked crowd of 12,000.

Lawrence, Kan., Nov. 22 (AP)—Missouri, its T-Formation ticking off dazzling long runs with the regularity of the falling snow and rain, capped an undefeated Big Six season today with a dynamic 45-6 triumph over Kansas.

Portland, Ore., Nov. 22 (UP)—Oregon State College, with its reserves playing a good part of the game, kept its favored Rose Bowl standing today by trouncing University of Montana 27-0 in a non-conference football tilt before 5,000 fans.

*Stories of fires* furnish opportunity for writing effective leads. A number of such leads are given below.

Walla Walla, July 27—Growing fields of golden grain quickly changed to burned and desolate waste as fire struck again today in the Waitsburg-Prescott area and estimates of 4,000 and possibly 5,000 acres burned out were placed by farmers in the area. All efforts to stop the fast-spreading flames failed, and the fire had to burn itself out as it swept down the Whetstone ridge toward Prescott.

Prescott, July 17—Flames roared over an area of probably 4,000 acres Thursday night in a huge grain fire more than five miles long in the vicinity of Clydem, north of here, destroying thousands of dollars worth of standing and stacked grain.

Eminence, Ky., Jan. 14—Approximately 65 head of livestock, including 55 registered Jersey dairy cows, perished early this morning in a \$10,000 fire which wiped out the dairy plant owned and operated by Worth and Dee Ellis, Shelby County landowners and dairymen.

A huge brush and grass fire on historic Antelope island in Great Salt Lake threatened at least one ranch and possibly others early Wednesday, as nearly four score fire fighters failed to gain control over the rapidly spreading flames.

An army of weary men, 2,000 strong, were on forest fire lines in Oregon and Washington Friday, hoping that rising temperatures and sinking humidity

would not increase the already grave blaze hazards. (From summary story in *Portland Oregonian*.)

New Haven, Conn., Sept. 24 (AP)—Fire of undetermined origin destroyed the 2,000-foot New England steel ship pier of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad here today with an estimated loss of more than \$200,000. Seven persons fighting the fire were injured.

Hood River, Ore., July 29 (AP)—Five firemen were slightly injured in a fire that destroyed two apple packing establishments here early Saturday at a loss estimated by firemen at nearly \$250,000.

*The name of a prominent person* connected with a news story may be used in the lead with good effect, even when he is not the central fact in the story. Otherwise, it is usually better to begin the story with some other feature. Politicians in office and others who seek personal publicity like to see news stories begin with their name. This explains why many publicity releases from public offices and departments begin with some such lead as "John J. Doesmith, chairman of the State Something Department, announced today that . . ." Such a beginning is not desirable in most cases. County agents, home demonstration agents, vocational teachers, field workers, organization officials, and others who wish publicity for their activities should rarely give out a publicity "release" beginning with their own names.

Following are some effective leads which correctly begin with a name:

George Lynn, Niles, Ohio, junior, is the new captain of the Ohio State University football team. He was elected by the lettermen of the '41 team just prior to the annual appreciation dinner for the team at the men's gym on the university campus Monday night, where his selection was first announced.

Washington, Nov. 21—President Roosevelt signed today, but with objections, the \$587,000,000 defense roads authorization bill which differed in only minor particulars from a measure which he vetoed Aug. 4.

Viscount Halifax, British ambassador to the United States, will address the annual convention of the American Farm Bureau Federation here December 10, Edward A. O'Neal, federation president, has announced.

Nacogdoches, Texas, June 1—E. Leroy Ross, of Mount Enterprise, had traveled a distance of 100,000 miles in pursuit of a college education when he

received his B. S. degree from A. W. Birdwell, president of the Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, it was estimated here Saturday.

Bowling Green, Ky., Jan. 14—Joseph Alexander, Barren County 4-H Club member, was announced today by Freeman Griffin, assistant Warren County farm agent, as winner of first prize in the annual district 4-H tobacco show and sale held here December 17.

Worcester, Mass., Nov. 17 (AP)—Albert A. Goss, a farm leader who sees agriculture “gravely endangered by overcentralization of control in Washington,” today was elected master of the National Grange at its seventy-fifth annual convention. He succeeds Louis J. Taber, of Columbus, Ohio, national master for 18 years, who asked to be relieved.

Dr. K. W. Stouder of Ames, extension veterinarian at Iowa State College, said Wednesday that recent wet weather may result in a heavy increase in livestock poisoning from cornfields.

*Striking facts or circumstances* sometimes offer themselves to solve the question of what shall be put into the lead. A good rule of thumb for the beginner in finding them is to search for fact or facts that make the particular story different from other similar stories. When news is looked at from such an angle, the variations in choice are many.

The following leads are suggestive of what may be found:

Eighty-five percent of the women’s shoes for fall will be black suede, Santa Barbara shoe merchants reported today on their return from the California Shoe Retailers’ Association convention held at the Biltmore hotel in Los Angeles.

The sun streamed through the chartreuse curtains of the Addison E. Holton living room Thursday where Barbara and her mother, Mrs. Holton, stood before the bay banked with white flowers and received from 4 to 6 p.m.

Wenona (PNS)—Almost 2,000 attended the four sessions of the fourth annual Corn and Home Economics show held at the high school Friday and Saturday.

Golden dust on the soap bubbles in which a woman was washing her husband’s overalls, so the story runs, prompted the process of flotation in extracting metal from ore and has contributed to the reworking of Virginia’s once rich gold mines.

Gainesville, Fla.—Peanut hull bran, a Southern product, can be used effectively mixed with sand in rooting cuttings of ornamental plants, it has been found by John V. Watkins, assistant horticulturist with the University of Florida.

Azalea plants were in bloom throughout New Orleans Friday, several weeks before their usual flowering season.

Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Jan. 2 (AP)—A crop-dusting airplane working over a bean field here today crashed into telephone wires, disrupting telephone communications with Miami and seriously injuring the pilot.

Coalinga, Cal., April 20 (UP)—Countless millions of ravenous young grasshoppers crawled and hopped into rich agricultural areas in western San Joaquin Valley today as farmers and state and county authorities united in efforts to eradicate them before they obtained wings to fly over wider areas.

Substitution of honey for sugar, rye bread and corn meal foods for wheat foods, and diluted grape juice and water for milk in the diet of children have been found in certain cases to act as effective aids to defective hearing, the clinical congress of the American College of Surgeons was told yesterday by Dr. James A. Rabbitt of Philadelphia in a general review on medical and surgical aids to hearing.

Tifton, Ga., Jan. 13—County farm demonstration agents do not have much time to fool around, if the report of Agent C. B. Culpepper for Tift County for last year is a fair example.

Brandon, Miss., Jan. 2—Conservation of the soil and better use of the land are double objectives of the county extension program in Rankin County, says R. G. Prescott, county agent, in his annual report.

Bloomfield, N. J., Oct. 18—An improved "Klystron," a generator that sends electrical power through the air, was demonstrated today before 100 engineering professors and other educators from 75 eastern colleges and universities and other guests at the laboratories of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company here.

Springfield, Ill. (AP)—Molasses—an ingredient of grandmother's ginger bread, baked beans and Indian pudding, but uncommon in present day diets—received quite a plug Friday from State Health Director A. C. Baxter.

Urbana, Ill., April—Children are not "ornery" little brats just because they do not like the vegetables served to them, contends Miss Harriet Barto, assistant professor of dietetics, University of Illinois.

McLean—Fifty acres plowed in two and a half hours was a new kind of record for a good neighbor deed Monday afternoon down at William McCance's home four miles south of town.

*The place where a news story happens is seldom important enough*

to feature in the opening words, though "where" is nearly always given somewhere in the lead. Yet at times, the place is important or so unusual that the reporter makes use of it to begin the lead. Some examples are:

West Virginia State College will be host Friday and Saturday to the fourth annual West Virginia Scholastic Press conference, Hillery C. Thorne, secretary-treasurer of the conference, said Monday.

Knoxville, Ia.—Marion County is making a bid for the title of Iowa's leading beef cattle area of Iowa.

Weiser, Ida., Aug. 1 (AP)—Hell's Canyon—America's deepest known gorge—drew five adventurous boatmen into its depths today as they embarked upon a hazardous expedition designed to survey the feasibility of a proposed \$12,000,000 highway along the Snake River.

Far up in the sky, a darkly silver cross against the sunlit blue, an airplane droned steadily on its bee-line course.

Out beyond the headlands where the sky meets the sea it was murky yesterday. To watchers on the Golden Gate Bridge the low clouds began to take on strange shapes as they moved toward the strait. The first to approach had formed themselves into trim gray destroyers . . .

Likewise *time* is not often used as a feature for a lead, although practically always the time of the event or happening is included somewhere near to it. However, it may be the important, significant feature, as the following leads suggest:

Shelley, Idaho—Two minutes after he had mentioned to a sidewalk group no punctures had occurred in the lifetime of the car, Orbie Shoemaker of Shelley, garage employee, returned to find one tire flat.

Kent, O., April 15—By this time next year, Dr. Eileen W. Earlanon, assistant professor of biology at Kent State College here, will be riding elephants through the tall grasses of India.

Okanogan, July 25—Just four days remain for Okanogan County drivers to make application for new drivers' licenses, Don Huber, patrolman, reminded them today.

Often it is *the most recent angle* of the news that is played up in the lead. This is particularly true if it is a follow-up story, after

one or more earlier stories, dealing with the same event, have appeared in previous issues. At other times, it may be the *local angle*. If a story coming in over the wire contains the name of a local person, or reference to something local, it will probably be rewritten by an editor to play up this angle. A county agricultural agent who gets information or news material from the state office in form of news stories can usually rewrite this to make it a local story. Such a rewriting adds to its news value. State extension editors realize this and frequently send out such releases, leaving blank the name of the county and the agent, who can fill these in before turning the copy over to a local paper.

The following leads illustrate the writing of leads as suggested above:

With an estimated 50 to 60 percent of the apple crop in Lake County lying on the ground as the result of Thursday's windstorm, apple growers were taking steps to enlist the aid of fruit dealers and the Federal Surplus Marketing Administration in purchasing and storing windfallen apples, Herman Mantle, secretary of the Ohio State Apple Institute, said today.

Increasing violence in the apricot price war between growers and canners today brought an appeal for additional help from . . .

A new system of alarming the White Hall-Hereford countryside was tried last night whereby cooperation among police, firemen, telephone operators and vigilante farmers may help curb the wave of incendiary barn fires which have swept the area for the past two years.

Increases in retail milk, cream and buttermilk prices in Rochester next Wednesday were predicted today as the State Department of Agriculture announced 99.2 percent of area producers had approved boosts in their returns in a mail referendum.

Houston, Sept. 24 (AP)—Refugees by the thousands returned tonight to the Gulf Coast homes from which they fled to escape a tropical storm which caused millions of dollars of damage to crops and property.

Chicago, Ill.—Iowa corn is being moved from state elevators for export to Great Britain under the lend-lease act. (Story in *Des Moines Register*.)

**Grammar and the leads:** The fact that a great variety of sentence forms is available may escape the reporter's atten-

tion unless he gives it particular thought. The lead may begin with a noun or with an adjective or adverb modifier carrying the emphasis. It may begin with the subject of the main clause that carries modifying dependent clauses. It may be a simple sentence with modifiers or it may be a compound sentence. It may begin with a prepositional phrase or with present or past participial construction. The opening may be an infinitive, or it may be one of many types of subordinate clauses. Without attempting to label each one specifically, here are a number of leads selected to show how a skillful reporter may secure variety in lead writing by means of varied grammatical construction:

Denton, Md., Sept. 24 (AP)—Construction of new rural electrification projects by the Choptank Cooperative, Inc., is being delayed by lack of materials, W. R. Merrikin, cooperative attorney, announced after a meeting of company officials yesterday.

Skimmed milk, previously restricted by law to certain manufacturing uses, will be allowed to be sold to home consumers in New York City beginning Jan. 1, the city Board of Health decided yesterday.

With harvesting practically finished in the Salt River Valley, price increases are reported for both oranges and grapefruit, according to the Arizona Citrus Exchange.

Waynesburg, Pa., Sept. 16—For the first time in several years, a large portion of the corn crop in Greene County has been cut by mid-September.

Corona, Calif., June 20—With heavy hearts and cherished memories, many of the pioneer families of this district are abandoning their homes to make way for the building of Prado Dam and its reservoir, covering several thousand acres of fertile farm land. Orange County and the Federal government will take control of this property.

Its commencement exercises literally washed out of the stadium by a deluging rain early last evening, Ohio State University, after a valiant attempt to "carry on" in the covered area beneath the tiers of seats, had to call the whole thing off and announce that for the first time in its history, graduates will get their diplomas by mail.

Rushing in from the West, high winds laden with sand swept through Rochester and western New York yesterday, knocking down trees, pulling down poles and high tension wires and smashing windows.

Because black is so important, the smartest day dresses are the little black numbers with schoolgirl quaintness, relieved by meticulous touches of white.

If war comes to Iowa, she'll have at least 30 men who can build bomb shelters and conduct blackouts.

Syracuse, N. Y. (AP)—Asked to express their menu preferences, 400 boys and girls invited to a rescue mission Thanksgiving dinner voted this way: for turkey—10 percent; for spaghetti—11 percent; various—four percent; and for hot dogs—75 percent.

Solving the problem of aircraft stress and strain is one of the latest uses scientists have found for soap bubbles. Prof. H. W. Marsh of the University of Wisconsin mathematics department and G. W. Traynor, now chief of the forest products division of the national forestry service, have successfully used soap bubbles in determining the twist resistance of all kinds and shapes of airplane wing beams.

San Francisco, Nov. 15—As a result of the vast national defense industries now located in the state, California is on the receiving end of the largest migration of job seekers in the history of the state.

*A quotation, either direct or indirect,* is often used as a feature in writing a lead for meeting or interview stories. The quotation is also a device that lends itself to writing other than summary leads, such as suspended interest types. The reporter should be careful, however, to make sure that the fact or statement quoted is of sufficient importance to justify its being so used. An inexperienced reporter is sometimes inclined to overwork quotations as leads. Here are a few good examples:

"It is not real batter bread unless you scald the meal," says Mrs. Emma Speed Sampson, who deplores the reflection cast on Southern cooking by those who seek short cuts to success with their ancestors' recipes.

"What can I do to get rid of boxelder bugs in my home?" is a question often asked extension entomologists at Iowa State College.

"Dinner's cold now, John!" won't be a reproach to tardy spouses in the housekeeping of the future, says Science Service. It will mean merely that dinner isn't ready yet, that it is still frozen solid, and has been that way since it was prepared, perhaps months before. This is one of the interesting possibilities of the frozen pack method, as visioned by a woman pioneer in food refrigeration . . .

Norman, Okla. (UP)—It is not romantic to say good night to a girl friend to the blast of a steam whistle, according to Walter Kraft, University of Oklahoma director of utilities, and he is going to do something about it.

Corning, Ia.—“There are no bottle-necks in agricultural production, and farmers should not be branded as unpatriotic or selfish if they demand equality with industry and labor which are guaranteed profitable incomes in the production of guns and ammunition,” said Mark Thornburg, secretary of agriculture, at the annual meeting of the Adams County Farm Bureau Thursday night.

Student reporters are oftentimes inclined to use questions as leads for their stories, but it is only occasionally that a question lead is justified. At times it may be good. A few examples are given here:

What are the women of Illinois talking about?

If the replies of several hundred women in attendance at a reception given this week in Urbana are indicative of the trend over the state, they are discussing many subjects, most of them serious, others of lighter vein.

Owasso, Mich., March 29—Is a fox hunt, hunting?

That is the question that is causing no end of debate in Shiawassee County, which is closed to Sunday hunting.

Statesboro, Ga., Jan. 13—Where do they come from, and will the supply never be exhausted? These are questions asked here each week as the two weekly livestock auctions report unusually large sales of both hogs and cattle.

**Big fact or cartridge lead:** While a summary lead is the first and most important kind of news lead, another effective lead is one that might be called a “single big fact” or a “cartridge” lead. When the feature of a story is of outstanding interest or importance, especially when it deals with the consummation of events for which people have been waiting, the cartridge lead can frequently be employed with success. This lead consists of a brief statement of the feature of the story in the first sentence and the giving of the other details of the summary in a second sentence. Often the first sentence containing the feature is also set off by itself as a paragraph.

The effect of this lead as compared with the clothesline lead, of which it is merely an adaptation, is to give greater emphasis to the feature. Consider the following:

Alberta Hoppe, 15, whose home is four miles south of Cedar Rapids, is the healthiest 4-H club girl in Iowa.

Alberta won this distinction last night in competition with 69 other club girls, champions of as many counties, in the state 4-H club health contest at the Iowa State Fair.

If this lead is compared with the clothesline lead above we see that it has quite a different effect. It has brought the single outstanding feature of the story into the very center of the limelight, thus giving it a heightened value. The summary, however, is not dispensed with. It follows the feature immediately.

This type of lead is more frequently used on what are known as *second day stories* than on *first day stories*.

A story which gives a first account of an event to the readers, which deals for the first time with an event and the actors in it, is called a first day story. The farm page editor hears that Sam Green has sold his farm or that a fire destroyed his barn, or that he is to hold a livestock sale. The account of any of these events would be a first day story. A follow-up on any of these stories in a subsequent issue would be a second day story.

The cartridge lead is often used in a second day story because it presumes to a certain extent, in its first sentence, upon the reader's having some knowledge of the events to which reference is made. Without this knowledge the first sentence, bare of the details of the summary, would not be intelligible to the reader. For the same reason this kind of lead is usually used only on fairly important stories, with the events of which the readers are likely to have some familiarity. The cartridge lends itself also to the use of leads of the suspended interest type. It will be found in some of the examples which follow:

St. Louis, Mo., June 11—Will 41,518,125,000 tons of water backed up into Lake Mead by Boulder Dam cause earthquakes?

This question was raised before a meeting of the Seismological Society of America today by R. R. Bodle of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Washington, D. C., April 29—Drought years are nearly at an end for the United States. They will not return until 1975.

Such is the forecast of Dr. Charles G. Abbot, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, made here today before the meeting of the American Geophysical Union.

Washington, D. C.—Twins don't stay alike if they don't stay together.

This is the general conclusion derived from a study of many pairs of twins, both identical and nonidentical, by a three-man research team at the University of Chicago, representing the sciences of biology, psychology and statistics.

Minnesota's public rat No. 1 is operating a slot machine at the state university, but it's perfectly legal.

The culprit is Pliny, a white rat which is in the slot machine business only to obtain enough food to keep fat and glossy and to please B. Frederick Skinner, instructor in psychology.

"No," Grace said right away, "I've never milked a cow."

Austin, Tex., Dec. 2 (UP)—Dr. C. C. Albers, University of Texas professor, grows weeds in his garden here.

This is the story of a reporter, a policeman and Fred Astaire.

Perry, N. Y., Feb. 1 (AP)—They're making butter in electric washing machines now.

Farm manure is worth \$1.97 per ton when it is used as a fertilizer on Iowa soils.

This is the value assigned to it following a large number of accurate experiments carried out on 16 soil types in 43 fields scattered in every part of the state. The experiments were conducted by Iowa farmers, working in conjunction with the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station.

Sacramento, Calif., Nov. 27 (AP)—California is going on a pay-as-you-go basis. Gov. Culbert L. Olson broke the good news to taxpayers yesterday.

Last week little Jack Purdy was a pedestrian. This week he is a patient.

**Grouped facts lead:** There is a third general type of lead which is used mainly for a news lead but which at times is utilized for a suspended interest lead. This has several modifications. One is a modification of the cartridge lead. It consists not of a single feature played up in the opening sentence, but of two or more features of parallel importance, cast in the opening sentence, or a series of sentences, and followed as in the case of the cartridge lead with the details of the summary.

Alberta Hoppe, 15, whose home is four miles south of Cedar Rapids, is the healthiest 4-H club girl in Iowa.

And Van Kinney, 17, who hails from Davis County, is the healthiest club boy.

They won this distinction last night in competition with 88 other club girls and boys in the state 4-H club contest at the Iowa State Fair.

This kind of lead gives the writer the opportunity, when the facts of the story warrant it, to give equal emphasis to more than one feature of his story. The following leads are further illustrations of the type:

Chicago—Tuberculosis is more prevalent among college men than among college women.

It occurs more frequently among college students in the East and Far West than in the Middle West.

Dr. Esmond R. Long and Florence D. Seibert of the Henry Phipps Institute, University of Pennsylvania, report the results of the tuberculin test on 18,744 college freshmen in 1935-36 in the forthcoming issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Denver, Colo.—Death is a crystalline pattern permanently set. Life is associated with the formation and destruction of crystals. The living organism is crystalline in nature, just like the material of the nonliving world. Evolution began with the joining of basic elements to form simple compounds long before life was born on the earth.

These new ideas of life, death and evolution were presented to the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting here by Dr. George A. Baitzell, Yale biologist, as the result of X-ray studies which reveal the crystalline structure of living matter.

Washington, D. C., May 7—At least 700 mammal species now living may pass out of existence within the next century. North America, with 25 extinct forms, leads all the world in its reckless destruction of irreplaceable species.

This indictment and warning were uttered before the meeting of the American Society of Mammologists here today by Dr. Francis Harper of the American committee for international wildlife protection.

Good leafy soybean hay is an excellent feed for fattening lambs, superior in feeding value per ton to red clover hay, when fed along with a ration of corn, cottonseed meal, corn silage and salt. Soybean hay is better for fattening lambs when fed whole than when ground.

These are some of the outstanding results obtained in tests recently completed at the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station.

If a news story does not contain any *single* fact important enough to stand alone or be featured as a lead, there may be a number of interesting facts which belong together or which can be massed

at the opening of a story to create an impression. The following are examples:

Do you need a buzz saw, sausage grinder, 10 tons of crushed stone or a ton of unbaled alfalfa hay? Would you like to have a shepherd pup, a corn planter, a grindstone or tractor plow? Could you use fruits, vegetables or grain of any kind? Is your supply of chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese running low?

If so, attend the seventh annual public auction sale which will be held for the benefit of the Dublin community church, Oct. 31, and you may have a chance to get these articles at your own price—if the bidding isn't too heavy.

Marshfield, Wis., Feb. 1 (AP)—They may be heirlooms. They may be scarce. They may even be antiques in Columbus, Ohio, or Nome, Alaska, but in sections of the country where men are men, you can still find red flannel underwear.

Hollywood—Strong men stood tense, hands clenched, mouths grim. Women twirled their handkerchiefs, nervously patted at their lips, watched in awed fascination. Actress June Lang, her face a mask of almost desperate resolution, raised an arm, brought it down smartly, palm first.

Smack!

“Ouch!” yelled Shirley Temple.

They had guppies, they had alligators, they had chameleons, they had, in fact, nearly every kind of animal, bird or beast known to man that could be considered as a pet at yesterday's pet show sponsored by the Park Department in the newly completed playground at Riverside Drive and Seventy-fourth Street. But it was a quiet little family of four mongrel puppies that took the event by storm by winning the “best-in-show” honors.

**Suspended interest lead:** Stories whose value depends upon human interest or unusualness have a strong emotional element. It is quite natural that news stories of this kind should be written, frequently, in a manner which resembles fiction, for, as has been said, fiction has developed an effective technique for arousing emotions.

Such stories often employ a suspended interest lead. (Straight news stories which have an unusual twist, a strong human interest element, or which lend themselves to an interesting verbal handling, may also be begun with suspended interest leads.) The purpose of this lead is not to convey information to the reader in the speediest and clearest manner, but to arouse him to an emotional

reaction to the facts of the story. The writer wishes, then, not to divulge in the lead the climax of his story, as he would with the summary lead, but to intrigue the reader by a clever, striking, unusual, or dramatic beginning and from that lead him up to the climax—a fiction story in miniature.

The following examples will give the effect and the method:

Ames, Iowa—The ring-necked pheasant, king of the upland game birds, has one failing which may lower his standing in the eyes of the duck hunter. He can't keep his wife at home in the nesting season.

Waterfowl studies in northwest Iowa by Logan J. Bennett, of the United States Bureau of biological survey, and Paul L. Errington, of the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, have disclosed that pheasant hens, either by design or through carelessness, sometimes lay their eggs in duck nests, thereby reducing the potential number of ducklings.

Ten thousand boys and girls writing essays. Ten thousand busy tongues asking questions. A quickening interest in the farm bureau.

That in a nutshell is the picture of the farm essay contest now going on in 27 states. One hundred and fifty-one counties are competing.

Washington, D. C., April 30—How blue is the sky?

That is not a mere rhetorical question put by a poet for the purpose of dragging his lady's eyes into the discussion. The exact color of the sky is a matter of considerable scientific, commercial and even military importance, for it is a measure of air turbidity, dust content, haziness, etc., affecting visibility at a distance, intensity and color composition of sunlight and a number of other intangible but important matters.

A new device for measuring sky blueness was described before the meeting of the American Geophysical Union here today. . . .

Kansas City, Mo., June 22—Outstanding glamor ladies of history, Cleopatra and Helen of Troy, wore sandals, not high heels.

This thought on shoe psychology was presented here this morning to the American Home Economics Association by Miss Ruth Kerr of the Calf-Tanners' Association. . . .

Carrollton, Texas, June 25—A small, spry man with black eyes and hair and a spring in his step, known to his friends as Tater Tucker, took a plunge 23 years ago when he plunked down a first payment on 300 acres of sandy land four miles northeast of Carrollton. At least so his friends believed, for Tucker at that time possessed only two things, energy and a belief in sweet potatoes as a money crop.

A sod house, a "dobie" oven built inside, of clay, which served jointly as a heating and cooking stove; dry brush and grass used as fuel; straw ticks for beds—and stewed sparrows and rye bread for food.

Green Hutchinson was a very ancient man. Maybe he was the oldest man in the United States.

If you see a huge, bewhiskered, overalled figure lumbering down the street, with a bright red bandanna handkerchief tied gypsy-fashion about his head and carrying a lantern and an old-fashioned hickory staff, don't be alarmed.

**News leads fit many uses:** Most of the examples of leads used as illustrations in this chapter have been taken from newspapers. Examination of straight news stories in farm, trade, and engineering papers will disclose that news writing for them is just about the same as for newspapers. Likewise, many of the short articles of experience or informational value are written with a good news lead which is likely to summarize the story or play up the essential feature first.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Clip ten summary news leads from papers or magazines. Analyze the completeness with which they answer the questions, who, what, where, why, when, and how. Discuss briefly the feature of the story and whether or not you think the writer chose his feature rightly.
2. Write a news story beginning with a summary lead. Be able to explain why you chose the feature as you did.
3. Write a news story, beginning it in four ways: with a summary lead, a cartridge lead, a grouped fact lead and a suspended interest lead. Which of the four is best in this case and why?
4. Clip out of a week's daily newspapers what you think are the three best examples each of summary, cartridge, grouped fact, and suspended interest leads, and be ready to defend your estimate of them.
5. Clip five leads that you think are poorly written. Rewrite them to make them more effective.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE BODY OF THE NEWS STORY

**R**EVERT to the previous chapter and reread the notes about the girl and the boy who won the state club health contest. We have already seen how the lead for this story might be written. Now comes the question, how does the reporter handle the body of his story?

It must be understood from the beginning that there are no fast rules for the organization of the body of a news story and that the skillful and original writer will always find new ways to make his story effective, adapting his plan to the particular occasion and purpose.

However, there are several rather distinct types of arrangement for news stories. Three of them apply especially to the straight news story; two others fit certain other purposes.

The three straight news story arrangements include the *inverted pyramid* arrangement, *chronological* arrangement, and the *suspended interest* arrangement.

A fourth arrangement is a well-defined type used only in technical and research journals. It has been recognized as a definite form for many years.

A fifth type has been developed through the years for presenting routine news in a convenient way.

The latter two types will be considered in separate chapters.

**The inverted pyramid arrangement:** Just as most stories dealing with "straight" news employ a summary lead, so the bodies of such stories are usually built in the form of an inverted pyramid. That is, the more important news material is placed early in the story and less important material later, the whole story following a line of decreasing interest.

This arrangement is distinctively a journalistic form. It has no parallel in any other kind of writing. It does have its parallel, however, in the verbal narrative of the news monger, who, as we have seen, instinctively follows this plan because it is the natural

method for conveying news information in the way best to satisfy the curiosity of the hearer. It has from the newspaper point of view two advantages, one of them implied in what has just been said:

1. It makes it possible for the reader to get the most out of a story in a minimum of time. He glances at the lead. That gives him the feature of the story and a brief but complete summary. Then, if he reads on, and if the story is arranged in the form of an inverted pyramid, he is able to get the most important details—in the order of their importance—without having to read through the entire story. It not only saves his time, but it also answers his craving to get the news *at once*; it is part of the effort that pervades the newspaper to give the reader the information he wants *as soon as possible*.

2. It facilitates the making of the paper. A reporter writes a story or a story comes in over the wire. It goes to the copy desk to be edited. Suppose the story as turned in is 500 words long. Suppose the copy editor thinks the story is only worth a quarter of a column instead of half a column. It has to be cut. If the story is written in the inverted form, with the more important news elements arranged in the order of their importance, it is a comparatively simple matter to cut the story from 500 words to 250. If, on the other hand, it were written in fictional form, the article would probably have to be entirely rewritten in order to compress it to half its original length.

Again, suppose that the story in its original form, 500 words long, has got by the copy desk, has been sent to the composing room and has been put into type. When it comes time to make up the paper a rush of late news has made it necessary to compress some of the less important earlier stories. In the light of this development our 500-word story must be cut to 250 words. If it is written in the inverted pyramid form, it will probably be possible to effect this cut by lopping off a few of the paragraphs at the end of the story. They are the less essential parts and can be sacrificed without doing vital injury to the article. If the story were not so arranged, it would have to be rewritten and then reset, a process which would take valuable time and would often be impossible of accomplishment in the rush of newspaper making.

Again, perhaps our story in its original form has been run in one edition of the paper. But for a subsequent edition, the story being of less value because it is getting old, it is desirable to cut it down. This can be easily done, as in the case cited above, if the story is written in the inverted pyramid form.

Still another reason for this writing method is that many news stories will also be put on press association wires. A story may be worth a column in New York City, half a column in Chicago, a fourth of a column in Denver and only a "stick"—about an inch or two—in Seattle. Also, the larger city dailies will use a long story, medium-sized cities will want less, while the small dailies can use only a brief story. One writing of the story in pyramidal form in the first place will produce a story that can be edited readily for these various papers without any further rewriting.

For these reasons most straight news stories are so arranged. The writer scans his material and outlines his story. He may make an outline on paper, and this is a good plan especially for the novice, or he may lay the story out in his head. He picks his lead material and then weighs the news value of the other details of his material. He proceeds to write the story, putting those details which have the greatest weight as news early in the article and those with less weight later. Reporters will differ as to just which details are worth the most, but they will all follow the same general scheme for any particular story.

Here is the way a Des Moines newspaper handled the material presented in the preceding chapter about the boy and girl state 4-H club health champions:

#### IOWA'S HEALTHIEST BOY AND GIRL

Alberta Hoppe, 15-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Hoppe, living near Cedar Rapids, is Iowa's healthiest girl, and Van Kinney, 17 years old, a junior at Bloomfield High School, is the healthiest boy.

The judges announced their decision at the state fair late Thursday after examining 70 Iowa 4-H club girls from as many counties of the state, and 20 boys from all over Iowa.

Alberta scored 98.92 per cent. The judges found little wrong with her physical makeup. She is 5 feet 5½ inches

tall, weighs 125 pounds, and has light brown bobbed hair. She declared she uses no powder or paint and cares little for the young men.

Kinney, who is the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Kinney of Davis County, scored 97.2 per cent. He is 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighs 141.5 pounds. He performs work usual upon the farm. He admitted that he smokes an occasional cigaret.

Both winners will receive a free trip to the 4-H club congress at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago, where they will compete with boy and girl winners from the other states in the union.

The story consists of five paragraphs. Why are they arranged in this order?

The second paragraph completes the summary and gives the number of boys and girls in the contest, a fact that is essential to any estimate on the part of the reader of the importance of Alberta's and Van's victory.

The third paragraph gives Alberta's score and details about physical makeup. This material is given before similar material about the boy because she made a higher score than he did—and then, she's a girl.

The next paragraph takes up parallel material about the other winner, Van Kinney.

The last paragraph is older material, no doubt published previously in advance stories about the state contest.

Now suppose that for one reason or another it were necessary to cut this story. The last paragraph could be dispensed with without doing any serious injury to the completeness of the account.

It would even be possible to cut off the fourth and third paragraphs and leave the first two alone. While we should miss in this way some interesting details, we should get from the first two paragraphs the essential news facts of the story. And both these cuts could be made without changing a word or setting a single slug of type.

**Chronological arrangement:** Occasionally a story can best be told by arranging the material in the order of the occurrence of the events—a chronological order.

An entire story, however, is seldom cast in this form. More usually a combination of the inverted pyramid arrangement and the chronological is used. A strictly chronological arrangement would start with the first event of the series to be described and follow through a time sequence until the story was completed. This is not often advisable in a news story because, as we have seen, the lead, at least, will want to deal with the *results* of the series of events rather than the initial details, which are usually of less importance.

The chronological arrangement does have these advantages: It permits a natural following of the events as they occurred and so

avoids the confusion entailed in jumping about among the facts; and it permits the writer to work up to a dramatic or logical climax.

Very often speech reports and interviews, when they are of some length, are handled with a combination of the inverted pyramid and chronological forms. The lead and a few following paragraphs deal with the outstanding statements of the speaker or the person interviewed, and then the writer goes back and picks up a chronological account of what was said.

Another type of story which makes use of chronological form, following a summary news lead, is one that newspaper men often call a "running" story. This is one that is written as the story progresses. The story may have to go to press before the event is finished or else immediately afterward.

A story of a football game is a familiar example of this. The reporter, sitting in the press box, writes a play-by-play story as it happens. As each paragraph is written, it is wired or phoned to the newspaper office. As it comes in there, it is set up in type, dumped into a galley, proofed, and put on the makeup table. Meanwhile a headline is set up—or often two headlines—one for a win, one for a loss. As the game ends, the reporter writes the lead for the story. In the office this is put into type last, stuck into the form at the top of the story. In a few minutes it is on the presses. Often by the time the spectators at the game have left the stadium and are off the campus, the newsboys meet them with an extra containing this running story of the game. Afterward, the reporter writes another story of the game in pyramid style, which is used in later editions.

This same type of story is sometimes used for baseball games, with an inning-by-inning account. It may be used for fire stories and sensational trials which are still happening as the story is written. Sometimes, too, this method is used for trials and crime stories just to make them more dramatic, as for instance when testimony of witnesses is reported verbatim.

**Suspended interest arrangement:** What was said in the previous chapter about the suspended interest lead applies also to the suspended interest arrangement of the body of the story. Stories

so organized—in a way to lead up to a climax and the divulging of the chief news facts at the end of the story—are usually short and of a feature story nature rather than straight news. For example:

### POP! \$5 IN CORN WINS FORTUNE

Cleveland, Ohio—This story originates in Wakeman, a little town of 500 population, that appears only as a small dot on the larger maps of Ohio.

It's a story of a \$5 investment in seed corn that developed into a \$100,000 a year business.

A humble farm woman invested the \$5 from her butter and egg money.

Her son, Charles S. Clark, Sr., now 77, took the money and developed a business which earned him the title of "seed corn king of the world."

To understand what this means, it may be well to cite a few figures from the 1936 record of Clark's firm which promises to be equalled or surpassed this year.

In 1936 the firm shipped to all parts of the United States, Canada and Europe, 3,500,000 pounds of seed corn. Of this gigantic total, 2,174,000 pounds were sweet corn—intended for the "corn-on-the-cob" trade. The remainder was divided into 176 varieties of field corn and popcorn.

In the warehouse of the company 111 varieties of sweet corn are stored. During the shipping season as many as 17 carloads of sweet corn are sent at one time to seed firms in all parts of the country. An airplane is used to deliver seeds or to check on the requirements of a customer at some distant point.

Quite a business, isn't it?

But the real story lies in Clark himself.

Back in 1876—59 years ago—Clark felt the urge to make money. Though only a boy of 18, he was anxious to see the \$1,700 mortgage on the Clark homestead wiped off.

So he decided to come to Cleveland and look over the possibilities of work in a large city. But his mother, a most wise and patient woman, had other ideas. Would it not be better, she reasoned, for her son to take the \$5 she had saved from butter and eggs and start a seed business of his own?

Charles was somewhat dubious but he decided to give the idea a trial. Taking the \$5, he went to Cleveland and spent all but 15 cents of the money in purchasing two different kinds of seed corn. The 15 cents was used for postage stamps to solicit orders from seed firms.

By return mail, young Charles received orders for seed corn from firms in Iowa and Pennsylvania and cleared a profit of \$8. He shelled the corn by hand and dried the seeds in an old hog house. His first product resulted in repeat orders from 21 concerns, his original customers, and many are still buyers from the Clark company. Today it pays out thousands of dollars to farmers throughout Northern Ohio who are growers for the Clark company.

As the corn story illustrates, the suspended interest method of telling news is one that can often be used for news of the type that is carried on farm pages of a newspaper or in farm magazines, household magazines, or in any trade or engineering paper. However, it is also used frequently in daily newspapers for what is commonly known as the human interest story. Such news is generally intended for entertainment and not often for conveying news of a happening. Often items of no great consequence, and yet with unique features, can be made into good stories if written

in this way. The suspended interest form is seldom used for a story in which the news is of prime importance.

The following story will illustrate the type:

#### NOBODY KNEW

Eugene, Ore., Nov. 11 (INS)—“Those of you who know what the national debt is, please raise your hands.”

The speaker was Dr. Robert Leeper, professor in psychology at the University of Oregon, addressing members of his class.

Not a single hand was raised.

“Those of you who know what the

national income is, please raise your hands.”

Still no hands.

“Is it possible that out of this class of university students, the cream of the crop and future leaders of the country, not one knows the answers to these simple questions?” he growled.

Silence reigned complete in the classroom.

“Well,” he said, “neither do I.”

**Other types of story arrangement:** Now and then a story, usually of the human interest sort, is written in a form so unconventional that it cannot be classified under any one of the heads that have been discussed. Sometimes the story is handled in the form of a scenario or as a one-act play. Again, it may be told in verse. Sometimes it takes the form of a letter to the city editor from the reporter sent out to cover the story.

Special kinds of routine news are handled in set forms. So important are these from the standpoint of technical journalism that they are discussed at length in a later chapter.

**Further Examples:** Some other examples of this type of building a news story in the inverted pyramid type of structure will show how this type adapts itself to stories from the fields of agriculture, home economics, and engineering, as they have appeared in newspapers.

#### GAIN SOUGHT IN BEET CROP

Waverly, Iowa.—Farmers of Bremer and eastern Butler county are invited to attend a “Sugar Beet” meeting in the Waverly community building Friday evening, Nov. 21.

Farmers from north central Iowa who have grown beets will be on hand to talk and to answer questions, and complete information will be given on plans for reopening the Waverly Sugar Co. plant in 1942. Work on repairs, estimated to cost \$75,000, will be started soon.

Two fieldmen who will solicit farmers

to sign contracts are to arrive this week. Eight thousand acres are sought. (*Waterloo, Iowa, Courier*)

#### SHOVEL LIFTS 40 TONS

Macon, Mo., (UP)—A power shovel so huge that it can pick up forty tons of earth and rock in one scoop is being used at the Bee-Veer strip mine near here. The shovel weighs 1,500 tons, towers as high as a fourteen-story building and is rated as one of the largest in the world.

Yet for all its size, the machine works with ease, swinging its forty-ton load a

distance of 300 feet, releasing it and then returning to its normal position in forty-five seconds.

The shovel is electrically operated and is used to strip the earth from shallow deposits of coal. After the large shovel has uncovered the coal vein, smaller shovels move in and load the coal into trucks.

Three men are needed to operate the shovel. One works in the control room, another works underneath the shovel and a third is kept busy oiling the complicated machinery. (*New York Times*)

## FARM AWARD WON

### BY YOUNG ATHLETE

East Lansing, Mich., May 1.—(AP)—Dorwin Williams, 17 years old, a sturdy Dansville High School boy equally adept on the farm, in the class room and on the athletic field, today held the "Star Farmer" degree, highest award of the Future Farmers of America.

Williams, who graduates next month after earning \$443 from dairy, bean and sheep projects while attending school, was honored before 2,500 rural youth assembled for the Future Farmers' annual meeting.

The new boy champion farmer owns three dairy cattle, 20 registered sheep and is producing seven acres of wheat. Ranking tenth scholastically in a class of 35, Williams played football, base ball and basket ball in high school. He is president of his Sunday school class.

George Fogle, of Okemos, was elected president of the Future Farmers. (*Detroit News*)

## PLANT PESTS PERIL VALLEY

San Jose, July 3.—Discovery of a pest which is a potential menace of Santa Clara Valley orchards was revealed today by L. R. Cody, county agricultural commissioner.

The pest, known as the European earwig, destructive to orchard and plant life, was discovered on the old circus grounds on South First Street.

Steps to prevent spread of the infestation have been taken. Dry grass has been burned off the field, which has been baited and dusted with poison.

First appearing at Sunnyvale three years ago, the pest has been found in

Mountain View, Sunnyvale and San Martin, but was not reported in San Jose until this week.

Of reddish brown color, an inch long, the earwig roams at night, living on plant shoots and leaves. In orchards it attacks both leaves and fruit. (*San Francisco Examiner*)

## COUNTY TO FIGHT WEEDS

Perkins county will soon be the second in the state to have a county wide weed control district. Following a recent hearing there in which farmers and land owners were given opportunity to express their views, the board of commissioners approved organization on a county wide basis to fight bindweed and other noxious weeds. An estimated 450,000 acres of farm land will be affected. Cuming county organized the first county district in Nebraska this spring.

W. L. Klatt, state weed supervisor, also reports receipt of petitions calling for the organization of districts including four townships in Box Butte county, and about two and a half townships in Jefferson county. Plymouth, Gibson and part of Cub Creek precincts are in the Jefferson county area. (*Lincoln, Neb., Journal*)

## GLAZED CHINTZ IS POPULAR

Stillwater, Okla. — (Special) — Next time you go near a tennis court or the junior-senior prom and see what looks like Mrs. Jones' best chintz draperies adorning some sweet young thing, don't stare.

She's not a fugitive from a sun-parlor. It's merely that glazed chintz is No. 1 tune on the Cotton Fashion Hit Parade this spring.

All cottons are in high favor right now because of shortages of other materials, but chintz is topping them all for styles ranging from playsuits to dance frocks, according to Miss Blanche Cade, of the household arts staff at Oklahoma A. and M. college.

Bold patterns in gay, morale-building colors are one of the main features of this chintz. Another reason why it is being gobbled off dry-goods counters is its washability. Most designs come out of the wash-tub as shiny and sparkling as ever.

Also ranking high in favor with Dame Fashion's devotees are ginghams, seersuckers, prints, and various novelty

weaves made of cotton. Plaids and bright colors are biggest news for all of these. They are being used for sun-up to sun-down and after costumes for all ages.

Reason for cotton proving so very popular this spring, besides material shortages in other fibers, is its ease of care, believes Miss Cade. (*Agricultural News Service, Oklahoma A. & M. College*)

### TO PROTECT TRACKS FROM OCEAN

In a never-ending fight to protect its trackage and rights-of-way from the elements, the Southern Pacific company is spending \$60,000 on a project underway at the ocean-side foot of Ortega hill, just north of Summerland.

The project is giving employment to 35 men who are working in two shifts. Southern Pacific engineers hope the project will be completed in four months.

A wall of rip-rap, nearly a half-mile long is being constructed to keep the heavy seas from pounding the roadbed. The tides and the heavy swells have eaten into its foundations until a wall is necessary to save the road.

The first section of the wall, 1,000 feet long, was completed sometime ago but, under pounding of heavy seas and shifting

sands, this wall was damaged to such an extent that repairs had to be made at once, according to company engineers. In addition to repairing the first section, the crews have started work on the second and final section of the 1,000 feet.

Engineers, however, are not satisfied that the 2,000-foot wall will finish the project. They explain that there is evidence the wall may have to be extended to almost a mile in length before the track protection there is solved. This would run the cost to several hundred thousand dollars.

The project near Summerland is similar to one on the Southern Pacific's right-of-way five miles south of Surf along the Honda section of the coast. Here the company is spending \$44,000 in its efforts to protect its roadbed from the sea.

And the project near Surf, according to engineers, may be only a start. It has been estimated that if all of the roadbed threatened by the ocean tides and storms is protected, the project will cost \$600,000.

Shifting sands along the Honda coast also are giving the crews trouble. Large boulders which were dumped into the sea there have been swallowed up. In 1906 a seawall was constructed along the Honda coast, but little of it remains today. (*Santa Barbara News-Press*)

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Find stories in daily newspapers illustrative of the different kinds of body arrangement discussed as applying to newspapers. Analyze the material in each story and see whether or not you would advocate any rearrangement.
2. Find stories in class, trade, or technical magazines which illustrate the different types of body arrangement. Write a brief comment on these with regard to whether they are as well written or not, as compared to daily newspaper stories.
3. Find a news story that is poorly written. Clip it and turn it in, along with the story rewritten to make it more effective.
4. Write a series of stories employing different kinds of body arrangement. Students who have already been assigned to beats should make use of these different forms in handling the news they gather and write.
5. Find and read a recent technical paper or report, preferably in your major field. Rewrite it in good pyramid form news style, putting the big news into a summary lead.

## CHAPTER 13

### WRITING THE NEWS STORY

A CAMPUS reporter had just been talking to the head of the Farm Crops Department about hybrid seed corn. He had called to pick up a timely fall corn story for the farm page of a daily newspaper. He was told that the corn crop, both open pollinated and hybrid, had been seriously damaged by aphids in some areas. However, certain particular hybrids evidently had shown the ability to resist aphid attacks, and their resistance had now been confirmed by two years of observation in several states.

The farm crops professor gave the reporter a reprint of a technical article on the research work that had established the relationship between the observed damage and the aphids as the cause. He also gave the reporter an experiment station bulletin on hybrid corn research, a copy of the recent annual report of the state corn growers association on field results with various hybrids, and loaned him a copy of a new extension leaflet giving instructions on harvesting, drying, and storing seed corn.

As the reporter listened he began to "write" the story in his mind—a habit developed through experience. As he heard about the hybrids resistant to aphids, he thought that maybe here was his lead. The farm crops man gave him some new figures on the striking increase in hybrid seed corn acreage and also in farm acreage for the current year. He set down these figures accurately; perhaps the lead might be there. The professor made a rather startling statement. That was put into the reporter's notes. That might make the best lead. At least it would have to be quoted.

As the reporter went away from the interview, he turned over in his mind the facts he had just secured, arranging them in some sort of order. There was a deadline for his story and he barely

had time to get the story written. He began "writing" it "in his head" so that by the time he reached his typewriter he could hammer it out with little hesitation.

The professional newspaper reporter has to do that sort of thing every day—write the story in his head as he gathers his facts.

However, if a reporter has more time he sits down to his typewriter and works more leisurely. He has his "dope"—the notes he made. He also has a vivid memory of the things he had been told, and the several pieces of printed information given him by the farm crops professor.

Now for writing the story. But first there are several things he must decide:

1. How much is the story worth to his paper—how long should it be?
2. What aspect of the whole subject will make the best lead material?
3. In what form shall he write the story?
4. He has enough material, gained from the half-hour conversation and bulletin, to write a small book. What portions of this material shall he use?

**Planning the story:** He leans back in his chair and thinks through his task. He remembers a weather forecast that he had seen that morning—in fact it was this forecast that had suggested that the story ought to be got at once. The prediction was for cooler weather with a possibility of frost. He had gone to get just a timely, seasonable story on seed corn and possible frost damage. He didn't know about the aphid damage and resistant varieties until he was told.

So therefore, the story had a heightened value. It was real "spot" farm news with information of timely value for many of the newspaper's readers—not only farmers, but business men who have a direct interest in corn and its many ramifications.

So the reporter decides to let his story "run"—give it all the space it needs for a thorough covering of the material. Because of the spot news angle of the aphids, that is the lead. Because it is straight news, he thinks it should be handled in the straight news manner with a summary lead and an inverted pyramid

arrangement. All this is preliminary to the actual writing of the story.

The next step is to make a plan of the story. This may be written out—and it should be in the case of the novice, especially if the article is to be of any length—or it may be arranged mentally.

This planning of the story involves a decision as to the form in which it will be written and a weighing of the news values of its various elements. The plan will make it possible to do two things, to arrange the data of the story in the proper sequence and to include everything that is necessary for a sufficiently complete account of the event.

With these preliminaries—and every experienced writer has his own way of going about them—one is ready to put his story on paper.

In some such way, whether on the campus or in the full-time employment of some publication, every reporter must analyze and organize his material for the writing of a news story. Perhaps the home economics student reporter at Iowa State College has learned that at last the long investigation carried on there and at several other institutions, dealing with the food intake of college women, has been released for publication. Or in the soils laboratory at Ohio State University the reporter has been looking through an electron microscope which magnifies 100,000 times, disclosing things in soils never before possible for the human eye to see. This is the only one of its kind in the world as yet available for soils research work. Or again, the engineering student reporter at Pennsylvania State College may have found that in the campus Diesel laboratory, a new simple smoke meter has been invented to measure the smoke in the exhaust from the Diesel engine. It can be built for \$25 and will be news to research workers and power engineers the world over.

Whatever the story, the reporter who gathers it has the task of analyzing the material and making a plan for writing it.

One thing which seems to bother the beginning reporter as much as anything is how long to make the story. One teacher of technical journalism answers that question when his students present it, by asking another question: "How high is a tree?" The length of a

story depends upon its news value, the character of the publication for which it is to be written, the space it has available, and so on. However, a story should be long enough to present the essential facts for the readers it is to reach.

Several things may determine how long the story should be. The city or state editor or the magazine editor may tell the reporter how long a story he wants. Otherwise the reporter will decide for himself, largely on the basis of what he thinks is the news value of his material. If the story has a policy bearing, that is if it advocates or opposes some movement or belief in which the paper is particularly interested, this fact will influence the length. For example, if the newspaper is making a particular effort to educate its farm readers to the production of better milk, a story on the bacteriology of milk infection will be worth more than if the paper were not stressing this type of material.

**Preparation of copy:** All copy which goes to a publication to be edited and put into type should, of course, be typewritten. To facilitate editing, both by yourself and the copyreader or editor to whom your story will go before it is put into type, it should be double or triple spaced. As a matter of practice, however, it is not always possible for students in a campus journalism course to have access to a typewriter when a story has to be written. In such case, the reporter should use a pencil with a heavy soft lead and leave as much space between the lines as there would be if he were using ruled paper and writing on every other line. Always write on one side of the paper only.

At the top of the first page in the upper lefthand corner, write some clue—one or two words—as to what the story is about, as “Hybrid Corn.” If you are on the staff of the paper, write underneath this, your name or initials, as “Brown” or “AHB.” If you are sending your story to a paper with which you are not connected, write your full name and just below that, your address. At the top of the second and subsequent pages, in the upper lefthand corner, put the same clue used on the first page, with your name or initials underneath. The address is needed only on the first page. The first page is not numbered, but number the second and other pages at the top, preferably in the center. Indicate the end of

the story in some way. Most reporters now use several marks, such as "#####."

Begin the first page of your story about one-third of the way down from the top, leaving blank four or five inches at the top. This gives the copyreader or editor space to write in the headline or give necessary directions to the printer. The reporter does not write headlines. Avoid splitting a paragraph at the bottom of a page and carrying part of it over to the top of the next page. In daily newspaper offices frequently a story of several pages will be given to a number of linotype operators to set up. If a paragraph has been split, this will mean that on the copy desk the part of a paragraph at the bottom must be cut off and pasted on to the next sheet, so each linotype man can have complete paragraphs.

It is a good idea to put on the upper righthand corner of the first page of copy the approximate number of words in your story. It isn't necessary to count the words, but just make a quick estimate. Put the number down in multiples of 25 if a short story, or in multiples of 100 if a long story.

Clean copy, that is, copy which is free of typographical errors, X-ed-out matter, and interlineations, copy which is neat and easily read, is not only indicative of careful workmanship, but is also a guarantee against needless errors in the printed version of the story.

After the story is written, edit it carefully, assuming as far as possible the point of view of the reader and trying to see your story as he will see it. In this way you can best test its clearness, completeness, and accuracy. If the story, upon second thought, will profit by alterations, or if it is much marked up in the editing, it should be rewritten.

In writing and editing his copy the reporter should follow the "style" employed by the newspaper or magazine to which he is going to send his story. By "style" is meant the rules of the particular publication covering capitalization, spelling, abbreviation, punctuation, and so forth. Most newspapers and magazines have a printed style sheet or style book which can be secured by writers. In other cases style is a matter of office tradition and can be

learned by a writer who is not on the staff only by a study of the publication.

Copy should usually be written or edited into short paragraphs. Long, solid blocks of type in the newspaper or magazine column have a forbidding appearance.

Often speed in the preparation and submitting of copy is important. This is especially true when one is writing for a daily newspaper. The reporter should know the editorial deadline, the time after which copy cannot be got into the paper, and plan his work accordingly.

Student reporters are at first sometimes inclined to look upon a news assignment in the same light as routine assignments in other courses or as a term paper, which does not have to be completed at any set time. It is a traditional habit of students to put such assignments off and then do up a batch of them whenever the time or urge to work comes. News writing is not done that way. The story has to be written and in before the deadline. You cannot write copy for a newspaper or magazine after it is printed. So back work should never be accepted from a student after it is due, under any consideration. To learn this lesson is all-important to anyone who expects to get publicity stories into a publication. The county agent, the vocational teacher, the home service worker for the power company, the chap who has to get publicity for his engineering construction company—all must learn that copy has to be in on time. The sooner it is in, the better.

**News diction:** What should be the characteristics of news diction, for what kind of style should the news writer strive? The answer to these questions lies very largely in the nature of the news writer's task. What is he trying to do and for whom is he trying to write?

First of all he is trying to convey information. He is not usually trying to inspire, to entertain, to move, except as these purposes are tied up with his primary one.

If we accept these statements, we shall have to agree that the one quality of writing for which, above all others, he should strive is clarity. He must endeavor to find the words and phrases which

will make clearest to his readers the ideas which he has got from his news sources.

And his readers—they are a mixed group, men, women, and children, educated and uneducated. They bring to the task of reading what he has written all degrees of intellectual ability. And yet he must write for them all, he must find a common denominator of language.

All of this points to a second cardinal quality of good news writing—simplicity. This does not mean that a news writer is limited to monosyllables and simple sentences, but it does mean that he should largely avoid extremely technical words or phrases, foreign language words and phrases, and the more exotic elements of his own vocabulary. Again, it does not mean that an ample vocabulary is a handicap, but that his efforts should be to know the exact uses of words rather than to build a vocabulary of unusual words which he will have little occasion to employ.

But even news writing isn't all bread and meat; if it were it would be too dull and monotonous for both the writer and the reader. Given that a story is clear and simple, there is no reason why it should not also be entertaining, clever, sprightly.

In other words there is ample room for originality and imagination in news writing. Negatively put, this implies the avoidance of the trite word and the hackneyed phrase. Positively, it implies the injection of imagination into what one writes.

In the following stories, the writers have succeeded, with material that is in no way exceptional, in giving an imaginative turn, an interesting freshness and originality, to what they have to say.

#### WHEN CELL MEETS CELL

Memphis, April 22—Minute cells of a human body can recognize each other by chemical means as accurately as a dog knows his master, Dr. Leo Loeb, Washington University pathologist, explained at the opening session here this morning of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology.

The differences between people are as great in chemical ways, he explained, as in shapes of noses and mental traits. The chemical traits by which cells identify individuals are as characteristic even as

fingerprints and moles or other distinguishing marks.

The individual scent or pattern of scents by which a dog recognizes a particular man is, of course, chemical. Cell recognition is far more subtle but it is also more fundamental. . . .

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#### DOES YOUR MOUTH WATER?

Those persons whose mouths fail to water at the mention of home-made mustard pickles need not read further. For others here is the formula:

One pint of cucumbers, about 2 inches long; 1 pint of large cucumbers, sliced; 1 pint of pickling onions; 1 cup of string beans; 1 pint of small green tomatoes; 1 pint of cauliflower, cut in small pieces; 3 red peppers, chopped; 1 cup of carrots, sliced;  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups of white sugar; 4 tablespoons of flour;  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of tumeric; 1 teaspoon of celery salt; 4 tablespoons of mustard and vinegar.

Miss Grace Magee, of the home economics division, Iowa State College, who furnished the formula, advises further: Soak all vegetables over night in brine, which is made up of one cup of salt to one gallon of water. Drain and let stand

in clear water for three hours. Mix enough vinegar and water in equal quantities to cover the vegetables and let them stand for an hour. Drain and scald with this liquid.

Mix the dry ingredients, add three pints of hot vinegar and cook in a double boiler. Drain the vegetables, pour the dressing over them while hot, let simmer for five minutes and seal.

The pickles will be firm and crisp, if the vegetables have been fresh, if the proper salt solution has been used, if the ingredients have been properly blanched and not softened by boiling.

Freshness and originality may be given to a news story by the use of words and phrases which specifically describe sound, motion, color, appearance, and other characteristics, rather than hackneyed general terms. It can also be done by direct quotation when the principal in the news speaks words that are more forceful and picturesque than the reporter could invent. An occasional figure of speech, well chosen, lends liveliness without interfering with the function of a story to tell the news, but really serving it.

A book on good news style would hardly illustrate more clearly what it is than the following story which appeared in the *New York Times* of April 9, 1941, unsigned, but coming as a special. From the lead, with such picture words as "death lifted the mask," "daybreak," "zigzagged," to its final direct quotation, "the Lone Ranger could never die. Every kid knows this by heart," it is a model of what effective news writing may be. It is a story out of the field of radio broadcasting, and its effective use of technical details helps to make it a great story.

### Exemplifying freshness and originality

#### DEATH LIFTS THE MASK

Special to *The New York Times*

Farmington, Mich., April 8—Death lifted the Lone Ranger's mask at daybreak today. He died at five o'clock when his car zigzagged into a parked trailer in front of the Methodist Church.

None of his estimated fifteen million devoted radio listeners would have recognized their stern-voiced, hard-riding hero in the figure that lay in the wreck. He

was a mild-eyed, chubby man of thirty-two, an inch or so short of six feet.

Away from the microphone and remote from Silver, his snow-white horse, he was Earle W. Graser. In the eight years that breathless children have thrilled to his "Hi-yo, Silver—Awa-ay-ay!" he lived in a white Colonial house here with his wife Jeanne. His daughter, Gabrielle, is fifteen months old.

Millions of youngsters will never believe it, but their Lone Ranger was a lawyer. It may deepen their pain to know that he held three college degrees—A.B., M.A., LL.B.—break their hearts to know he was never west of Michigan, and crush them to learn he could not ride a horse.

But perhaps they will refuse to believe the facts and remember only the voice they heard.

#### Popular in Foreign Lands

For Lone Ranger was a voice, a deep, rich voice. He sang bass in his church choir. He studied elocution; dreamed of teaching it, some day, in an Eastern college. He liked swimming and played a middling hard game of badminton.

Three times a night, three times a week, he was heard on 150 stations of the Mutual network and on scores of independent radio stations. A single announcement that he would distribute Lone Ranger badges brought in 1,397,000 requests for the tin.

He was every kid's symbol of hard-riding justice; foe of the road agent, the strong arm of the weak, the deliverer of the oppressed—a deathless, godlike being who had survived from Coronado's time down to our own as each glib script would have it.

The Lone Ranger was as popular in New Zealand and in Yugoslavia as he was in the United States. His fan mail came from Mexico and from South America. One time, when the villains of the script were Mexican bandits, the Mexican consul at Detroit was distraught and wrote him about it. . . .

#### Once a Soda Jerker

Earle Graser was born in Kitchener, Ont. He was a child when his parents moved to Detroit. He went to Detroit schools and was graduated from a Detroit high school. He won his degrees at Wayne University in Michigan.

In between he worked at odd jobs. He

was a soda jerker for a time. The only horse he ever handled was a grocer's cart horse when he delivered orders. He had one other affiliation with horses—he got his nickname, Barney, from a milk wagon horse on the family route.

He sang in pit orchestras. He was an usher in the Michigan Theatre in Detroit. His only stage appearance was as an Alpine shepherd when he drove six undipped sheep.

Eventually he drifted into the WXYZ studio and did character bits. . . .

He was chosen from among five men who tried for the Lone Ranger part. His lush, vibrant timbre made this easy. It was a voice to make outlaws quake.

The owners of the Lone Ranger program and Fran Striker, the script writer, decided at the outset that the Lone Ranger must ever remain a mystery. They forbade personal appearances. Except within a narrow social circle in Farmington, the Ranger's identity was secret.

The youngsters who worshiped him will probably refuse to believe that the Lone Ranger's pistol shots were just so many raps with a can against a hard leather cushion; that Silver's gallop was merely a sound effect produced by patting bathroom plungers into a box of gravel. . . .

Earle Graser appeared before the microphones as Lone Ranger, his associates estimate, about 1,300 times. Last year and the year before he got two-week vacations. Through these fortnights the scripts built up to the climax of his return. He just vanished and came back at the right minute, not one second too late, not one breath too soon.

The body is to lie in state in a funeral parlor here until rites on Thursday. The broadcasters think mostly adults will come to see it. They think, and hope, that few youngsters will hear of the wreck outside Farmington Church.

A station official said:

"We have to do it that way. The Lone Ranger could never die. Every kid knows that in his heart."

**Don't "write down" to reader:** There are few things more humiliating to one, no matter who he is or what his position in life, than to be treated with condescension. To write a story in such a manner that the reader will feel that he is being "written

down to" is a serious error of both taste and psychology. It is an error, however, to which the writer of technical stories is particularly prone. His is the task of taking what are often intricate scientific findings and translating them into a language which the layman can understand, and there is often a temptation to assume a somewhat top-lofty air which may creep into his story as an attitude of condescension. To write in such a way is to invite a poor reception of one's story.

**Avoid didacticism:** For much the same reasons the writer should so handle his material that, even when his purpose is to preach, the preachment will not be obvious. It wouldn't be a bad idea for writers to bar "should," "ought," "need," "must,"—in such phrases as "Experiments show that farmers should add minerals to the rations for fattening hogs"—from their vocabularies. Instead of employing a hortatory form, the writer can tell what the results of the experiment are and leave the drawing of conclusions to his readers.

**Make the story practical:** The editor of a farm paper once remarked that the greatest fault he had to find with many news stories submitted to his magazine was that they did not give the reader ample information to do the things that the stories themselves recommended. The purpose of much farm and home "time copy" is to convey information about up-to-date agricultural and home economics practices. To accomplish their purpose such stories have, necessarily, to be sufficiently complete so that the reader can actually follow the suggestions which they make.

One gets a story, for example, on seed corn testing. It is not enough, for a farm paper or the farm page of a daily paper, to say that such and such an agronomist recommends this or that type of seed corn testing. That is news to be sure, but for the story to accomplish its function it should go on to a description of the testing method so clear and complete that the reader can carry out the recommendations.

**Getting the local angle into the story:** When writing a story for a newspaper or regional magazine, the writer will find it important to be on the alert to give as strong a local angle to his

material as possible. The "closer home" the story is, the more interest readers will have in it.

Comment from local people, experiences of local people, the way events will affect local conditions—these things are to be emphasized.

**Accuracy in writing the story:** Accuracy in news writing is not merely a matter of gathering information correctly but also of writing it correctly. In selecting the facts that are to go into his story, in rejecting others, in clothing them in language, in giving or withholding emphasis, in arranging them in order, the reporter needs to guard against several dangers:

Partial statement or omission of fact.

Misstatement of fact.

Inadequate statement of fact.

Incorrect emphasis on facts.

Overcoloring of fact.

Misinterpretation of fact, through prejudice, misunderstanding, or otherwise.

Erroneous deductions or conclusions from facts.

This brings up another important angle of accuracy which relates to what was said in an earlier chapter about what makes news. This is that *news is fact and not opinion*. In avoiding the dangers just listed, the reporter who does a good job of writing is impartial in what he writes. In the first place, he should be impartial as he gathers the story. The reporter who handles a football story does not take part in the cheering or "rooting" for either team. It is not the best policy for a writer for a farm paper or other type of publication to take part in a convention he is covering by acting as a member of a resolutions committee, by electioneering for some candidate, or by sitting on the platform among the notables. He will secure and write a better story if he keeps free from any entanglements, works as a friend to all involved and tells the facts without bias.

Let us present a fictitious story, not unlike one which was actually given currency in newspapers some time ago, to illustrate these various inaccuracies in writing:

A remarkable corn production record of 125 bushels per acre has just been hung up by Henry Thompson of Thompson County, Mont. That is a mark even for corn belt growers to shoot at, in Iowa, for example, where the state average for corn production will not very much exceed 40 bushels per acre in a good season.

Mr. Thompson did not have a large field of this corn, for Montana farmers are not in the habit of planting 80 and 100 acre fields of this crop as they are in the corn belt. But it was genuine corn

and the figures were carefully checked to insure their accuracy.

Mr. Thompson is also a successful grower of alfalfa. Last year his 40 acres of this crop yielded him 200 tons of hay, besides pasturage. He marketed most of this crop to his neighbors at \$20 per ton and fed the remainder. His income may be figured at about \$4,000 for the field. His land rental, hired help cost and a due portion of the original seed cost amounted to \$1,875, leaving him a profit of \$2,125 for the season on the 40 acres.

The complete facts back of the story were these: The corn was a little trial plot of about one-tenth of an acre, in a garden near the farm house. This plot was expensively fertilized and frequently watered and thoroughly cultivated by hand. It did yield at the rate of 125 bushels per acre, and the corn was of a very good grade. The alfalfa field produced as stated, but a number of important items of production cost were not considered in estimating the profits, such as Mr. Thompson's own labor, interest charges, haulage cost, the near failure of the crop the preceding year, and others.

This story is fictitious and extreme, but many approaching it in inaccuracy are published. Its errors lie wholly in the writing.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Gather material for a news story. Outline it carefully and write it. (This, of course, is a standing assignment, not only with this chapter but with most of the others.)

2. Make a list of from 50 to 100 words which should usually be avoided because of their triteness. (It is well to keep such a list in a notebook and add to it from time to time.)

3. Clip five stories which you think are outstandingly characterized by good news diction.

CHAPTER 14  
MEETING STORIES

IT WAS past midnight of one of the days of an annual convention of a national organization. As a matter of fact it was a farm organization. But it might just as well have been a business organization in the throes of discussing relations with the government, a national labor organization, a national organization of women's clubs, a political convention, or even some large technical or scientific group. It might have been yesterday, last week, or years ago. No matter what or when, it furnishes a typical illustration.

The meeting was being held in a big city hotel. The air was filled with rumors of dissension. One or more state branches might secede from the organization. There was a struggle on between factions, representing two sections of the country, for control. Much seemed to depend upon the new officers elected or upon the resolutions adopted.

Long after the evening meeting had adjourned, here and there in the lobby and corridors could be found little knots of delegates and visitors, heads together, whispering. They paused and turned the conversation when someone of another faction approached.

It was after midnight when one of the prominent delegates decided to hold a caucus in his room. Delegates from other parts of the country were summoned from the lobby or from their beds. In that room for three hours the delegates talked with a freedom not possible in a formal session. Plans and compromises were offered and much of the difficulty threshed out.

One group stepped inside the bathroom to talk over a proposal that not even the others present knew anything of. But before the caucus broke up, the atmosphere had been cleared of a good part of the difficulties and differences.

No editor or reporter was present at this meeting. But the

next morning the experienced reporters knew before breakfast just what had happened, who had been there, what would be the outcome. This caucus was in reality the most important thing in connection with the convention.

How did the experienced reporter find out what had happened?

First of all, he had prepared himself to cover the meeting. He had found occasion before the convention opened to visit with prominent delegates from various sections, not to report what they might say, but to gather and store away in his memory what they might tell him—to “get wise” to the whole situation. He had learned that there was dissatisfaction underneath and what it was about; he had learned that it might break out or that it might be adjusted by electing a new head and setting up somewhat different policies. He knew the men he talked with, and they knew him and his publication and trusted both.

Late that night, after the caucus, the experienced reporter learned from a man or two on the inside what the outcome had been; it took only two or three sentences to inform him; he knew the rest through advance preparation. He had the story; he understood what to print and what not to print. Later he wrote the news impartially and without giving offense to anyone.

The inexperienced reporter, not understanding the situation, without intimate friendship with men who knew he could be trusted, might have been entirely unaware of this caucus and have taken his place in the meeting the next morning to observe the motions made and officers elected, thinking what a fine, harmonious meeting it all was.

It is said that there are less than a dozen political reporters in the United States who can adequately cover the news of a national political convention, because there are so few men with the wide acquaintanceship and knowledge of men and events necessary to understand what is happening and to interpret the swiftly changing events at such a gathering.

The same statement is relatively true regarding the meetings of some of the national farm, engineering, and scientific organizations. To handle a complex meeting, attended by men from all parts of the country, each with different views and viewpoints,

each with his ax to grind, requires something more than native ability. It requires experience as well.

These illustrations drawn from important meetings are used to point out problems which are also present in more or less degree in meetings of less scope and importance. The task of covering the monthly meeting of a county farm organization is essentially of the same nature. Its program is likely to include several sectional meetings, and each has to be handled on the basis of its news values. A reporter who has an assignment to cover the county fair has as intricate a task, although the occasion is not so important, as the one who must report the annual convention of the American Farm Bureau Federation or National Grange.

**Meetings bulk large in the news:** A little examination of newspapers or technical journals in almost any field will uphold the statement that news growing out of meetings comprises a large part of their content.

To a city of any consequence comes an endless succession of meetings—conventions, assemblies, conferences—of high or low degree, and each must be covered. Sometimes a meeting gets columns of space in before and after stories; sometimes it rates no more than a “stickful” of type or two, but each must be covered and given space. In even a modest capital city, meetings number hundreds in a year, and the local Chamber of Commerce is certain to maintain a convention secretary with an office staff to make sure that they are well taken care of.

To almost any county seat town come many meetings also, of less consequence perhaps and with smaller attendance, but of prime interest to those who come and to others who rely upon their local newspaper to carry a story about the gatherings.

So newspapers in all fields find it essential to deal with meetings and give them much of their space. Failure to do so soon brings an unpleasant kickback.

For technical publications the meetings in their respective fields also bulk large in importance. A farm journal, especially a local journal, has every meeting of state or district importance on its date or assignment book, and often it covers county gatherings if they have more than county concern.

Likewise, meetings of engineers, scientists, research workers, and industrial trade, and business organizations provide news that must be secured.

The winter meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science is as important in a way as a national political convention. It brings together at one time more than sixty different technical and scientific organizations. Its program is so complex and far reaching that when printed it sometimes makes a book of more than 300 pages. Science reporters and science writers attend in such large numbers that they have set up their own organization, the National Association of Science Writers, which holds its annual meeting in connection with the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Some workers in the field of science closely related to agriculture meet with this large association, such as entomologists, plant pathologists, and geneticists. Other agricultural scientists, notably agronomists, agricultural engineers, and animal husbandrymen, hold their winter meetings in Chicago at the time of the big International Livestock Exposition and Grain Show. The annual meeting of the American Home Economics Association and the American Dairy Science Association are held in summer.

Without undertaking to give a complete list of the scores of other societies whose meetings are important from a news standpoint, we name a few more to suggest their varied interests and purposes: American Chemical Society, American Medical Association, civil, mining, mechanical, and electrical engineering societies, American Association of Nurserymen, American Seed Trade Association, American Soybean Association, American Waterworks Association.

A reason why the technical and scientific society conventions make news, beyond the mere fact of the meeting itself, is that it is a custom of scientists and research workers to make the first announcement of new discoveries at such gatherings in the form of papers.

Sometimes a timid man may stand up behind a desk and read in a monotone a paper filled with technical terms, which half of those in the room do not even hear. Yet when a skilled reporter

gets the paper, finds its essential point, and translates it into words of the common man, it may be a story of national or even world-wide importance. At a meeting of a great technical or professional society, there may be a half dozen stories like that in one day.

**Campus meetings:** The student in technical journalism classes need not lack for laboratory work to give him experience in writing meeting stories. With a little look around he will find that "the woods are full" of organizations of many kinds which hold meetings—faculty groups and student groups. What they do and say when they meet is usually likely to have local interest at least, and occasionally they bring to the campus meetings of much wider consequence. At almost any time in his college year, the student reporter may cover some meeting of importance for a local campus or town publication at least, and often of state-wide interest for the state dailies.

**Types of stories about meetings:** There are two general types of stories about meetings. In one, a single speech or address constitutes the meeting. One man is the whole program. We might well call it a "*speech story*."

The other type is the *meeting of an association, society, or club*. Here general business is taken up, in addition to one or more important speeches. There are reports of officers, resolutions, committee hearings and debates, election of officers, motions and debates on the floor, an outburst from some dissatisfied member, gossip of the lobby, and dozens of cross currents and angles. Often the convention breaks up into a number of sessions, each discussing a different topic—and all of them must be watched.

We want to deal briefly with a third kind of story about meetings which is nothing more nor less than a news story of a meeting to come—an *advance story*, as the reporter is likely to call it. We will deal with it first—in advance—because it is convenient to do so.

**Advance story:** Good news management on a daily or weekly newspaper demands an advance story of a meeting to be held in its field. In periodicals of less frequent publication a mere mention of name, place, date, and a brief presentation of the program may be enough.

Information for an advance story may be secured from an or-

ganization's publicity man, if it has one, or from its secretary, program chairman, or some other officer. Usually the reporter may have to reach such a person by mail or by telephone. A member of a local committee on arrangements may be of assistance.

In getting and writing an advance story, keep in mind that the newspaper or other publication will likely want the following essential information:

1. Exact name of organization or meeting.
2. Sponsor, if it is not an organization meeting.
3. Date, time, and place of meeting.
4. Purpose of meeting, if this is something important or not routine.
5. Nature of organization, if it is not generally known.
6. Who are expected to attend, number, any from distance.
7. Important facts of program—important speaker or speakers, unusual topics to be discussed, changes in officers expected, new policies to be announced, important action that is expected to be taken, reports to be submitted.
8. Entertainment or other features beyond routine—tours, demonstrations, special exhibits.
9. Information about speaker, if a speech type—who speaker is, what he or she has done, unusual experience, books written, research carried on, distinguished honors won, subject of talk.
10. Any special part that local people will take in program.

What has been said in previous chapters of this book regarding a good lead and correct construction of a news story, preferably in the pyramid form, applies to an advance meeting story.

The following are examples of typical advance stories:

#### AN ADVANCE CONFERENCE STORY

Conservation officials and leaders from twelve states will come to Des Moines this week for the seventh annual Midwest Wildlife conference.

Sessions will be Thursday and Friday at Hotel Savery, with two field trips scheduled on Saturday, final day of the conference.

#### First Session

Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, chief, United States fish and wildlife service, Washington, D. C., will open the first general session at 9:30 a. m. Thursday by discussing "Wildlife and National Defense."

There will be technical sessions during the afternoons of both days, with groups split into classifications of fisheries research and management, and farm game management.

Jay N. (Ding) Darling, cartoonist and former chief of the United States biological survey, will be guest of honor at an informal banquet at the hotel Thursday evening.

#### Field Trip

One field trip Saturday will be to Ledges state park, the state game farm and Iowa State College, Ames. The other will be to Lake Ahquabi state park, Lake Keomah state park, and Lake Wapello state park.

Participating states will be Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin.—(*Des Moines Register*)

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#### ADVANCE STORY ON FARM BUREAU MEETING

Bloomington-Normal owners of farm land have been invited by the farm bureau to meet in the bureau assembly room at 7:30 p. m. Tuesday, Dec. 2, for discussion of the proposed formation of a soil conservation district in nine townships and the signing of petitions to call a hearing.

All owners of land, whether or not it is located in those townships, are invited, according to the farm bureau announcement. The proposed district includes Cropsey, Anchor, Martin, Dawson, Arrowsmith, Cheney's Grove, Bellflower, West and Empire townships.

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#### ADVANCE POULTRY SCIENCE CLUB STORY

Suggestions on not only how to buy but how to prepare that Christmas turkey will be offered at Ohio State university Thursday, when the Poultry Science club sponsors its first annual dressed turkey show. Producer and consumer alike will benefit from the program, to be held in the poultry building. Buses will leave Townshend hall before each meeting.

Prize-winning turkeys, representing the highest quality fowl offered on the Ohio market this fall, will be on display during

the afternoon and evening and will be sold to the highest bidder at an auction scheduled for 8 p. m. Trophies and ribbons will be awarded winners in four classes, with a sweepstakes trophy going to the outstanding bird of the show.

The morning program includes talks by Dwight E. Lifer, Danville, well-known turkey farmer, and A. G. Williams of Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now doing graduate work at Ohio State. At 2 p. m. D. D. Moyer, Ohio state agricultural extension service, will discuss "Buying the Christmas Turkey," and Miss Ossee Hughes, of the School of Home Economics, will give a practical demonstration on preparing the Christmas turkey. A colored movie, "Turkey Production," is scheduled for 7:30 p. m.

Purpose of the show is to encourage production of quality turkeys by Ohio growers. Class divisions are based upon weight and height.

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#### ADVANCE ENGINEERING SECRET MEETING STORY

Engineering work in the national defense program will be discussed at the sixty-second annual meeting of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Dec. 1 through 5, in the Hotel Astor, it was announced yesterday. About 100 technical papers will be presented.

Commissioner of Borough Works Walter D. Binger, chairman of the National Technological Civil Protection Committee, will report on "Lessons Learned From London" at a luncheon on Dec. 2. Mr. Binger returned from England last month.

A clinic on conservation and reclamation of materials used in industry will be held the same night. William A. Hanley, president of the society, will preside at a national defense symposium Dec. 3.

The speakers will include Frank B. Jewett, president of the National Academy of Sciences; Brig. Gen. G. M. Barnes, Colonel L. B. Lent, chief engineer, National Inventors Council, Washington, D. C., and Dean A. A. Potter, of Purdue University.

**The speech report:** Newspapers and magazines may employ any one of three ways of covering a speech. In many cases it is possible to get from the speaker an advance copy of his talk. This enables the editor, if he desires to speed up the story to make a

particular edition, to have the account prepared in advance of the meeting and even put in type. It is necessary, however, for a reporter to attend the meeting to make sure that the speech is given, that it substantially corresponds to the advance copy, and that nothing else of particular interest occurs at the meeting. Even when there is no need to rush the preparation of the story, the possession of a copy of the speech makes possible a fuller and more accurate story than can be secured in other ways.

If the speech is a very important one, and no advance copy is securable, the paper or magazine may send a stenographer to take a shorthand report of the speech. When this is transcribed, it is turned over to a reporter or editor, who has usually heard the speech, and he writes his story from the transcription. If the address is of very great importance or the speaker outstandingly prominent, the talk may be published verbatim in the paper, with a lead written by the reporter.

But both of these methods are exceptional. By far the greatest number of speeches are covered by a reporter without the aid of either an advance copy of the speech or a stenographer's notes. He attends the meeting and takes longhand notes of the speech. (If he knows shorthand, it will be a great help in note taking, but not many reporters are so equipped.)

**Taking notes:** The taking of good notes requires a skill that comes only with long practice. One cannot hope to get down in his notes more than a small fraction of what is said. The mistakes that novices make in taking notes of speeches are usually of two kinds: They try to get too much down, with the result that their notes consist of hurried, incomplete scraps; and they fail to discriminate between the statements that are important or colorful, statements which will, therefore, make good copy, and those which are explanatory and elaborative and therefore unessential to the story.

Most speeches follow some kind of an outline. The speaker may even deal in firstlys, secondlys, and thirdlys, in which case it is comparatively easy to follow the points of his discourse. When he is not so explicit he will often indicate, by the tone of voice, breaks in the flow of his talk, and in other ways, the division points of his subject.

By closely watching for these points, the reporter is able to get into his notes a rough outline of the speech—and this, because it follows the logic and the chronology of the address, will later help him in recalling the details of the talk.

He will also want to put into the speaker's own words some of the more important statements made by him. These also can often, although by no means always, be anticipated from the speaker's tone of voice and gestures. With practice a reporter can learn to put down quite extended bits of direct quotations.

It is important that the story of the speech be written just as soon as possible after the talk, for if one's notes get cold and his memory faint, it becomes very difficult to construct an accurate account of the speech. Immediately following the meeting, it is well, therefore, while the reporter is getting to a typewriter, while he is getting home or to the office, on the streetcar or in the taxi, to go over the address in his mind, organizing it for his story and attempting to recall the important points which he will want to incorporate in his account of what was said.

**Preparing for the assignment:** In the case of either the speech or convention type of meeting story, the wise reporter makes advance preparation for his task. He gets hold of any available advance publicity material, the program, "dope" on the speaker or meeting leaders, and studies them.

If he does not know the conference or convention officers, especially the secretary and publicity director, he gets acquainted with them and with as many leaders as possible. Through them he is often able to get advance copies of resolutions, reports, and speeches, or he can make arrangements to get them when they are ready. This is a good time to get the exact names of those who are prominent in the meeting, correct initials, names of organizations, and other details.

The daily newspaper reporter is often forced by the necessity of making early editions to write an account of a meeting on the basis of the advance material which he can get, before the meeting actually takes place. The practice has obvious dangers, which the reporter should take every precaution to overcome. It is not often that a correspondent for a magazine has to resort to this device.

The dangers are illustrated by the following case: The farm editor of a small city daily thought that he would emulate the enterprise of his brother reporters and write in advance the story of a colt show. But he made a mistake of just one week in the date—and his story appeared seven days before the show was held.

The reporter will not wish, however, to go about his task with too firmly established notions. Sometimes the speech or other expected business of the meeting turns out to be less important as news than some unexpected occurrence. For example: A farmer who made a world's record in corn growing was given a banquet by his home folk. He was called on for a speech, but he was so moved by the occasion that he broke down in the middle of his speech and had to be helped from the room. And the reporter made this unexpected episode, with its high emotional value, more prominent in his story than what the hero of the banquet or any other of the speakers had to say.

On one occasion, a high United States Government official came to a college campus to make an important talk. A dozen or more reporters present were supplied with advance copies. Some left without waiting to hear the man speak. But this official read just two paragraphs of his colorless prepared speech, then threw it on the table, stepped out in front, and made a forceful impromptu talk that was full of red-hot news copy.

A veteran farm paper reporter tells this story of a meeting in a tent on a state fair grounds during the fair. There were two speakers, a prominent state politician, and a farmer of whom nobody seemed to know anything. But this reporter did some preliminary investigation. After the politician spoke, the city newspaper reporters all got up and went out. The farm paper reporter stayed to hear the farmer, then talked with him for an hour after the meeting. This farmer gave him the foundation for what this reporter said was perhaps the most significant farm news story he had ever written.

**Writing the speech story:** The orthodox speech story consists of three ingredients, direct quotation, indirect quotation, and the reporter's own words of description, narration, and explanation. The handling of these elements involves some special problems.

Direct quotation is the reproduction of the speaker's words or a very close approximation of them. The reporter is in fact permitted some latitude in altering and modifying the phrasing of direct quotation, but only to a limited degree. He must give a scrupulous reproduction of the speaker's ideas in approximately the same words that the speaker used. The latitude that he may take with the speaker's phraseology must be governed by the necessity of making the quotation clear and conformable to the context of the story.

A greater danger than that of actual misquotation is the use of quotations in themselves accurate, but in a context other than that the speaker intended. It is no defense for this error to say that the words quoted were the actual words of the speaker. The writer's purpose is not to reproduce words but ideas.

A practice followed by many reporters in an effort to avoid this difficulty and other errors of representation is to discuss the speech with someone else who has heard it before writing the story. Such a discussion with someone who is alert and open minded will help the reporter to determine the important aspects of the speech, to check his own judgment, and to avoid the overlooking of parts of the speech which did not particularly appeal to him as important or significant.

If a speech is reported at length, considerable sections of it may be in direct quotation. In a shorter story direct quotation will be principally used to give the more important aspects of the speech. The amount of direct quotation in the story will be determined, then, partly by the length of the story, but also by the nature of the speech—whether or not the speaker has used a diction which makes copy which is clear, interesting, and colorful.

Indirect quotation is the reproduction of the speaker's ideas in the reporter's words. It is used primarily for two purposes: to give a clear or more effective phrasing to ideas which are not clear and effective in the speaker's own words or which the reporter has been unable to take down in direct quotation; and to make it possible to summarize in a few words the ideas which the speaker discussed at length.

Material about the speaker, the meeting, the audience—any

facts which are not the reproduction of what the speaker said—will be told in the reporter's own words.

The following stories are typical short speech reports:

### A BANQUET SPEECH STORY

The United States must not be made to choose between "butter or guns" during the national emergency, E. E. Howard of Kansas City, Mo., director of the American Society of Civil Engineers, said Thursday night in Des Moines.

Howard, a consulting engineer who has designed some of the nation's outstanding bridges, spoke at a banquet ending the annual meeting of the Iowa section of the civil engineers society at Hotel Fort Des Moines.

#### Civilian Work

While the major portion of the nation's productive output should be devoted to defense "guns," Howard said sufficient "butter"—civilian work for civilian purposes—should be allowed to keep the country's economic condition "half way normal."

"It would be a disaster if civilian building and work were stopped to aid the defense program," Howard said.

"Certainly we should devote our greatest effort to the defense program," he said, "but we also should continue our civilian building, although it should be subordinate to our defense needs."

"You may have a paving project in Des Moines or some other civic building program which shouldn't be abandoned when half completed."

A "tendency toward war hysteria" must be overcome, Howard added, and the nation "must maintain its social system, and carry on its normal life as much as possible."

#### Credit to Engineers

Credit is due the engineering profession for the "wonderful accomplishment" in the progress of the defense program, Howard said.

He cited a munitions plant at Kansas City on which work began under private contract last February.

Howard visited the plant last month, he said, and found it "turning out bullets at 46 per cent of capacity already."

Besides several defense contracts, Howard's engineering firm has designed bridges at Dubuque, Ia.; Omaha, Neb.; Rock Island, Ill., and the triborough bridge in New York, N. Y.

### CHEMICAL SOCIETY DINNER SPEECH STORY

Pittsburgh, Pa., March 20—Dr. Alexander Silverman, pioneer in glass technology and head of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh, received the 1940 Pittsburgh Award of the Pittsburgh section of the American Chemical Society at a dinner at the University Club tonight for "outstanding service to the profession of chemical education and for distinguished contributions to industrial chemistry and the ceramic industries."

Dr. Silverman in his acceptance speech praised the cooperation of his colleagues and students at the University of Pittsburgh during the past thirty-five years.

A new method of making opal glasses was described by Dr. Silverman in his discussion of recent developments in glass. Experiments already tried, he said, indicate that beryllium oxide added to quartzite should increase opacity, as do alumina and similar substances.

In 1902, when Dr. Silverman became a chemist in a glass factory, nothing was taught about glass technology in America.

"I was asked to reproduce alabaster glass, the art of whose manufacture had been lost prior to 1880," Dr. Silverman recalled. "Opal glass produced a fiery glare with the Edison carbon filament lamp. Alabaster glass did not show opalescence. Its analysis revealed considerable alumina and so, knowing its refractory nature, I decided to use this compound directly. It had never been used in opal or alabaster glasses before.

"Alumina produced a horrible glass which looked like curdled milk. Undaunted, I added a stirring agent, selecting salt which vaporized appreciably at white heat. The salt did the trick and alabaster glass was reborn. Years later, when I studied colloid chemistry, I learned that ionized salts precipitate colloids, thus accounting for formation of alabaster in-

stead of an opalescent glass. And then Willard J. Sutton, one of my graduate students, proved that fused salts ionized when they dissolved in glass."

Dr. Silverman, whose work is recognized internationally, was born in Pittsburgh on May 2, 1881, and was graduated from the Western University of Pennsylvania, now the University of Pittsburgh, in 1902. He received his A.B. degree from Cornell University in 1905, and M. S. from Pittsburgh in 1907. He joined the Pittsburgh faculty in 1905, and became head of the Chemistry Department in 1918.

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### HOMEMAKING LEADERS' STORY

It's best to open a can of soup at the top, but the same rule doesn't hold necessarily true for all kinds of canned goods.

For example, asparagus is an exception, Miss Dorothy Gill, Chicago, Ill., home making lecturer, said Thursday, in an adult education lecture at Stowe school.

"Cans containing asparagus always should be opened at the bottom. Then the stalks may be slipped out without damaging the more fragile tips," Miss Gill explained.

As for Vienna sausages, there is another step in the process.

**"Both top and bottom of the can**

**should be removed. Then the sausages may be pushed out of the can without damage,"** she said.

Miss Gill, a representative of the Libby, McNeill & Libby Canning Co., described the use of lacquer in food cans.

### Shut Out Light

"Beets, strawberries, raspberries and other red foods are put in cans having shiny lacquer interiors to protect them from light rays which seemingly penetrated the tin and discolor the food," she said.

"Dull lacquer interiors are used in cans containing pumpkin, corn, ripe olives and other foods containing sulphur.

### Black Spots

"Sulphur reacts with the tin, forming black spots in the food," Miss Gill said.

She pointed out, however, that the spots in no way affected the quality of the food.

**"It is just as safe,"** she added, **"to keep food in the can it comes in—if the can is cool and covered after it is opened.**

"Cans and foods are sterilized in processing, but the dish into which the food might be emptied is far from sterile—and much more likely to have on it bacteria which cause food to spoil," she said.

**Attributive phrases:** Two things further about the handling of the speech story need to be noted: the use of the phrases which explain who is being quoted—what we may call the "he saids"—and the arrangement of the material in the story.

In direct quotation we have a symbol, the quotation marks, which tells the reader that the material is quoted. The end-quote signals to him that the quotation is at an end. It is necessary, then, in any single direct quotation to make only one reference to the speaker. This should be done in the middle or at the end of the first sentence in the quotation.

But when the quotation is indirect there is no such sign to tell the reader the extent of the quotation. The sentence is the unit of indirect quotation. It is therefore usual to put a "he said," a reference to the speaker, in every sentence of indirect discourse. This rule may be violated only where the context is so clear or

where several sentences are so closely related that there can be no doubt in the reader's mind that the material is being quoted.

The "he said" in indirect quotation may come anywhere in the sentence. In the summary lead, however, when either direct or indirect quotation is used, the "he said" should not come in the middle of the quotation, for the explanatory material which accompanies it would break the back of the sentence.

Because of the necessity of repeating the "he said," indirect quotation is apt to become monotonous if used at too great length. This can be somewhat obviated by variations in the phrases that refer to the speaker. But it is usually well to alternate between direct and indirect quotation to avoid this difficulty.

**Building the speech report:** The material in the speech report is organized just as the material of any other news story is organized. The story usually follows an inverted pyramid arrangement, although when extended quotation is given, it may be chronological. A verbatim report would, of course, be chronological.

In building his story the reporter must go over his notes and memory of what was said, determine which are the most important points of the speech from a news point of view, and build his story to put these important aspects of the speech toward the top of his story—although they may have been dealt with by the speaker at the end of his talk. In other words, the reporter will make no particular attempt to reproduce what the speaker said in the order in which he said it but will rather attempt to rearrange the material in the order of its importance and interest to his readers.

**The meeting story:** It has already been indicated that the covering of a convention, conference, short course, or other such gathering is apt to be anything but a simple job. Here the reporter has something more to do than listen to and take notes on a single talk. He must follow a whole program, which may consist of a number of speeches, reports, resolutions, elections, and contests—as well as undercurrents of gossip, contention, and rivalry that never appear on the surface of the meeting. Out of this welter of material he must get the comparatively few things that are significant as news.

A reporter sent to handle a meeting should first of all, in case

he is not already familiar with them, secure and put down in his notes the exact name of the organization and such facts as the time, the place, and the attendance.

Accuracy in the name of an organization may seem a trivial thing to mention. Yet as a matter of fact, names of educational institutions, engineering and scientific bodies, breed associations, and farm organizations are constantly appearing incorrectly in print. It is Iowa State College, not "Ames" or Ames College or Iowa Agricultural College. It is the University of Connecticut, not "Storrs." Michigan State College and University of Michigan are two different institutions. It is Ohio State University, University of California, and State University of Iowa. It is Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College but Kansas State College, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, and Purdue University. It is Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Illinois Agricultural Association, and Michigan State Farm Bureau, although the three are parallel.

The experienced reporter must know the history of the organization whose meeting he attends. If he does not know in advance, he should find out as soon as possible. Else he may make ludicrous errors. One experienced and usually careful farm paper editor mentioned a man as a leader in one type of cooperative marketing, not so long ago, when as a matter of fact this man has had no connection with the organization and is really opposed to it.

A recent state convention of an industrial organization was held on a university campus. In addressing the gathering, a dean of a college of the university tried to speak in technical terms familiar to his audience. In so doing he made a statement that was entirely incorrect. A reporter covering the meeting had gone to a good bit of trouble in looking up the history and background of the meeting and so knew that the dean was wrong.

This reporter was faced with a problem. It was quite possible that the dean's statement was merely a slip of the tongue and he had said what he did not intend to say, without realizing the error. But it sounded as though the dean were uninformed and consequently inaccurate.

The reporter could have quoted the incorrect statement which, when printed, would have reflected on the dean. He ran the risk

in so doing of having the dean deny the statement and accuse the reporter of being the one who was inaccurate. His best way was to talk with the speaker after the meeting and see if he couldn't get permission to use the correct fact in his report of the story. He might make the correction in his story without permission, but this would not be quite right. He could have used a more general statement without giving the exact context of what was said. What he did was to play safe and make no reference whatever in his story to that part of the dean's remarks.

At any convention meeting much routine business will be transacted, some of it important and some not. The reporter will have to exercise judgment in determining what is essential. If he is unfamiliar with matters brought up, he should ask someone about them. Usually the secretary can help him, some of the leaders will be only too glad to set him right, or some other reporter present will lend a helping hand.

Reports of officers and committees, resolutions, debates either in committee or on the floor of the convention, reports of credentials and nominating committees, elections, contests, votes on important motions, significant events such as revision of the constitution, personalities, keynotes, notable addresses—all should be watched for and covered.

The inexperienced reporter will spend a lot of time at first sitting through tiresome sessions, making voluminous notes. After a time, he learns to tell when something worth while is going to break for which he should be on hand. Meanwhile he spends his time to better advantage in the lobby or corridors.

Lobby gossip, the use of friends on the inside of caucuses and closed door committees, and an understanding of the significance of things all play their part. A chance remark, seemingly of no consequence, made at the breakfast table in the hotel dining room by one prominent cooperative leader to another, once gave a reporter a tip that uncovered one of the most important bits of inside news at a national farm meeting.

The observation of two men in conversation may give a clue to some combination of forces. There may be something quite significant when the delegate from Illinois rises to make a nom-

ination or present a resolution. It may reveal to the experienced reporter that a political deal or combination has been made.

The careful reporter does not take many chances. He goes early and stays late. The very session at which he thinks nothing is going to happen may be the most important of all.

In a national farm organization meeting some time since, there was a tense situation regarding the past and future policies of the organization. It looked as though nothing would be brought up at an evening meeting except some reports. Most of the newspaper men, however, were on hand until after these were read. Nothing exciting had happened except one outburst from a farmer delegate, after which a number of reporters left.

But just when the end of the session was at hand, a delegate arose and asked a seemingly inconsequential question of a speaker who had been called on for remarks. The speaker came back with an unexpectedly dramatic answer, which uncorked the lid, and the pent up excitement of the past two days broke out.

For nearly two hours matters were debated and threshed over, and the meeting lasted until after midnight. That night's session in a way marked a turning point in the history of the organization—and those reporters who left early missed it all.

In a recent annual convention of a prominent national organization, there was a bitter and successful under-cover fight against re-election of the president of the organization who had become unpopular with parts of the country because of his pronounced views on national defense matters. Reporters present all knew of this, but since none of it came out into the open or upon the convention floor, the stories written of the election of another man as the new president said nothing of this fight, and readers might have had the idea that all was harmony. A few days later, however, one city newspaper told the real story back of the change in leadership. Then other papers, in self-defense, had to write additional stories which told the same facts.

**Writing the meeting story:** Because of the varied nature of the problems involved in writing the report of meetings, only a few general suggestions as to the handling of these tasks can be given.

The problem here, as in the speech report, is primarily one of selection. The activities of the meeting or convention may be extremely numerous and diverse, and out of this mass of material the reporter must select the significant and interesting things.

The account of these significant aspects of the meeting will usually be written in inverted pyramid form. Out of all of the things said, the business transacted and the other activities of the meeting, he must choose the most significant, from a news point of view, for his lead. This will be followed, in the order of their importance, by the other important events of the meeting.

The stories which are reproduced below will give some idea of the nature of the reporter's job in handling a meeting assignment. Some of them will illustrate, too, the type of story that should be written by a secretary, publicity chairman, or other person whose task it is to write a follow-up meeting story for a newspaper.

### BUSINESS MEETING STORIES

Leroy (PNS)—Roy Will, who dumped in baskets for Normal Community high during the basketball season, was elected president of the McLean county 4-H club federation at the annual county 4-H rally at Empire Township high school Friday night.

More than 350 4-H members, leaders, parents and friends were present for the games and entertainment. Bill Genders for the Busy B club, retiring president, conducted the business session. The Leroy club presented the program. Merle Spratt is Leroy president and L. A. McKean, leader. Richard Biven and Dorothy Bremer gave readings and the Bunkhouse Ramblers, Ernest and Odell Lamont and Lyle Pray gave musical numbers.

Others elected were Verne Erdman, vice president; Lois Bright, secretary-treasurer; Jake Bauman, reporter; Violet Schneider, pianist; Lyle Bidner, director; and Delores Wrzburger, cheerleader. Allen King of Towanda was chairman of the nominating committee.

Alfred Merritt Smith, Nevada state engineer, was elected new president of the Association of Western Engineers at the annual convention of this body held last month at Phoenix, Ariz. Mr. Smith suc-

ceeds Don McBride, Oklahoma water resources director, as president of the organization. Wardner G. Scott, Nebraska state engineer, was chosen vice president. A resolution was passed at the meeting demanding that "all water utilization work financed or constructed by federal departments be subject to the water laws of the state in which they are located.—*(Engineering News-Record)*

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### AGRICULTURAL MEETING STORY

"If we're going to further machinize our work in agriculture in West Texas, how is a young man going to get started in farming?"

That was the question asked by A. H. Leidigh, dean of agriculture at Texas Technological college, Monday afternoon in a speech before representatives of co-operatives here for a school in cooperative information.

Dean Leidigh also asked where the families are to go from farms while the number of farms in Texas is being reduced.

He did not present his opinions in answer to those questions, but presented data from recent publications.

There was a 34 per cent increase in the number of tractors and a 57 per cent

increase in rebates on gasoline from 1936 to 1938. The number of tractors in Texas is estimated from 99,000 to 116,000. Each tractor displaces  $9\frac{1}{2}$  head of work stock.

If 846,000 tractors displace work stock in three years, that number of tractors will result in displacement of 3,000,000 acres of feed which previously would have been grown for work stock.

The farmer buys from 1,000 to 1,200 gallons of gasoline a year per tractor.

Under mechanized conditions, the number of farms will decrease constantly.

"This kind of movement will take 10,000 families off the farm a year," said the dean. "If farms are bigger, what will become of the people?"

Dean Leidigh also referred to an article in the *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics*, quoting from that article in discussing the mechanical cotton picker.

O. J. Edler, of Crosbyton, president of Plains Cooperative Oil mill, presided for Monday's program.

Other speakers Monday afternoon were S. D. Sanders, cooperative bank commissioner, Washington, D. C., and Claude Terry, manager of Cooperative Gin Service supply company at Houston.

#### STATE FARM BUREAU MEETING STORY

Syracuse, N. Y., Nov. 25—"Food will win the war and write the peace," H. B. Little, president of the New York Association of County Agricultural Agents, said at the annual meeting of the State Farm Bureau Federation today.

"Without doubt, farmers are going to increase food production because they have been looking for an opportunity to make some money for a long time," he added. "And, to a casual observer, the time appears to be here."

But Mr. Little warned the farmers

against going too far. They might easily "overexpand," he said, even though food is one of the crying needs of the world today.

C. Chester Dumond of Ulster Park, president of the federation, said "farmers could not survive in an economy controlled by pressure groups unless they had spokesmen of their own and supported them by organization.

"The sooner we realize that we cannot stay home on our farm and mind our own business and let some one else run things for us the better," he added.

#### Urges Unity of Rural Women

Speaking at the Home Bureau meeting, Mrs. Charles W. Sewell, administrative director of Associated Women of the American Farm Bureau Federation, urged an informed electorate among rural women.

"It was the organized womanhood of America which, in 1917 and 1918, fed an army. When the women of rural America are thoroughly organized their actions for the benefit of agriculture and farm homes will likewise accomplish things which will be written into the pages of history."

At the joint meeting of the three organizations in the afternoon Morris Sayre, vice president of the Corn Products Refining Company, speaking as a representative of the committee on agricultural cooperation of the National Association of Manufacturers, protested against attempts to isolate farmers and industrial workers into separate groups, often with opposing interests.

"The forces that are at work trying to divide all groups against each other may be expected to increase their efforts," he said, "and perhaps succeed if we forget we are American citizens above everything else and farmers and business men only secondarily."

**Meeting publicity:** Not infrequently it falls to the lot of a man or woman without skill in news writing to prepare a story or two about a meeting of an organization with which he or she is connected; for example, a Farm Bureau, a Home Economics society, or an Engineering society.

For such an occasion these suggestions are likely to be helpful:

If you are to write an advance story, do it in time for publication

a week or ten days in advance if it is to appear in a daily newspaper, and at least a week in advance for a weekly. The copy for the weekly should be delivered to the editor two or three days before day of publication. Make it really an "advance" story.

Make a personal call, if you can, to deliver the story. If not, send it by mail to the city editor of a daily newspaper, and to the editor of a weekly or a trade magazine.

If pictures of officers or principal speakers are available, offer them, but do it in plenty of time for halftones to be made. If "mats" are available, so much the better.

If the meeting is of special importance, two different advance stories might well be offered, each playing up some different angle.

If the stories are offered to competing publications, vary the stories. If advance copies of important addresses or reports are available, they will be appreciated by editors.

If some important change in plans comes unexpectedly, give information to the editor in good time.

**Follow-up:** One of the most common complaints of newspapers and other journals about those who promote meetings by giving or writing advance information is that they are zealously on the job before, and grossly negligent about it after a meeting.

Editors are probably a little keener about getting stories about what really happened than about what was planned. They get good cooperation by way of advance stories and usually none by way of follow-up stories of the event itself.

The publicity person who follows through is thrice welcome when he next comes with an advance story.

The suggestions made here are, or should be, of prime importance to anyone who wants to maintain good relations with newspapers or journals of any kind.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. As many stories as possible dealing with speeches and meetings should be covered by student reporters. Advantage should be taken of as many off-campus gatherings and conventions as possible to supplement campus assignments and to give students a wider experience in reporting.

2. Make an analysis of the meeting stories carried in one issue of one of the following publications or one of equivalent type and write a brief report: *Chicago*

*Daily Drivers' Journal, Engineering News-Record, Florists' Review, Farm Journal, Women's Wear, Dog World, American Lumberman, American Photography, Science.*

3. Make a similar analysis of one issue of one of the following daily newspapers: *New York Herald-Tribune, Philadelphia Bulletin, Atlanta Constitution, New Orleans Item, Dallas News, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Kansas City Star, Los Angeles Times, Oakland Tribune, Detroit News, Des Moines Register, Columbus Dispatch, Chicago Tribune.*

4. Clip and turn in examples of five well-written meeting and speech stories.

(*Note:* Students who expect to be engaged in some type of work after graduation where meeting and other stories will have to be furnished to newspapers or magazines, might well begin a collection of various examples which can serve them as a guide later on when such stories have to be written.)

## CHAPTER 15

### INTERVIEW STORIES

**M**OST of the material out of which news stories and feature articles are made is secured by the reporter as the result of interviewing. Few stories can be written without asking somebody something. In this sense, interviewing, the task of getting from people the facts for news and feature stories, is the basis of practically all news writing.

We want to deal a little more fully with this act of interviewing and its technique, but first we want to make clear what an interview story is and illustrate it with a few examples.

When a newspaper man or magazine writer refers to an interview story, he has in mind a particular kind of article—one which predominantly deals with the opinions or with the personality of the person or persons interviewed.

There are roughly two kinds of interview stories, though sometimes both are combined in one story. They are:

1. The *news interview* which presents opinions or ideas of a person of more or less consequence because they have news value. It may also present facts given by the person interviewed, adding value by connecting his name with them.

2. The *personality interview* which makes news of the person interviewed and his interesting characteristics and qualities.

**The news interview:** It takes only a moment's consideration to see that news inheres not only in events but also in what people think. Many times the thoughts of people—because they are the forerunners of events—make as important news as the events themselves. For instance, what an agricultural economist may think about the probable livestock market trends of the next six months or a year may be very important news.

The news interview deals with the thoughts of people as they concern movements and events in which the public is interested.

The value of any particular news interview will largely depend upon two factors, the prominence and authoritativeness of the person interviewed and the importance and timeliness of the subject of the interview.

The idea for an interview usually originates in the mind of the editor or reporter in one of two ways. Public interest in some important event or movement may suggest to him the value of interviewing someone particularly familiar with the situation and getting his ideas upon it. For example, an outbreak of hog cholera will suggest to the farm paper editor an interview with a well-known veterinarian on the situation. The fact that it is canning time may remind a reporter that an interview with a home economics specialist on canning will make a good story.

On the other hand an interview may be suggested by the presence in a reporter's field of some well-known, prominent person. A foreign scientist or a noted engineer comes to the university. An interview with him will be of interest to many readers. In this case the subject of the interview is thought of secondarily.

Many interviews are secured from local authorities or people of prominence to give a local angle to stories of a larger nature.

The interview story also enables an editor of a publication to present facts, as well as opinions, to his readers. A newspaper editor who wishes to promote civic beautification can run an interview with a man who is an authority on the subject, in which this authority relates how other cities have been beautified. A farm editor interested in pushing certified seeds can interview a farmer who grows certified seed, one who increased his production by use of such seeds, or a farm crops authority who can tell of the methods used in producing and handling the certified seeds.

The *Chicago Daily Drovers' Journal* has for years carried almost daily one or more interviews with livestock farmers who have come to the Chicago stockyards with cattle or hogs. These interviews give news of feeding operations, crop conditions, or farm methods from a wide territory. Persons who attend farm gatherings, conventions, and the like can also be interviewed.

A county agricultural extension agent who supplies a department of farm material to a local paper can make good use of an

interview in preparing his copy. Instead of trying to put his information in form of advice or exposition, he can convey the same idea in much more readable form by writing an interview with a farmer who has had success with a new variety of potato, who gets a premium for production of quality milk, or who has found a better way to handle the irrigation of his cotton. Likewise, the home demonstration agent can write an interview story telling how Mrs. John Jones prepares vegetables and fruits for storage in a zero refrigerator or how somebody else washes nylon hose.

Some discussion of the principles of interviewing follows later.

The writing of a news interview is handled in about the same way as a speech story. Just consider it as straight news and write it as such.

Study of the following examples of news interviews will give an idea of the handling of the news type of interview material:

#### *With a scientist—*

Minneapolis, May 5 (UP)—A young University of Minnesota physicist revealed tonight how he had succeeded in isolating a chemical substance possessing 30,000,000 times the exploding force of TNT, but cautioned that it has little commercial or military value at present.

Dr. Alfred O. C. Nier, 27 years old, only four years out of graduate school, confirmed an announcement made in New York City yesterday that by means of an instrument known as a "mass spectrometer" he had isolated U-235, one of the three isotopes of uranium. If the discovery can be perfected for commercial use it possibly would mark the most revolutionary step in the field of power since introduction of the steam engine.

Dr. J. H. Williams, Dr. Nier's colleague, said production of U-235 on a commercial scale was "definitely possible."

Dr. Nier believes that his experiments have proved a theory advanced by Neils Bohr, Danish scientist, that the explosive tendency of uranium lay in U-235.

"The isolation of the isotope has little commercial or military value at present," said Dr. Nier.

"U-235 is present in uranium in only minutely small quantities, the bulk of the

metal being U-238, another isotope of uranium which does not possess the explosive quality of U-235."

So far, he said, laboratory experiments had produced an infinitely small amount—"hardly enough to spring a mousetrap."

There is no possibility, he added, that U-235 could be developed for use in the present war.

He explained that there are three uranium isotopes—U-234, U-235 and U-238—chemically identical but varying in atomic weight and structure.

The explosion of U-235, he said, is due to nuclear change.

Immersion of U-235 in water is enough to start the reaction, he asserted.

The Physical Review Magazine, which published announcement of Dr. Nier's discovery, said a relatively large sample of U-235 had been isolated at General Electric Company laboratories and that other industrial laboratories were following suit.—(*United Press*)

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#### *With a cattleman—*

By no means has the west run out of thin cattle, asserted A. R. Latka of Dawson county, Mont., when here with a

shipment of replacement stock recently. The small movement for so late in the year is because of the wonderful feed conditions during the past summer. And when he left home late in September to bring his cattle to market there had not been a killing frost. The summer and fall season this year lasted longer than it has for many years.

"One reason we are a little reluctant to move out stock at present is because they are full of green grass. And when stock is shipped in that condition they lose a lot of flesh before they hit the market. If they are held back a few weeks on good dry grass they are less apt to shrivel up on the way to market, for the dry feeds put on good firm flesh. But you'll see a lot of cattle move in the next four to six weeks," predicted Mr. Latka.

Included in his shipment of cattle were 13 head of 502-pound feeders that sold at \$12.00; a few feeder heifers that brought \$11.50, and some killer heifers at \$9.75.—(*Chicago Daily Drovers' Journal*)

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### *With a housing specialist—*

No "ghost towns" will succeed Federal defense housing after the present emergency has passed, according to Miss Gladys Miller, recently appointed consultant on the defense housing projects of the Public Buildings Administration.

"Before any houses are built," she revealed here yesterday, "a survey of the community is made to determine how many slum houses should be condemned, and that number of new houses is built. Workers moving into the 40,000 individual dwelling units now available, especially in areas near shipyards and airplane factories, bring with them a certain feeling of permanence."

Meeting fortnightly in Washington with other consultants on the project, Miss Miller is working with Gilbert Stanley Underwood, architect in charge, who built the Sun Valley resort. She is focusing on plans for interiors and giving advice on home furnishings.

In visits to completed houses Miss Miller said she had noticed that the tenants, impressed by the fact that the houses were new, had been challenged to fix over their old furniture. . . .

In designs for the interiors of the defense houses Miss Miller is concentrating on economy in building costs, short cuts for the housewife through careful planning

of closets and hallways and variety in floor plans.

"We don't want to think of this as mass housing," she asserted, "but as the creation of individual homes constructed and furnished with considerable variety."

The houses vary in size from one-room units to double houses and four-family homes with a separate entrance for each family. These houses may be occupied only by defense workers. Rents are scaled from \$27.50 to \$35 a month.

Complete sites are designed by planners who incorporate schemes for erecting underpasses, overpasses, new roads, playgrounds and landscapes for the entire community, in addition to planning the placement of houses. The maximum cost for one house has been \$3,500.

"I'm really a clearing house for the government and the manufacturer in an effort to provide the consumer with the finest small homes in the world," Miss Miller declared. "Good living quarters create better morale."

Miss Miller is an author and a member of the staff of New York University, as well as a decorator.—(*New York Times*)

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### *With a home economist extension worker—*

Ames, Iowa—The country woman of a quarter of a century ago—the one caricaturists drew with hay in her hair—where has she gone?

The woman whose hat was always summer before last's, whose shoes sometimes bore dried traces of the morning milking, whose tightly drawn hair and unsmiling mien spelled "life is real, life is earnest" and life is hard—why did she go away?

Because she wanted to, said Miss Fannie Gannon, extension home management specialist at Iowa State College. That sounds like a "raison de femme," but not if you'd heard Miss Gannon say *wanted*.

"You see," she said, "the country woman has built up a new philosophy of living, and defeatism is definitely out. She used to contrast herself, when she went into town, with the women she saw and continue resignedly to think—and show it—"I am the country cousin," a marked woman."

There's a lilt in her walk now; a sort of purpose when she looks at a kitchen knife or an enameled pan on the hardware counter. Occasionally she has to

remind one—and she does it laughingly and with pride—“I’m from the country, you know.”

Whence this new alert, alive being?

Miss Gannon cited four influences that have contributed to the “inner something” that marks the new poise and self-confidence of the rural woman: The automobile and good roads that have opened her front door; the radio, magazines, newspapers and books that have stretched her horizon into “a great, wide, beautiful world”; the depression which brought problems challenging her “to take it”; and adult homemaking education with new ideas and efficient time and energy-saving practices.

All this is, translated, different clothes, different food, a different family, a different living room and a different spirit.

Her clothes?

Begin at the top, suggests Miss Mary Wood, extension clothing specialist. The summer-before-last hat, for example—several things may have happened to it. If she could, the country woman bought a new one; if she couldn’t, she outwitted the ‘hoppers who had devoured the Easter bonnet money off the south forty. A quirk here, a twist there, a brave new bow, and last season’s hat was perched on a confident profile that said, “I know it’s right, because I know what ‘they’re’ wearing.” Too, the hats she buys aren’t draped with fruit, furbelows and froth; they tend to be the simple, just-for-you type that “stay in” if she doesn’t buy every year.

And under the hat, perhaps a permanent wave, or at least a hair-do. Parts are copied from Hollywood and Paris instead of from Aunt Lizzie in the red plush album, although if the cycle has swung around, they may follow Aunt Lizzie’s with digressions.

The country woman cares how she looks. Over one-half of the 114 farm women in Keokuk County answering a recent survey spent part of their clothing budgets for permanents and common beauty aids. Age has ceased to stamp “30” or “50” on the farm homemaker’s brow. She lives in a life-begins-at-forty and an as-young-as-you-feel age.

Daughter deserves a hand, asserted Miss Wood. She has been a strong ally of the sociological and economic influences. No farm mother could long stay in a rut with a high school daughter voicing a distressed “Mother, your hair!” or “Wear your green dress to the 4-H leaders’ meeting—it looks swell!” Twas Daughter who fur-

nished part of the courage it took to smooth on the first faint touch of youth-bringing rouge.

Standards are higher, little things count. Stocking seams are straight, straps stay put, sagging hem lines are evened and yawning plackets securely snapped or efficiently zipped. Blue calico kitchen aprons have given way to pink print or gay plaid. Waspy, stayed-to-death corsets are replaced with foundation garments that smooth but don’t obliterate curves.

They’re slimming up from the inside, too, said Miss Ruth Cessna, who has talked diet to farm women, both up and down a business cycle. The country woman who carried kindling to build the morning kitchen fire, pumped water to heat and milked cows before breakfast needed a “stack of wheats.” There are more fruits and vegetables now, and less starch, sweet rolls and pie—consequently, a clearer eye, clearer skin and slimmer silhouette.

Better diets of farm mothers are showing up in their babies, Mrs. Alma H. Jones, child development and family relations specialist, said. She talked of the “going, glowing and growing” children of farm mothers she had seen recently.

Children’s clothing is simple, comfortable and attractive, Mrs. Jones said. Fewer school youngsters have hand-down complexes, as did the Marys and Jimmies who needed no mittens because the sleeves of big brother’s cast-off coat quite enveloped their hands. The problem of tell-tale winter underwear ridges that brought periodical rebellion from Jane—“The town girls don’t wear it, Mother; I’m in high school now”—has been solved with ski trousers slipped off before school.

Mrs. Jones said something about “a more cooperative family spirit,” too. She illustrated: When Mother wants to go to a homemaker study meeting, Dad spends the afternoon balancing his farm account book and seeing that three-month-old Judy’s schedule remains intact. When Dad runs out of binder twine, Mother puts Judy in a basket on the back seat and hies to town. John and Mary whisk the dinner dishes off the table and through the dishwasher so that Mom can referee the three-player basketball game or ping-pong tourney in the basement.

The 1937 homemaker’s life is still real and earnest, yes—“but I like it,” she says, with a steady glint in her eye that convinces. And there is her secret—she likes it.

**The personality interview:** Because of the intense interest of people in the personality and character of men and women who are prominent in the world or who have had unusual experiences or whose outlook on life is unique, newspapers and magazines run many personality interviews whose purpose is not so much to present what the interviewee thinks as what he is, how he looks, acts, talks, his character and philosophy.

In any community there are a few people who stand out from all the rest because of their achievement or because of something unique in their character or experience. Interviews with such people will be widely read because of the human interest involved. Again, there are continually coming into one's community prominent people from outside, to speak, to conduct investigations, and the readers of the local newspapers are interested in hearing about them.

The personality interview is secured in the same way as the news interview, but it is usually written in a much freer, more unconventional feature style. The following stories are examples of personality interviews, based on current news:

*With a 37-year-old grandmother—*

Phoenix, Ariz.—A 37-year-old grandmother stopped her work of tearing down an airplane motor here, shook a heavy wrench at a group of amused spectators, and said:

"America's going to have to get smart."

"They're training women to take the jobs of a lot of men who'll be needed for other things if we get into the 'big fight.' But they're missing the boat completely in one occupation:

"Airplane mechanics."

The stocky, good-natured, blond and blue-eyed woman—who looks far more like a chorus girl than a grandmother—believes the Government should start a nationwide training program for women airplane mechanics.

Mrs. Ann H. Stanley is recognized hereabouts as the only woman in the United States licensed by the Civil Aeronautics Authority as a tearer-downer and builder-upper of flying machines. She's the wife of Dale Stanley, head of maintenance for Southwest Airways here.

She was doing bookkeeping and steno-

graphic work in a Los Angeles office—and hating it—when she met Stanley. He was running an airplane repair shop.

Waiting around for him, she started handing him tools. Then she put a wrench on a bolt and the business "just got in my blood." Soon she was doing work about the shop in her spare time.

She had two years of practical experience when her license was issued September 19, 1938.

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*With a veteran civil engineer—*

This morning, about 10:30 o'clock, Thomas Ulvan Taylor will be called to the platform in the auditorium of the Engineering Societies Building for a short speech upon becoming the first Texan to receive an honorary membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers. He will be one of thirty-two such members in the nation.

He may find it difficult to tell in five minutes in his drawling voice the thoughts that come to a man who was born eighty-two years ago along the Texas cattle trail

twenty miles from Fort Worth, then the nearest town.

Yesterday, in his room on the thirteenth floor of the Governor Clinton Hotel, he stood at the window staring down on Broadway, with the wind blowing papers above the heavy traffic.

"You know, son," he remarked, "when I was a boy back in Parker County, Texas, if we saw a bright day like this we'd figger there'd be a moonlight night. And when that happened folks would get their livestock and run them down into the woods by the creek and we'd scatter the critters. On moonlight nights the Comanches used to come riding down on their raids."

The telephone rang and he strode across the room, his legs a bit bowed, his powerful shoulders slightly rounded. "Hello, Jack," he said cheerily. "Sure, come on up."

He grinned at a reporter. "That's Professor John Focht of the University of Texas. He used to be one of my pupils. That was before I became dean of the School of Engineering. I've been dean emeritus since 1936."

After the introductions, he sprawled in a leather armchair. His former pupil, seated on a bed, asked: "Did Dean Taylor tell you about his job for a saloon?"

Dean Taylor's ruddy cheeks became scarlet and his blue eyes twinkled. His gnarled fingers played with the heavy gold chain on his vest. There were no keys on the chain to indicate he had been graduated from the University of Virginia and Cornell.

"When I was about 10 or 12 years old," he began, "there was only about twenty miles of railroad in the whole state of Texas. It was twenty miles to the nearest post office and there wasn't a cook stove in the State.

"You had to travel mostly by stage coach, frame box wagons and often you used ox teams. Well, about 4 in the morning the stage would come in and the driver would take his tin horn out of a holster and blow a few notes. He couldn't

blow anything fancy but he'd wake up the whole town. He was like an alarm clock.

"You didn't have any water right in your house in those days. So the saloon keeper would pay me 5 cents a bucket for bringing him water. I'd make about 15 cents that way. Why'd they want water in a saloon? Why, people didn't drink raw whiskey. They'd put a little water in it and make what they called a bull toddy. It was a bad season when they drank it straight.

"The saloon keeper in our town was one of the leading citizens. He didn't want any drunkenness and rowdies. Of course, now Dodge City, that was different. No, it wasn't so much of a railroad center. 'Twas more of a cattle center. And the drinking and gambling in Dodge City—wow, they were something."

He threw his head back and laughed, his frame shaking.

Professor Focht began talking of the changes that Dean Taylor had witnessed at Texas University during his fifty-two years of service there. For a while Dean Taylor kept looking out the window dreamily. Then he told how he had come to forsake ranching for school.

"There was an old Campbellite preacher, they were kind of off-shoots of the Baptists. And this preacher he put the fire into me. Well, there was a normal school that had opened about that time. So I entered a competition and won a scholarship. I didn't have a thin dime.

"By the time I got out of there I was ready to go to a regular university. I liked mathematics so I took up engineering. When I got out of the University of Virginia I went to Cornell."

He snapped his fingers suddenly. "And here's one of the strangest things. When I got out of Cornell in 1895 the man who conferred my degree on me was Henry S. Jacoby. And he's one of the four other men who will be gettin' certificates or medals or somethin' with me tomorrow."

—(New York Times)

**Skill in interviewing:** Securing a successful interview of either the news or personality type is usually no easy job. The beginning reporter does not always make much of a success in the first few attempts. Interviewing on a newspaper is a task usually assigned to an experienced reporter.

A college campus furnishes plenty of opportunity for a journalism student to secure an interview story. Faculty members, the campus policeman, a janitor, the keeper of the stadium, the student from Liberia—all are probably accustomed to being interviewed and know what to expect when the reporter appears and begins to ask questions.

Interviewing taxes the skill of the reporter as thoroughly perhaps as any reportorial task. To be able to get the information that he wants most from a man or a woman, who many times is not particularly anxious to talk for publication, is a task which calls for the reporter's best ability.

As in the case of the meeting story, the reporter can do much to prepare himself for an interview by familiarizing himself with the subject of the interview and with facts about the person he is to interview. Nothing could be more detrimental to success than to show the interviewee that one is ignorant of a subject in which the interviewee is vitally interested or that one is not familiar with the name, position, and record of the interviewee.

It is obvious, therefore, that skill in getting from people the information that one needs is one of the most important, if not *the* most important, problem of reporting.

What can be said in a general way about this task?

1. The reporter needs to know human nature in an intimate and realistic way. He has to deal with all kinds of people. He has to make an approach to them that will incline them toward cooperating with him. To this end he must be able to "size up" people, to recognize types, to make quick and accurate estimate of peculiarities of character and temperament. The reporter should be both a scientific and a practical psychologist. He can get much from books on psychology. He can perhaps get more from an eternally vigilant study of people, their actions and reactions, their foibles and idiosyncracies.

2. The reporter must be sensitive to the relative values of testimony. One whose business it is to get information from people learns very early that he cannot put equal reliance upon what different people tell him. One man to whom he goes for information is congenitally careless of facts; another is an inaccurate ob-

server; a third does not have a too scrupulous regard for the truth; a fourth is biased through vanity or fear; a fifth is prone to leap to conclusions from insufficient data.

It is well, therefore, for the reporter to cultivate, in this connection at least, a skeptical attitude of mind, to the extent of persistently questioning and checking what he is told.

3. The reporter cannot expect the person he is interviewing to do his work for him. It is too much to expect that the interviewee will know what information will make news. The reporter, in other words, must be the questioner. It is not enough to go to a man with the query, "Do you have any news today?" The answer is nine times out of ten—and quite naturally—"No, I don't believe I know of anything." When the reporter makes such an approach he is asking the interviewee to be a better reporter than he is.

**Use of interviews:** The interview story still remains a fixture in journalism. It is true that the old-fashioned "celebrity" interview story is not as common in newspapers as it once was; the radio has encroached upon that particular field of presenting the opinions of persons of prominence for public consumption. The motion picture screen likewise has invaded what was once the exclusive domain of newspapers and magazines.

But the very useful device of the interview story is still valuable, and the pages of both metropolitan and "big town" journals are well sprinkled with them.

As a part of the technique of writing magazine articles, the interview has become steadily more important through the years. Many articles carried in magazines, other than those of the more technical sorts, are nothing but interviews. Other articles are made up of a number of interviews or include well-defined interviews as part of the material in the article. Some investigation by the journalism student will reveal how widespread this is. To illustrate, a recent issue of *The Etude*, a noted magazine for musicians, had four interview feature articles in it. One was an interview with a famous pianist. A second was headed, "She Studied With Liszt," and was an interview with an elderly woman who once had been a pupil of Liszt, the great pianist.

The interview is as much a part of writing the feature story as it is of straight news writing. Perhaps more so. In many a good interview story the line distinguishing it as a news story or a feature story, is mighty thin. Often it is nonexistent. Because this is so, interviews will also be considered again in a later chapter in this text.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. List five tips for good news interviews on or near the campus.
2. List five tips for good personality interviews on or near the campus.
3. Gather and write one of each of these two types of interviews.
4. Secure and write an interview story based on one of the following: research work under way; extension project; visitor to campus; most unusual member of faculty you know; faculty member or student who has had some strange adventure—was on a torpedoed boat, say; faculty member in charge of some unusual laboratory—as psychology clinic, nursery school, veterinary clinic.
5. Write an imaginary interview with one of following or equivalent: Statue of soldier in front of museum, statue—or portrait—of former president of institution, with swan in pool on campus, with the dean's watch, with a flower in garden of department of horticulture, with frog that lives in botany greenhouse, with the vase made by ceramics student which broke in firing, with a spike used when the Union Pacific Railroad was first built, with the data book used by some civil engineering student years ago, with an old-fashioned wood cook stove, with grandmother's wedding dress, with dress form used in clothing laboratory, with a corner fence post, with the old cider press, with the old reaper under the elm tree.
6. Examine one issue of one of the following and report on interview stories found in it: *Detroit Free-Press*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Minneapolis Tribune*, *Chicago News*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Milwaukee Journal*, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Lincoln Journal*, *Denver Post*. If none of these newspapers is to be found in the library, some others of prominence will do.

## CHAPTER 16

### TECHNICAL OR RESEARCH REPORTS

**I**N THE discussion of the arrangement of material in Chapter 12 a fourth scheme was mentioned: a scheme for writing of technical news in technical reports, research papers, and articles for publication in the technical and professional journals. Essentially the same arrangement is used when such material is issued in technical bulletins.

Many of the most important technical news stories of experimental and research results have first been told in this form. The arrangement can hardly be called a news story arrangement, however. It is formal. It was adopted many years ago by research workers in scientific fields and adhered to very strictly because it seems to them to be the most desirable arrangement for their purpose. These papers—the newspaper man is not inclined to call them “stories”—are intended to make a record of research findings, they are intended for fellow research workers, and they are written in technical language that is not readily understood, if at all, by the general public. Inasmuch as the arrangement suits most of the men and women in the research field, they have a right to prefer it.

**The arrangement:** The arrangement used may be called a logical one and proceeds as follows:

1. A statement of the problem studied or investigated.
2. A review of literature relating to the subject and a discussion of previous research bearing on the particular point or points involved.
3. A description of materials, methods, equipment, and special technique involved.
4. The results, presented in as much detail as the author deems necessary and desirable. They are usually presented in chronolog-

ical order and accompanied by statistical tables. These results are discussed as fully as necessary to make them clear.

5. The conclusions reached by the author are presented as well as any applications or implications that seem to be involved.

6. A bibliography may be presented in footnotes as well as acknowledgements.

To illustrate the differences between a straight newspaper and a technical report, two articles are presented. Both were published in *Science*, the official organ for the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Both report California experiments with the use of Vitamin B<sub>1</sub> in plant growth, so they are quite similar as to subject matter. But the first was prepared by *Science Service* to be syndicated to daily newspapers; the second is strictly a technical paper.

A comparison will show plainly the differences in construction and in phrasing:

#### ORANGE TREES AND VITAMIN B<sub>1</sub>

(From *Science Service*)

Healthy valencia orange trees, grown under favorable conditions, failed to show any improvement from good to superior when vitamin B<sub>1</sub> and nicotinic acid were added to soil and irrigation water. This was the report of Dr. E. R. Parker and Dr. F. M. Turrell, of the Citrus Experiment Station, and Dr. James Bonner, of the California Institute of Technology, on experiments carried on at Riverside.

Young trees were planted in good soil, well drained and aerated. At the time of planting organic matter in the form of peat and dairy manure was added to the fill-in soil and as a surface mulch; the usual procedure. As the trees grew, vitamin B<sub>1</sub> and nicotinic acid, another factor in the vitamin B complex, were added generously to the irrigation water continually throughout two seasons. Now vitamin B<sub>1</sub> can do remarkable things for humans deficient in the substance. It also stimulates growth in some plants. But healthy young valencia orange trees, according to the scientists, apparently have no use for vitamin B<sub>1</sub> or nicotinic acid.

"It appears," they said, "that vigorous young valencia trees synthesize sufficient vitamin B<sub>1</sub> for their own needs. The vitamin B<sub>1</sub> content of the mature leaves was not affected by any of the soil treatments. In all cases it was higher than that of species of plants which responded to treatment with vitamin B<sub>1</sub>. The beneficial effects of the organic matter applied to newly planted trees appears to be due to factors which were not limiting in these experiments."

**EFFECTS OF VITAMIN B<sub>1</sub> ON WOODY EROSION-CONTROL PLANTS<sup>1</sup>***(From Science)*

Recently there has been considerable interest in the use of vitamin B<sub>1</sub> for stimulating plant growth. The results reported here are concerned with the relation of added vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamin chloride) to the survival and growth rate of young woody erosion-control plants in the field. By woody erosion-control plant is meant one that possesses to a high degree the ability to withstand indifferent handling, drought, adverse soil conditions, and vigorous competition. For deciduous erosion-control plants, these requirements are best realized by planting seedlings with strong taproots that are large in proportion to the size of the tops and that contain much stored food.

Plantings were made at two locations: (1) On recent sandy alluvial soil in an intermontane valley in the Santa Rosa Mountains, in Riverside County, California. The Santa Rosa planting is in a mountainous mediterranean climate. (2) On primary heavy grassland soil near Capistrano, Orange County, California. The Capistrano planting is in a coastal mediterranean climate, with moderately cool summers. Precipitation during the experimental period was at or above normal.

Seedlings were planted in natural soil in holes dug by shovels to a depth just sufficient to accommodate roots without bending. Soil was filled back into holes and tamped by shovel and by hand. Around each plant a ring of soil was thrown up to form a basin; subsequent waterings were made in these basins from tank wagons. At Capistrano domestic tap water was used; at Santa Rosa water from a surface reservoir was used. Where vitamin B<sub>1</sub> was used in the experiment, it was added at the rate of .05 mg. per liter of water.

TABLE 1

Percentage Survival of Control Plants and Vitamin B<sub>1</sub> Treated Plants at the Santa Rosa Site in Riverside County, California

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*Note*—The extensive table is not presented, not being essential to the presentation of form of arrangement of the paper.

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Species listed in Table 1 were planted April 6 to 15, 1939. All these plants received water at planting time and two weeks later. On these two occasions no vitamin was added. On May 17, 1939, vitamin solution was applied to basins of plants listed in Table 1 as treated plants. On the same date coordinate applications of water were made to control plants. Applications similar to those given May 17, 1939, were repeated June 8, July 10, and August 8, 1939. No further applications were given after August 8, 1939. The total amount of the vitamin solution added to the basin of each of the plants receiving the vitamin is shown in Table 1.

<sup>1</sup>Field and clerical assistance was furnished by the Works Project administration.

For the Santa Rosa site, Table 1 shows the survival of control plants and of treated plants during 1939 and 1940. The differences between the new shoot growth of the treated plants and of the control plants were not significant at any time during the test at Santa Rosa.

The species listed in Table 2 were planted April 10 to 20, 1939. The plants grown at this Capistrano site differ in their treatment from those of the Santa Rosa site. At the Capistrano site vitamin solution was applied immediately after planting to the basins of treated plants. Control plants at planting time received coordinate applications of water to which no vitamin was added. Applications of water (no vitamin added) to control plants and of vitamin solution to treated plants were given on May 1, May 24, June 20, July 20 and August 14, 1939. No further applications were given after August 14, 1939. Total amount of the vitamin solution added to the basin of each of the plants receiving the vitamin is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the percentage survival of control plants and of treated plants in the test at Capistrano. No significant differences were found in the new growth of the treated plants and of the control plants at the Capistrano site.

TABLE 2

Percentage Survival of Control Plants and Vitamin B<sub>1</sub> Treated Plants at the San Juan Capistrano Site in Orange County, California

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*Note*—Table omitted. See explanation in Table 1.

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*Conclusions:* For the plants tested, no marked beneficial effects were found in the initial survival or initial growth by adding vitamin B<sub>1</sub> in water (in concentration of .05 mg. per liter of water) to the soil surrounding the plants. The data on survival suggest that added vitamin B<sub>1</sub> may have had, under the conditions of the experiment, an adverse effect on the survival of some of the species tested.

MAURICE DONNELLY

University of California Citrus  
Experiment Station and  
U. S. Soil Conservation Service,  
Riverside

The above report is news, just as much as is the Science Service story. If it were written for a daily newspaper, the lead would be in the last paragraph, where conclusions are given.

No further discussion as to the writing of these technical papers or reports is given in this text. Many students in technical lines have a course in advanced English where the writing of such reports is taken up in some detail.

## CHAPTER 17

### ROUTINE NEWS FORM

ON a recent July day the phone rang in the office of the Tree Fruit branch of the State Experiment Station at Wenatchee, Washington. The horticulturist in charge answered the call and listened to the query that came. He replied by saying, "160 and 479," and hung up.

A reporter was at the other end of the wire, calling from the editorial offices of the *Wenatchee Daily World*. He wanted to know the figures on the day's catch in the two moth-flight traps operated by this branch experiment station.

Wenatchee is the center of the largest apple-growing section in America. An annual menace to these orchards is codling moth. By use of the two traps, the entomologists at the station keep tab on the emergence of the moths and thus are able to advise the growers as to exact time of applying sprays.

That night in the Wenatchee paper, the following table was printed, with the figures given over the phone as the last line in the table:

#### MOTH FLIGHT

| Date         | Station<br>Moths | S. Slope<br>Moths |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| July 11..... | 4.....           | 95                |
| July 12..... | 16.....          | 82                |
| July 13..... | 25.....          | 100               |
| July 14..... | 16.....          | 11                |
| July 15..... | 25.....          | 100               |
| July 16..... | 16.....          | 26                |
| July 17..... | 51.....          | 110               |
| July 18..... | 60.....          | 272               |
| July 20..... | 39.....          | 149               |
| July 21..... | 89.....          | 423               |
| July 22..... | 55.....          | 230               |
| July 23..... | 149.....         | 526               |
| July 24..... | 250.....         | 601               |
| July 25..... | 161.....         | 733               |
| July 26..... | 160.....         | 479               |

This table was not given display position on the front page. It was buried on an inside page, appearing in about the same

position each day. Yet this table was probably the most important item in Wenatchee any day during the season when the codling moths had to be controlled. Apples, along with other fruits, constitute the biggest business in Wenatchee. The welfare of the city and surrounding orchard land depends largely upon apples—not only the welfare of the growers and the packers and shippers, but merchants, banks, and nearly everybody else.

This important news was not presented in a form that would fit into any of the types described in previous chapters. It was a simple statistical table, designed to fit a special news need. No explanation accompanied it; that was not necessary. Everybody around Wenatchee understood it.

The table illustrates how a large proportion of news in daily or weekly newspapers and in trade and technical publications of many kinds is handled. The method might well be labeled as a routine form of news presentation.

Its purpose may be said to be to present the most information in the least possible space.

**Familiar types of routine news:** A very common example of daily routine news is the weather report, usually carried on the front page or in some other regular position, and written in stereotyped phraseology. This refers to the statistical record and not to the rather fanciful weather story published by many newspapers when weather conditions are out of the ordinary or for any other reason that appeals to some reporter.

The list of routine items presented is long, as an examination of any daily newspaper will disclose. Here are some of them: deaths, births, traffic accidents, marriage licenses, wedding announcements, divorces, fire runs, arrests, certain court activities, contract awards, building records, church notices, radio time tables, amusement attractions.

In newspapers on the seaboard, especially in shipping cities, the daily table of tides may be found, and the arrival and departure of ocean vessels. Along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers a table of river stages appears daily. In some irrigated sections, newspapers present tables showing the water levels in irrigation reservoirs.

City dailies in the Great Lakes region report the passage of boats through the Sault Ste. Marie and by Mackinaw City. Highway detours are presented weekly.

Scores of sports contests are presented in tabular form, as are racing forms, racing results, awards in livestock and flower shows and other exhibitions. In areas of forests and streams, fishing conditions of streams and lakes may be presented.

**Market reports and prices:** An examination of the financial and market pages of daily newspapers will quickly give evidence that they and many of their readers consider routine news of markets of all kinds as of utmost importance. Literally, pages are given to such information by such publications as the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. They tell the story of a day's dealings in stocks and bonds, cattle and hogs, grains, produce of all kinds, fruits, cotton, textiles, meats, metals, lumber, foreign exchange, electric power production, and so on and on, in every market of the world, until the whole tale of the world's activities in trade is completed.

The gathering of that news, its transmission in quick time, and its publication constitute one of the marvels of news presentation.

As part of this story, the skilled experts in the news fields prepare tables of market averages, past and present, chain store sales, trends, and the like; they must be accurate to the last detail. The *New York Times* has a booklet (price 25 cents) which under the title, *Financial News*, lists 200 daily and weekly and monthly reports of business and finance published by that newspaper.

In areas where special production of raw materials and finished goods and foods has developed—such as in the Wenatchee apple country referred to at the beginning of this chapter—newspapers publish routine news to fit. For example, in Tulsa, center of oil, many tables of production and shipment are prepared and presented as news; in mining areas, the output of copper, of silver or zinc, is reported; in California and Florida, citrus fruit production has its special place.

**Special publications for routine news:** In many trade and industrial fields are special journals which carry prices and other

market and production information in detail. They carry much weight, and their tabulations are accepted as accurate and reliable.

Among them are the *Chicago Daily Drovers' Journal* and similar dailies published at other livestock market centers. A recent issue of the Chicago publication carried thirty-seven different tables dealing with livestock and thirty-four dealing with grains and produce. *The Packer*, issued in several regional editions, contains the prices and trade news for readers interested in the production and marketing of vegetables, fruits, and the like. Department store buyers, wholesale merchants, and manufacturers of clothing and dress accessories find their news in the daily, *Women's Wear*. There are also special financial dailies, as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Barron's*.

The *Engineering News Record* carries a monthly department giving a business summary which contains tables of construction volume and new capital, FHA mortgages, construction costs, wage rates, material shipments, building permits, cost-of-living indexes, and engineering construction contracts. Elsewhere, prices from twenty or more cities are given for cement, aggregates, ready-mixed concrete, paving brick, road oils, iron and steel products, various kinds of pipe, lumber, glass, explosives, chemicals, piles, ties, lime, paint, roofing, skilled and common wage rates. Classified construction reports for the entire country are given.

*Iron Age* has a record of many years for being the accepted source of prices for iron and steel. Figures on coal production and consumption are a regular feature of *Coal Age*. In *Engineering and Mining Journal* can be found a monthly summary of the markets, much of it in tabular form.

**How routine news is gathered:** The gathering and distribution of much of this routine news is highly organized on a country-wide scale. The United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Commerce have in recent years entered the field. Through the years the great news agencies, especially the Associated Press, have been the principal reliance of most dailies. However, some publications maintain their own staff representatives in market centers, sometimes in cooperation with

other journals. There are also private agencies which serve clients either in special or general fields.

In the market centers, the various exchanges provide an essential source of routine news; they are the official gatherers of this information, and they make it available to the representatives of press associations, news agencies, and publications. This news is gathered with great speed. Within a short time after a market closes, its news in detail is on the wires for all parts of the country and of the world (in peace time).

Local routine news gathering is the job of some reporter, who sometimes has a rather difficult task because in smaller fields there is no exchange or other central assembly point to which this information goes. He must establish his own several sources of information and then use his trained judgment in establishing fair market figures. That is especially true in the local weekly newspaper field.

The worker in the field of market news needs to be a good reporter at bottom, and in addition, he must like the work and undergo a good deal of training on the job. The beginner in the field on such a newspaper as *The New York Times*, for example, must serve a long period of apprenticeship and observation by his superiors. He must convince them that he has the knack, that he is accurate, absolutely reliable, and that he wants to make his career in the field. Carelessness and less than 100 per cent integrity cannot be tolerated. However, when a reporter makes good, his pay is relatively high.

In some states the state and Federal governments maintain a staff of men in a central office to gather and compile information about livestock, crops, poultry production, and dairying. They have the assistance of reporters in every county—sometimes in many townships, who gather first-hand information about livestock population, dairying and dairy production, poultry production, and crop plantings, conditions, and harvest. They also gather information on prices received by farmers. Their frequent reports of state-wide conditions are supplied to the daily and weekly press and farm journals. They present not only the current figures on crops, livestock and prices, but compare them with the figures

for other years. In some states valuable statistics on the buying power of the farmer's dollar as compared with other periods are included. Often these information bureaus include on their staffs a man or two with a combination of training in economics and statistics and journalism.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Examine and list all the types of routine news to be found in one issue of a daily newspaper, a class or trade daily or weekly, and an engineering or industrial periodical.
2. Clip and turn in examples of five different kinds of routine news from any publication.
3. Prepare a calendar of coming events for the rest of the college term.

## CHAPTER 18

### INFORMATION PLUS NEWS QUALITY

IT IS commonly understood that the primary purpose of journalism is to inform. Of course, it may seek to entertain and to do various other things, but these other functions are largely subsidiary. To bring information together and publish it is the chief business of journalism.

That holds true of any newspaper which seeks to serve its readers, be it a county weekly, small daily, or a great city daily. But it is especially true of the publications of the technical fields and fields of special interests: farm journals, women's magazines, garden magazines, engineering periodicals, trade and class papers and many others of their kind.

The time was when newspapers confined themselves almost wholly to the publication of the kind of information we call news; that is, information about recent happenings. Names of first newspapers indicated that: *Acta Diurna*, *Publick Occurrences*. On the other hand, magazines and other journals in special fields have concerned themselves mainly with information of importance, but not especially because of any news quality in it. However, the content of each of these two general types of publications has changed until at present newspapers are taking on more and more the characteristics of magazines, and magazines are more and more concerned with news and information with a distinct news quality.

While technical journals are still primarily concerned with information, they treat that information as news and, more and more, their writers cast their articles in news form to give them the force that is inherent in news.

**The change in newspapers:** An examination of almost any larger newspaper of today reveals that often as much as half of the material in it may be classed as information rather than spot news. It may include half a dozen signed features by correspondents

and commentators, or "columns" by local staff members; or illustrated articles on foods, house furnishings, home management, child welfare, clothing, beauty, health; or automobiles, recreation, travel; or commercial and industrial projects and developments; or engineering enterprises, or mining; or farming, gardening, and rural life; or progress in science.

Much of this kind of information appears in the daily every day of the week, with a larger portion on Sunday. Some larger newspapers maintain a "magazine section" in their Sunday issues, or include a syndicated magazine printed in regular magazine form.

Several factors have helped to bring about this development. Desire for larger and larger circulation is one of them. To get more and more readers, the ambitious newspaper reaches out in this direction and that to bring into its pages material that will appeal to readers of many diverse interests in wider fields. Spot news does not quite have that interest, and so magazine or information features are added. Moreover, a newspaper published in Chicago cannot be printed and distributed rapidly enough to give readers in distant Wisconsin or Iowa news while it has all of its news quality, so these various other features of more enduring quality are added. Probably, too, the great growth of national advertising, of automobiles, for example, or foods, has helped to bring about the publication of much related material.

This development is not limited to larger newspapers, but extends through the entire field to county weeklies. However, although they have encroached upon the field of the magazines and other journals, they adhere to the news style of presenting the information.

But if newspapers have gone to the periodical field for copy, the magazines of today have gone to the newspapers for writing style and method, and also they have stressed news quality in the material they use.

**Evolution of magazine content:** There was a time a generation ago when the farm, engineering, and scientific journals and, to a lesser degree, the women's magazines, were staid, dry, "informational," and impersonal. Their articles had little of the variety, the interest, and the entertainment qualities—the popular-

ization—which we now think of as characteristic of the magazine feature article.

This information was presented quite baldly. After a study of his field the editor decided what his readers ought to know and do, and then pursued a policy of telling them what they ought to know and do, much in the manner of a preacher and with a full quota of thou shalt's and thou shalt not's. From first page to last, the journal was a sea of advice with almost no balmy isles or verdant shore lines of human interest or entertainment to make the voyage from cover to cover more interesting. Pills in earlier days were not sugar coated; neither was magazine advice.

But the present day journals proceed somewhat differently. Apparently there is a feeling among them that plain preachment is not the most effective way of publishing advice and information. They are still presenting both advice and information, because that is a necessary part of their business, but they are putting them in the guise of news. There is abundant reason to believe that in this guise, advice and information are more widely read and that the method is fully justified.

The influences that brought about these changes were various, and some of them go back a long ways. Perhaps the most important among them was the influence of the daily press, especially the so-called "yellow" press. To more than any other one editor, the credit for discovering "people," human interest, as a source of news material must go to James Gordon Bennett, who in 1835 founded the *New York Herald*, a blithe little scandal sheet which was the grandfather of yellow journalism. The *Herald* was personal, intimate, confidential; in other words it had in high degree those qualities to which newspaper men have given the general term human interest. The *Herald* liberated daily journalism from the bone-dry, long-winded dullness of its predecessors. Its contemporaries and successors, such papers as the *Sun*, the *World*, the Hearst papers, the tabloids, have elaborated upon Bennett's methods.

It took time for magazines to realize that they could learn something from the *Herald* and the *Sun* about appealing to wide,

popular interest. But they did slowly come around to the use of that informality, intimacy, humor, unconventionality, which give "pull" to reading matter and above all, to recognize that "people" quality in both news and pictures attracts hosts of readers they had never been able to interest before.

Other influences also had their effect. Following the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, some magazines awakened to the fact that the American readers were interested in other lands and what happened there, in geography, science, just as much as they were in weighty discussions of other matters. Early in the present century the *Saturday Evening Post* discovered that readers wanted to know about business and people in business. From 1904 to 1909 came the so-called muck-raking era of magazines, in which corrupt politics, misdeeds of large corporations, patent medicine evils, need of pure food and drug laws, and other similar matters were set forth in sensational manner. In that period the magazines learned that by doing an expert job of reporting to get at hidden facts, they could secure news of great interest and at the same time render a public service.

So there emerged the magazines of national circulation such as the *American*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's Weekly*, and *Liberty*. Following them have come other national publications as *Time*, the transformed *Life*.

**Farm papers have changed:** The farm papers were slow in taking a hint from the newspapers and popular magazines, although there were some pioneers in putting news quality into their pages, notably the *Breeder's Gazette*, as an examination of the files from say 1905 to 1910 will show. But on the whole, farm papers were more serious, with a restricted audience vitally interested in agricultural subject matter. Their circulation was not large, their scope of material was limited, their information applicable mainly to a state or section of the country.

A turning point in farm paper history came when the Curtis Publishing Company acquired *Country Gentleman* in 1911 and began to make a rural magazine along editorial lines that had been successful with the *Saturday Evening Post*. The idea was that articles on farming and farm life could be interesting, even entertaining,

as well as informational; also that interest in agriculture is nationwide and sometimes world-wide, rather than confined within state boundaries or to one section of the country. Articles were gathered and written on this premise. Its articles were based on news happenings and upon people, and shot through with human interest. This method was applied also to articles about farm women and the home, so that the household pages became more interesting.

With these changes came the building of larger circulation, national in scope but especially centered in the best agricultural areas. National advertising was developed along with circulation.

In the years since about 1912, farm papers generally have changed in pattern to become more interesting, more entertaining, and broader in their appeal.

The growing competition which they had to face played a large part. They had to compete with each other, for circulation and for national advertising. They had to compete with general magazines for part of the advertising patronage. They had, to some degree, to compete with newspapers for advertising, and more recently for reader interest.

The national farm magazines that have survived this competitive process are of large circulation, with several around or above 2,000,000 copies each month. Examine a current issue of *Farm Journal*, *Successful Farming*, *Capper's Farmer*, and *Country Gentleman*. You will find that each one is different from the others. Yet all of them are filled with articles of news, of news quality, of well-written material and illustrated with photographs and drawings.

A very large factor in the evolution in the content of farm journals has been the development of many new sources of information, as suggested through the preceding chapters of this text in the discussion of agricultural news, its gathering and its writing.

Agricultural colleges and their extension services, their specialists, county agents, and home demonstration agents have made available a vast amount of information of a news quality and concrete, practical nature that did not exist before. Later came the project work of 4-H Clubs, and the vocational schools of agriculture and home economics.

Concurrently came a very great expansion in agricultural re-

search by the United States Department of Agriculture and the state experiment stations, as well as by private industrial laboratories. Together they have given rise to a mass of information such as the earlier editors hardly dreamed of, and entirely new agricultural sciences, such as plant pathology, dairy bacteriology, and genetics, have come into being.

The achievements of workers in the extension field, in campaigns for the elimination or control of animal and plant pests and diseases, in more profitable production of crops and livestock, in the up-building of cooperative enterprises in marketing and in community development, in the establishment of club work among boys and girls, in enlivening farm organizations and their programs—all these results have furnished a type of news feature material that old-time farm journals never presented.

A new world of farming has sprung up to widen the scope of agricultural information: irrigation in the Intermountain country, in the southwest, and lately, well irrigation in the Great Plains; the extensive growing of vegetables in favored areas; the development of large centers of specialized production of citrus fruits, apples, potatoes, and tomatoes; flower, vegetable, grass, and forage crop seeds, and so on, almost endlessly.

With all this change, there have been important shifts in types and methods of farming, especially in relation to livestock. Once feeder cattle were produced almost wholly on the western ranges and then fed out in the Corn Belt. But in recent years the Corn Belt has been producing more and more of its own feeders. Through the South, farming has been changing from a cotton one-crop practice to livestock and diversified farming. Cattle are being fed in the irrigated valleys of the Intermountain region. The Great Plains is turning many of its ranges into cultivated farms and farm production of livestock. The meat packing industry is moving away from Chicago into many new packing centers, and central livestock markets have declined as smaller markets have grown.

Engineers and their development of power farming in all its phases have added to the shifts and changes. They have brought electricity to rural communities, they have shortened hours of farm labor, they have given impetus to farming on a larger scale. They

have shown how erosion may be robbed of most of its evil. Government alphabetical agencies such as the AAA, SCS, FSA, and REA have all come into the picture recently and are making news.

Almost bewildering are the changes. The accompanying change in the farm journal field was inevitable. There came changes both in content of successful publications, and in the manner of presentation, as news.

However, one other change came—a sharp decline in the number of farm journals. This began with the collapse of farm prices in the winter of 1920–21 and the subsequent depression in agriculture. Paper after paper ceased publication or was combined with some other. The great reason was that these papers were overcome by economic forces over which they had no control.

But it is perhaps also true that some of these publications were hastened to their end because their editors and publishers did not recognize that agriculture was being made over, that it had become a national matter, and not a state or regional affair. They did not recognize that the modern farmer wants news and news quality, not advice nor staid exposition.

Part of the older function of the farm paper, that of conveying information, was gradually taken over by extension services and experiment stations. Bulletins and circulars from these and from business sources brought more complete information than a farm paper could hope to furnish. Farmers had direct help and service from their county agents and from the fieldmen of the implement manufacturer, the canning factory, the sugar-beet company or the rural power line. He got his market news from the city daily and later from the radio. He got informational reading matter that applied to his own community from his local weekly or daily paper.

The farm journals which came successfully through difficult years to face the future with confidence are those which adjusted themselves to fit new conditions. They are reporting the news of what is happening. They are getting news quality, people, human interest, sprightly writing, illustrations into their columns. These values are the distinguishing mark of the leading journals in the farm field today.

**Magazines for women:** In general, magazines published for women have been progressive, ever since the day of *Godey's Lady's Book*. Their purpose, apart from supplying fiction, has been to supply women with information dealing with matters of special interest to women, girls, and the home. While these publications are practically all of large circulation, and so cannot usually deal with material of immediate news value, as can some of the farm papers with a circulation limited to a state or region, yet they have for years infused many of their articles with news quality and human interest. All this applies also to those magazines which deal with home and garden and appeal to all members of the family.

In recent years this has been more than ever true. If a home economics student were to analyze the articles in any current issue of one of the national women's or home and garden magazines, she would discover that many of the articles are based on current news events or that the articles have news quality in that they are about actual people, their lives, their homes, their way of living, their experiences. A goodly number of the articles will be news feature articles exactly of the same character as those in the large general magazines and in many daily newspapers.

**Engineering and technical magazines:** The history of these journals during the past twenty-five years will show that they have gone through a development quite similar to that of the farm papers. While engineering and other technical journals have always carried a certain amount of spot news, this has been increased in recent years.

But articles of informational value once were mainly rather solid, academic, or technical discussions. At the present time, there are articles of this type still published, but there are many more articles based on news—on the actual happenings in the field of the magazine.

Examination of a recent issue of *Engineering News-Record*, for example, shows that it contains articles of feature length based upon the annual meeting of the National Council of State Boards of Engineering Examiners, upon the annual conference of the American Public Works Association, and upon the annual meeting of the Engineers' Council for Professional Development. There is

also a lengthy article dealing with the extension of the Wilbur Cross Parkway in Connecticut and filled with technical details about spacing of expansion joints, sizes of crushed trap rock used for the concrete aggregate, the concrete mix formula, and the like. Another story gives technical details of the building of a new type steel-plate dome structure recently erected in Chicago. All these are articles of technical information, yet they also have specific news quality. They are neither advice nor academic discussions.

In the fields of engineering, industry, and the sciences, there has been a development of new sources of material for articles that exactly parallels that in agriculture. Engineering experiment stations have greatly increased their scope of work. Technical and scientific laboratories have been created, both government and private. Formal extension work in these fields has not been carried on to anything like the extent that it has in agriculture and home economics, yet some of it has been done.

As was pointed out in earlier chapters, under discussion of news, there has been a revolution of world-wide significance in the past twenty-five years in engineering, industry, business, and the sciences. Correspondingly, there has developed such a multiplicity of news events in the fields of construction, transportation, mining, metallurgy, industrial chemistry, corporations, sales efforts, research in such fields as physics and chemistry, and more recently war and defense activities and materials in their technical aspects.

**Trade and class magazines:** In this field of important and useful publications, precisely the same development has taken place. The essential quality of these periodicals is news itself and news interpretation, in a majority of their articles.

**News quality in technical information is important:** Students in technical journalism classes who up to this time have been writing "straight news," sometimes have difficulty in getting the next point—that information can be told in terms of articles which have news quality. While this will be amplified in later chapters, it may be worth while to illustrate just what is meant, by a specific example.

Let's take some sugar news—for practically everybody is interested in sugar, one way or another.

Formerly, practically all sugar-beet seed sown in the United

States came from abroad. After the advent of the Second World War, which began in 1939, this foreign supply was cut off. That was news—straight news.

Previously, however, investigators of the United States Department of Agriculture and of state agricultural experiment stations, through research, found a way to grow sugar-beet seed in New Mexico, Arizona, and elsewhere. By the time foreign supplies were threatened in 1939, a good share of the domestic needs were being produced in this country. By 1941 it had been demonstrated on a large scale that sugar-beet seed could be grown in Oregon, Utah, and elsewhere. So all together, this meant that regardless of war and world conditions, the United States was producing its own supply of this important seed. All this made news, suitable for daily newspapers or any other publication interested in any angle of sugar, from its use in cooking to the manufacture of products made from it, or to feeding of beet pulp to cattle.

But men specifically interested in sugar-beet seed had to have much additional information. Farmer growers had to know exactly how to grow, harvest, and thresh the crop. Implement manufacturers were concerned with special types of machinery necessary. Sugar-beet companies and farmers who grew sugar beets had a direct interest in it all.

But the important angle was the production of the seed. However, nobody knew how to go about it, neither the authorities nor the farmers. So it had to be found out by trial and error, and the experimenting done had to be mainly on the farms of the growers, rather than at experiment stations. The growers, the research men, the seedsmen, and the sugar-beet companies all had to work together at finding out.

It was soon learned that to prevent shattering of seed, the seed plants had to be cut in early morning, while dew was still on the plants. The beet plants are large, heavy, and grow in a tangled mass. It took a large force of men to do the cutting by hand.

Then some farmers made the discovery that by bolting a sheet of thin steel to one side of a farm tractor and using a special type of heavy cutter-bar, it was possible to do the cutting with a tractor. This made technical news, of particular interest to the growers.

Other growers not only wanted to know this much, but they needed to know about type and power of tractor, the size and kind of steel plate, how and where to fasten it on, the details of the heavy cutter bar. This was further technical news. It also was information.

Growers began experimenting with the use of combine harvesters. Ordinary types would not work. So with help of implement men, a special type was built after three or four years of work to develop a special machine that would do the job. By 1941 a good share of the crop in Arizona was being cut with these special machines. A machine would cut the beet plants but deposited them in windrows on the ground. It did not do the threshing at the same time as would a wheat combine, but it did gather, save, and sack such seed as was shattered in the cutting. This made it possible to run the machines day and night, as compared with working only in the morning. One machine and ten men could do as much work as 150 by hand. Likewise, another special type of machine was developed for threshing in the field.

All this was news, technical news. It was also technical information. The best article to be written that would give this information to other growers and others interested would not be one of advice. It would be one telling how it was being done by those Arizona growers, with sufficient details, and with pictures, so that Oregon growers could do likewise or make such modifications in the method as might be necessary to fit their own conditions.

The article written might be published as a leaflet to be given to growers. It might be published in a farm paper, and it could be told again in periodicals read by the seed trade, by the sugar-beet industry, and by farm implement manufacturers. Wherever published, it would be carrying technical information by means of news; infusing news quality into information.

That illustrates the present-day method most widely used in conveying technical information of whatever sort to readers. It is the way in which the beginning writer and the college student of technical journalism will soonest reach success in writing. It holds true, regardless of the particular technical field in which a writer or a student may be interested.

**Three types of information writing:** We conclude this chapter by naming the three types of informational writing that are commonly used by both newspapers and magazines: One is the *short informational* or *news-experience article*. A second is the *brief* or *paragraph* method of writing. The third is the longer informational article, usually designated as the *feature story* or *feature article*.

Each type will be discussed in chapters immediately following.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. If files are available of various types of magazines of twenty-five or more years ago, make a comparison of typical issues of that period with issues of the same magazines of today or others in the same field. Write an article of about 500 words, based on this study. Cite specific examples of how the same general topic was handled then and handled today.

2. Make a brief report on informational material to be found in a week's files of a current daily newspaper of medium to large circulation. Clip and turn in examples of information which could be termed technical, of interest to three different classes of readers. Do the same with a weekly newspaper.

3. Analyze one issue of one of the following and report on how many long and short informational articles have news quality and how many are information only: *Country Gentleman*, *Successful Farming*, *Farm Journal*, *Copper's Farmer*, *Poultry Tribune*, *Hoard's Dairyman*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *McCall's Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's Weekly*, *Engineering and Mining Journal*, *Iron Age*, *Steel*, *The Lumberman*, *Seed World*, *American Nurseryman*, *Scientific Monthly*—or other equivalent periodicals.

## CHAPTER 19

### WRITING INFORMATION AS SHORT NEWS OR EXPERIENCE STORIES

**A**LARGE proportion of the information that is presented in technical journals of all classes is presented in news form, and rarely without the dressing up that makes it more readable and interesting. The bald, give-it-to-'em straight idea about writing information about technical methods or developments has long since given way to the make-'em-like-it-and-read-it idea, employing the values that are inherent in the news form. Of course, information must not be dressed up so that it cannot be recognized; its guise may be altogether too fancy. But common sense will guide the writer against any such error just as common sense will tell him that information should be presented interestingly. After all, the purpose of writing is to get a reading for the thing written, and the news form is a first class means to that end.

A short information article may be written either as a straight news story, dealing with a simple subject or one phase of the subject, or as an experience story. It differs from the feature article in several respects, as will appear in the chapter on that subject, but principally in its length; it is shorter.

To illustrate, let us assume that a writer wants to inform his readers that it isn't necessary to throw away expensive hatching eggs cracked in shipment and to advise them how to save the eggs and use them for hatching. He might tell the story in this manner:

#### **CRACKED EGGS MAY BE HATCHED**

Poultrymen who have been discarding fancy and expensive hatching eggs because they were checked or cracked in shipment may avoid both their grief and their losses from this cause. The eggs may be "salvaged" and used successfully for hatching, unless they are badly injured.

All that the poultryman needs to do when he receives such eggs is to perform

a little skillful patching, and he can put them under the old hen or in the incubator along with the perfectly sound eggs. They will produce chicks as well as the undamaged eggs, and he will not be able to tell the difference between the fluffy youngsters.

When damaged eggs are found in a shipment, set them aside for careful examination. If the skin under the shell is broken, of course the egg is useless for hatching. But if the skin is unbroken, the egg can be saved, even though the cracks and checks may spread over an area as large as a quarter. Cover the cracks with a thin coating of glue—any good glue will do if it is not applied too thickly—and it will give the cracked area the necessary toughness to stand the hatching process. The glue must be allowed to dry thoroughly before the egg is put into the incubator.

If the cracks cover as much as half of the egg's surface, it probably is too badly damaged to be salvaged. If the egg is to be put under a hen, the larger the damaged area, the less the chances for its hatching.

Or he may have in hand, or he may secure, an *experience* which illustrates or exemplifies the information, and then he may present his material in some such form as this:

#### **MRS. JOHNSON PATCHES CRACKED HATCHING EGGS WITH GLUE**

When Mrs. Tom Johnson of Jones County began buying expensive hatching eggs for improving her farm flock, she found that quite regularly some of them were cracked on arrival, even though they had been carefully packed. Just as regularly she discarded them, taking a considerable loss, but finally she determined on an experiment to see whether or not they might be hatched in spite of their cracks, and the experiment worked. It worked not only once, but again and again.

"My experiment was quite simple," says Mrs. Johnson. "I merely glued up the cracks. That sounds too simple to be good, but the chicks that come out of the eggs prove that the scheme is all right, and it saves me a good bit of money, as well as disappointment."

When Mrs. Johnson finds checked or cracked eggs in a shipment, she rejects only those whose skin under the shell is broken, or those that are cracked over more than half of the egg. She prepares glue in the usual way and applies a thin coating over the cracked surface. That seals the cracks and provides a sort of substitute or extra shell which is tough and elastic and will stand handling practically as well as the sound shells. She uses an incubator for her hatching, which makes it more certain that the eggs will hatch. She says that if she were putting the eggs under a hen she would be more particular to reject the eggs that have large cracked areas. She adds that she has not lost a single fertile egg on account of cracks which she patched with glue.

In the first instance the writer used a straight *information story*,

in the second, an *experience story*, or as they are sometimes called, a *news-information story* and a *news-experience story*. Let us examine each in a little more detail.

**The news-information story:** As one reads the first example it gives an impression of being a news story, and it has increased interest because of that fact. It gives that impression partly for the reason that its information has a measure of news value, but more for the reason that it has been cast in typical news form with the intent of making it read like news.

If only the information in this instance be considered, it has about as little news quality as most stock information in agriculture, such as good practice in plowing, in handling hay, and the like. It bears no evidence of being new or recent; it is of more or less importance as is most information of this sort; it has no particular quality of nearness; it is somewhat unusual; it lacks in human interest; if published just in advance of the hatching season, it would be seasonable. It is only information, no more nor less, like the vast quantity of other information of all sorts that is available for publication and is often deserving of publication.

But the information is written in news form. It has a typical big-fact lead, and an effort has been made throughout to simulate news development and presentation. It follows the suggestions for news writing contained in preceding chapters. It might be written with any of the other types of leads, or it might be developed in any of the ways of news story construction.

Information stories of this sort have a place in journalism. But usually it is possible to link up some happening, some name, some bit of human interest, or some unusual fact with such material, as was done in the second version of the facts, and thus give the story greater interest and increased value. If information must be presented merely as information, let it be important and useful and seasonable or timely and exercise all possible ingenuity in giving it news structure. Apply the suggestions for writing news which have already been fully dealt with. That is about all that can be said or done.

A man or woman who is a recognized authority can give advice, and it will be accepted in good part by those who read. An ex-

periment station authority can say that a certain ration is good for fattening hogs. An experienced engineer can give advice on bridge construction. An authority on foods can state the correct temperatures for cooking meats. The reader will read their say-so, partly because the information appears to be authoritative and partly because there is news value in the statements of a person of distinction.

But there are other people who are not in quite the same position. County agents, home demonstration agents, field service workers, and others have sometimes had to learn this by sad experience. The journalism student who wishes to write an article for a magazine may know thoroughly the subject matter of which he wishes to write. But readers do not want advice from the young, inexperienced, or unknown writer. It is also a human trait to want to hear news. So it is good writing policy to put information in news form, rather than as advice.

**The news-experience story:** As one reads the second example story given above one feels that it is a news story—and it *is*. It carries the same technical information, and it has the same primary purpose to instruct or advise as the first example, but it has nearly all of the news characteristics that the first example does not have. It is not only written in news form, but its subject matter has the nature of news—at least within its field. This second example is correspondingly interesting; it is the kind of “stuff” that the editor likes to get for his journal; it is the kind of “stuff” that writers may find everywhere about them and for which they will have a reasonably ready market. Such stories may sometimes even carry information about practices and methods that are old, for when that information is linked up with entirely new persons and new circumstances, it renews its youth and becomes news over again.

The news-experience story example lacks in recency—at least it gives no evidence of having happened very recently. That is likely to be the case with most stories of this type. However, recency is not so important a quality in the publication of the experience story in the farm or home journal or other technical or class journals as it is in the case of the straight news story in

the daily or weekly newspaper. But newness is important, and the story evidently has that quality; that is, the particular experience of the particular individual has probably not been published before. The example has the quality of importance; it may or may not be near to the place of publication in a geographical sense, but it is "near" in the sense that it is close to the interests of the readers of almost any farm journal. The example apparently has the quality of unusualness, partly inherent in the facts and partly due to the new circumstances. It has human interest—that is inherent in almost every experience story. It may be given the quality of seasonableness if offered for publication at the right time. In short, the second example bears most of the ear marks of a good story.

What was said in a previous paragraph about old information taking on news value when presented as the experience of new persons under new circumstances must not be taken to mean that the information carried can be ordinary or common. Ordinarily, common information is not important. Information about the ordinary methods of storing vegetables, or the ordinary methods of canning is not likely to be acceptable to editor or reader, no matter how well "dressed up" in writing. There must be some measure of newness or unusualness in the facts as well as in the circumstances of the experience. There is not likely to be a worthwhile experience story in a farm woman's marketing of eggs at the country store, but if she ships her quality eggs to a dealer in Chicago, or to a select lot of customers nearby, thereby getting a premium price and a bigger profit than anybody else in her community, that would make a good experience story. The average poultrywoman does not do this.

**Finding material for experience stories:** Experience stories must come out of the experience of the writer, or of some other person.

If the writer is a farmer, a homemaker, an engineer, a research worker, an extension specialist; or engaged in some business, industry, or profession; or has some hobby, as photography or flower growing—then the best possible material may be found in his or her own experience. The most valuable experience story is usually

written out of the writer's own work and knowledge. It carries an air of reality that no other story can duplicate. A journalism student who wishes to write for publication can find no better way to begin as a writer than with experience stories of his own.

A home economics student who for several years had baked angel food cakes and sold them, wrote a story about how to bake such cakes. A horticulture student wrote on how apple thinning had paid as practiced in the home orchard. An engineering student prepared a manuscript on a system of drying hybrid seed corn with forced air circulation which he had installed on his father's farm. These three stories were written as assignments in a class in technical journalism. All were bought and later published by magazines of national circulation.

A teacher of vocational agriculture who had helped a dairyman plan an unusual type of dairy barn later took a picture of the building and wrote a story. A dietician in a hospital wrote a short article for a household magazine on how she cooks game. An engineer on a big construction job wrote an article for an engineering magazine on some unusual features of this work. These articles were accepted and published.

But after while, the well of the writer's own experience may go dry. If he is to continue at writing, the second method of finding material for this type of article must be utilized. This is to draw on the experiences of others. In other words, you become a reporter. You go looking for news or, more specifically, for news-experience story material.

Such material is to be found everywhere. On a college campus it is found in extension activities, in research work in laboratories, in reports from cost test associations and cost account records. It may be dug out of reports of county agents on file or out of annual reports made by teachers of vocational agriculture or home economics. Away from the campus, ideas and material can be found in practically any community.

All you have to do is to hunt for experience material, as was learned by a young college instructor who had for several years tried his hand at other types of stories with indifferent success. Most of the manuscripts that he sent to the farm magazines came

back promptly, largely because they dealt with things more or less remote from the farm and its life.

Going back to his old home farming community for his vacation one summer, he determined to try his hand at actual farm reporting—gathering experience stories. So he borrowed his father's flivver and set out around the neighborhood, stopping at farms wherever he thought that he might find something of interest.

When he came to write his articles he told of one farmer's experience with lamb-raising; of another's convenient hog house; of another's success with sowing rye in shock rows; of discing wheat before sowing clover seed; of a boy's money-making with a Jersey calf; of a concrete hog wallow; and similar things. These were all experience stories, with the name of the farmer linked up with each and a picture with nearly every one. They were written concisely in news style. Practically every one was sold. One leading farm journal liked these short experience stories so well that the editor soon after gave the young man an assignment to get a longer feature article.

Knowing that a certain farm journal was in need of short experience articles about farm buildings, a young man who wrote occasionally for publication took his car and made a short trip across country to pick up a notebook full of experience stories. As a result of this trip he wrote and sold short articles, with and without pictures or drawings, about a handy catch for holding up windows in poultry houses, about a comparison between two different types of hog houses on adjoining farms, on a new type of poultry house, on a cheap hog shade, on a handy and safe bull pen, on grinding feed with tractor power, on packing bees for winter, about a stock loader on wheels, on a farm hospital for livestock, and on a crib and granary combined.

A staff reporter for a rural magazine of national circulation relates how he found good stories wherever he went. For instance, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland he found a grower of sweet potatoes who was getting a premium price by washing his potatoes with a large machine that he built in his packing house. In Mississippi, a county agent gave him the facts about increasing crops by use of a new by-product fertilizer. A Utah farmer stepped up

barley yields by growing a new variety originated at the state agricultural experiment station.

In eastern New Mexico, this reporter found a farmer who stacked field-chopped alfalfa in long parallel ricks in the center of his feed lot, lined the space between with heavy paper, and used this space for storing his corn silage. Out in Yuma, Arizona, it was a large grower of cantaloupes who told him of the development of a new variety which would ripen early in the field and stand shipping to distant markets. Successful feeding of pea-vine silage to beef cattle was the story related to him by a Montana farmer.

A dozen other states furnished notes for many other experience articles of value.

Equally fertile is the field of experience material for the writer of articles of special interest to women. Every well-conducted household will provide some new wrinkle for saving time in home-making, planning meals and preparing them to fit nutrition requirements, managing a budget, dealing with child rearing, youth problems, community recreation enterprises, and scores of other experiences that make information news.

A young engineer on a highway building crew saw some new ideas in mixing concrete and getting it onto the job several miles away; his contractor boss developed a method of curing the mixture after it was in place that saved time and money without reducing the quality of the job. There was a good story in each experience. Likewise, the observing, inquisitive technical man in any field of engineering may find good material for stories. And not merely stories out of his own particular line of work, but out of incidental experiences. A college teacher who often writes magazine articles on the side, based on professional information, took a vacation in the north woods to get away from his work. He caught a big bass and had his wife take a picture of him holding the bass. He had an interesting adventure in capturing it. When he got home, he wrote a story on bass fishing which sold promptly to an outdoors magazine.

Ideas for stories come from being on the lookout for them as you travel along the road, as you visit farms or homes or construction jobs or factories. You hear of them at meetings. You

learn of them by inquiry from people who are in touch with things. Many a tip for them can be found in the newspapers you read. A perusal of bulletins and circulars put out by colleges and government agencies often suggests stories.

Another way, and one of the best of all, to get suggestions on what to write is to examine a number of journals to which you would like to contribute to see just what they are publishing. Two or three hours of careful study will be ample to provide you with an abundance of ideas for stories. But, of course, such study is merely preparation for an observing visit to places where worthwhile things are being done.

In addition, it may be said that the earlier discussions of news gathering methods are directly applicable to the gathering of experience material, for experiences are news.

**Writing the news-experience story:** If the news experience story is based on an experience of the writer, it is usually best written as such an experience and in the first person. When so written it takes on qualities that make it desirable to the editor because his readers like these qualities in a story—the qualities of informality, of personality, of reality, of human interest, and so on. But even so, the personal experience story is usually best written in news story form. You will find it best to choose your lead and write it as you would an ordinary news story lead; you will find it best to write the body of the story as you would construct a news story.

If the experience story deals with the experience of others, then by all means cast it in the form of the news story.

In either case the material is news, looking at it from the standpoint of the journal and its readers, and the suggestions made in previous chapters on news writing have full application.

However, a few special suggestions may be profitable. Tell your story plainly. What Shakespeare said of a tale speeding best when plainly told fits the experience story; the readers are not so much interested in the style as in the information, although style should not be neglected; every manuscript ought to be workmanlike. Let your story be like Abraham Lincoln's famous legs, which he said were just long enough to reach the ground. The length will vary

from a paragraph to several paragraphs or a half column or more, but never should it be longer than enough to tell what the reader wants to know; again, the reader is most interested in the information presented. If the story gives instruction for making or building something, be very explicit as to directions, measurements, materials, and the like. Make clear early in the story whether it is a personal experience or not, and if not, tell promptly whose experience it is and give names, places, and other information adequately so that the reader may know that the experience is worthwhile. It is desirable to give the story a title and the sprightlier, more suggestive it is, the better.

**Perhaps a bigger story:** Many of these news-experience stories have in them also the elements for a longer article—a feature story. All that is necessary is to secure additional material, along with several photographs. A writer who begins his writing experience with these short articles will soon find that he can go on to the longer, more important ones.

**Some examples:** A few examples of the news-experience story will illustrate better than further discussion, just what this type of story is and how it is written. Those given here have been selected from a number of publications in different fields. Some were illustrated with photographs. The journalism student should go on to examine still other publications.

### CANADA THISTLES

Neighbors talked behind their hands six years ago when H. E. Ball went to an auction in Henry County, Indiana, and bought a farm for \$40 an acre. A 42-acre field on the farm was so completely overrun with Canada thistle that it hadn't grown crops for several years.

But Mr. Ball fooled 'em. He knew what to do with Canada thistle. He plowed the field in July and started cultivating it at ten-day intervals with a duckfoot cultivator. The eleven-inch shovels cut the thistles off below the surface of the ground. He kept duckfooting until late fall, then started again in spring. Due to a three-week rainy spell, soil packed and thistles got a start, so he plowed again.

In June he planted corn (checked so he could cultivate both ways). He used hoes to cut thistles out of the hills. Hogs were turned in to harvest the corn in fall. His returns from corn were \$56 an acre.

The following season the land was rented to a cannery for tomatoes. *Only nine thistle plants were found!*—(*Farm Journal*)

### WATERING HAY STACKS

Before Max Dahl, Cass County, North Dakota, moves stacks of alfalfa or sweet clover from field to hayloft or to his feed lot for immediate use, he wets them thoroughly. Late last fall, before moving a 35-ton stack of alfalfa, Dahl pumped over 1000 gallons of water into it, using a 300-gallon tank loaded on his pickup truck, a garden hose, and a small pump. The water soaked through the stack from the top and was quickly absorbed by the hay. This treatment saved the leaves, improved the color, and increased the palatability. Water absorption softened the stems and branches, and cattle ate the hay readily with very little waste. Dahl has found that with the water treatment, which may be given at any time of year, he can feed coarse hay without grinding or chopping.—Walter Hunt.—(*Successful Farming*)



### WOMEN'S MARKET

Early last summer, 30 farm women in Atlantic County, New Jersey, started a farm women's market, to be open every Saturday. In 15 operating days they took in over \$4,500 for farm products, and because of the increasing number of regular customers, found it worth their while to keep the market open every Saturday during the fall. Carloads of shoppers stopped continually every Saturday at the market, which is about five miles out of Atlantic City on one of the heavily-traveled highways toward Philadelphia. At the end of the year, gross receipts added up to \$7,500.

To get the market started, an association was organized and each woman bought a share of stock at \$25 a share. The Farm Security Administration loaned money to some of the women who lacked ready cash to buy membership.

Farm women in Burlington county, New Jersey, visited this market to get tips on starting a similar market.—(*Farm Journal*)



### WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE PHEASANTS

By Wilma Phillips Stewart

I wonder how many of you are struggling with a pheasant or two in your kitchen! Maybe the hunter in your family just sort of tossed them on the kitchen table and expected you to do the rest.

All right, but this is for those of you who are new at this "pheasant-fixing."

You can't tell how to prepare the pheasant until you look at the last big feather on the wing—if pointed, the bird is a young one and can be roasted; if the feather is rounded, then the bird is an old one and must be cooked by braising (addition of moisture and a covered utensil.)

#### Picking

If pheasants are picked right after shot, they pluck easily; otherwise scald and pluck feathers. There are some who like to skin the birds, which means that the surface of bird must be stripped with bacon or salt pork, if its age permits roasting.

#### Smothered Pheasant

1. Cut pieces as for frying; roll in salted flour. Saute each piece in butter or bacon fryings until coated nicely with brown.

2. Place in casserole and scatter minced celery tops over pheasant or one cup of finely diced celery or a mixture of both.
  3. Pour over one cup of sour cream or milk. Wine makes a delicious gravy. Cover and bake in a slow oven, 325 degrees F., until tender—about one hour. Remove cover the last 15 minutes of baking time.
  4. Remove pheasant to a hot platter and keep it hot. Make gravy with pan drippings.
  5. Serve with wild rice, brown rice or browned hominy grit cakes.
3. If you wish the rice more moist, add a little more water during the cooking process.
  4. I like to add one-half cup of mushrooms which have been sauted in butter for each cup of rice used. Add extra salt if necessary.

#### Roast Pheasant

#### Wild Rice

1. Wash and pick over rice. Use as many waters as you think necessary to get the rice clean.
2. Cover each cup of wild rice used with one cup of hot water and one teaspoon of salt. Place in top of a double boiler and add two tablespoons of butter. Cover and let cook for about 45 minutes. Keep water in lower part of double boiler just bubbling during the cooking process.

1. Rub inside of bird with salt. Stuff with well-seasoned bread dressing or cooked wild rice seasoned with salt and butter. Tie as you would a chicken.
2. Place on a rack in an uncovered roaster. Rub bird with butter or bacon fryings, or, if you wish it to be self-basting, put strips of bacon or salt pork on breast.
3. Do not add liquid or use a cover. Roast in a slow oven, 325 degrees F., for one to one and one-half hours. Baste frequently so that the meat will not become dry.

*P. S. Instead of using sage in your bread dressing, finely diced apple makes a splendid addition.—(Des Moines Register)*



### LAMESA FARMER TO TERRACE NOW

*Special to The Star-Telegram*

Lamesa, June 21—Row crop land is usually not terraced in the summer time, but J. H. Reese of Lamesa expects to build terraces on his entire 320 acres before harvest time next fall.

For two years Reese has been practicing contour tillage on his farm located five miles southeast of Sparenberg and he claims that the crooked-row farming paid big dividends in increased yields of cotton and sorghum crops last year, due to the moisture conserved. He is co-operating with the soil conservation CCC camp near Lamesa and has been expecting to terrace the farm for some time, but the rush of work and lack of equipment has prevented his doing so.

#### Crops Washed Away

This Spring heavy rains coming after his crops were planted washed out most of the crops and a severe hail storm finished what was left. Although the land was contour tilled, the lister ridges had been worked down in planting operations

and the contour furrows by themselves could not hold the heavy Spring rains. Hence, most of the crops were washed out. Reese believes that terraces are the solution to this problem.

The Reese farm lies along Sulphur Draw on land that has a slope of 1 to 4 per cent. The farm has been in cultivation several years and has suffered moderate erosion by both wind and water, and in some fields a few gullies are beginning to appear.

#### Good Moisture Lost

Realizing that soil and water conservation practices are necessary not only to increase his crop yields, but also to save the farm from eventual destruction, Reese began co-operation with the CCC camp at Lamesa last year in an effort to install a complete conservation program on the entire farm.

Since Reese does not have a crop on most of his land at the present time, he figures this Summer is a good time to

get his terraces built. Hence, he has made arrangements to secure the proper equipment and get the job done as soon as possible.

"If terraces had been constructed this

Spring to hold the rain on the land, I would have had good moisture to replant, but as the rain fell in just a few minutes, most of it went to the Sulphur Draw," he states.—(*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*)



## MACHINE TO DIG POST HOLES HELPS FARMERS BUILD FENCES

By Frank W. Bill

Pontiac—Duffy brothers, farmers and mechanics, utilized spare time last winter to make a post hole digging machine which has saved them a lot of hand labor this spring in building of new fences.

It cost just \$25, including \$17 spent for welding, plus a lot of junk parts from old autos and an old single row corn picking machine and two old corn shellers—and a lot of time in the farm shop.

Quite likely a new machine to do the same job would cost \$500 or more, but junk and mechanical ability often serve very well in the place of cash on farms, and building machinery is just fun for farmer mechanics.

An old model T Ford truck provided the engine, frame and front wheels. A Chrysler rear axle was fitted under the rear of this frame, far enough forward to provide plenty of room for the digger at the rear. A short steel chain couples the old truck transmission to the rear axle shaft.

Gears from an old corn sheller drag line were mounted directly behind the old truck transmission, providing the chain drive for the digger.

### Used Corn Picker Shaft

Angle iron was used for the vertical digger frame, and gears from the old corn picker machine.

An old rolling coulter from a plow was

cut and shaped into an auger digger, mounted on the end of a six-foot two-inch pipe, the upper end fitted with a square shoulder into which was fitted the square drive shaft from the old corn picking machine. That square shaft telescopes into the two-inch pipe shaft of the auger when the auger is elevated.

The only labor connected with the digging of a post hole is that required to back the machine into position and operate the hand wheel that raises and lowers the auger. That hand wheel, by the way, came from an old hand power corn sheller.

### Digs Through Frost

The machine was used by Martin and William Dully on the farm northwest of Pontiac, doing a first class job, even when there was frost in the ground.

This week Maurice Duffy has used the machine over south of Graymont, digging holes for 80 rods of new fence.

Because it is mounted at the rear of a truck frame, it can be backed into any fence for digging extra holes in old fences, as well as in cleared space where new fences are to be made. In case the ground is sloping so the truck frame cannot be placed level, the digger frame may be shifted so the post hole will be straight.—(*Daily Pantagraph, Bloomington, Ill.*)



## A NOVEL METHOD OF SELLING CIDER

Paul Muckley, an Ohio applegrower, has developed a novel method of increasing cider sales. During the late fall and early winter Muckley presses large quantities of cider, blending several apple varieties together. Fifty-gallon wooden barrels are used as containers.

The filled barrels are taken into storage and placed in the "zero" room and frozen solid. Five gallons per barrel is allowed for expansion in the process of freezing. The cider is kept frozen until five or six days before it is to be sold. It requires four or five days in a room temperature of 75 degrees for a barrel of cider to thaw completely.

No preservative is added to the cider at any time, and the fresh-cider quality is retained until it is marketed.

Muckley didn't stop when he found a satisfactory method of making good cider for early-season use, but he also devised a novel method of successfully merchandising large quantities of it in competition with other soft drinks. A portable cooling outfit equipped with a refrigerating unit and a stainless-steel tank much like some of the commercial milk coolers was mounted on a trailer chassis. The entire outfit was then covered with a collapsible tent and awning.

With this outfit Muckley makes the rounds of the county and state fairs throughout the Corn Belt.—C. W. Ellenwood.—(*Country Gentlemen*)



### ELECTRIC DRIVE IMPROVES SAW RIG

Experiencing continued difficulty with its gasoline-motor-driven saw rig, the City Fuel Company, Seattle, Wash., switched to electric power by exercising considerable imagination and ingenuity. As shown in the accompanying illustrations, an old truck frame and cab, including the truck motor, were used to construct the new rig. One 40-hp., 440-volt, three-phase induction motor drives the conveyors, chains and saws by belts. The motor is mounted directly behind the cab on the frame of the truck and underneath the conveyor platform. The motor cost \$300, one 200-ft., three-conductor No. 6 cable \$120, and the total cost \$675, including \$255 for installation.

Operating data on a monthly basis for the rig is 600 cords of firewood, 1,800 kw.-hr. power requirement, 120 man-hours (one man handles the equipment on a six-hour shift). Since building the first machine, City Fuel has constructed two more and had another built by contract for its Everett, Wash., yard. All of these rigs are portable, and J. R. Tucker, superintendent of the fuel company, says: "These machines are much faster and save about \$1 per cord over the old method." Advantages of the electric-powered rig are that it is fireproof, cuts to exact lengths desired and reduces labor and maintenance cost.—(*Electrical World*)



### TRACTOR SHIFTS RAILWAY TRACK

Great saving of track-moving labor is accomplished at the works of the Timken Roller Bearing Co. by a tractor bulldozer fitted with the lifting and pulling attachment illustrated. This attachment is made of two torch-cut 1-in. plates set parallel and welded to cross-spacers. The tops of the plates are cut to hook tightly over the top of the bulldozer blade. Two dogs and a hook, which runs back under the blade, make the bottom of the attachment secure. In operation the tractor moves ahead to hook the device under the far rail and lift and drag the track toward the edge of the dump or it backs so that the device bears against the near rail and the track is pulled inward. As used at the Timken steel mill dump it is estimated that 1 hr. of tractor work equals 96 hrs. of hand labor when working on the level and 120 hrs. when moving track uphill. The device is not

manufactured by the Timken company; it is described here as a service to contractors or others who have track shifting to do. Any well outfitted machine shop can make the device. As used at the Timken mills, it is fitted to a diesel crawler-tractor bulldozer.—(*Engineering News-Record*)



The following story is an excellent example of a short article that combines spot news with added information material. It was published in the *Engineering Experiment Station News* of Ohio State University. Note that it has a summary news lead and that it is constructed in pyramidal news form. As it was printed, the article also contained three photographs, two tables, and seven footnotes, one of which contained a third table.

### A NEW ALLOY CAST IRON FOR USE AT ELEVATED TEMPERATURES

By *A. H. Dierker*  
*Research Engineer*  
*Engineering Experiment Station*

An alloy cast iron recently developed at the Engineering Experiment Station for use at elevated temperatures has shown definite commercial possibilities, including relatively low cost and excellent foundry properties. We present briefly some information on its properties and applications.

This alloy, developed in cooperation with the Globe Iron Company at Jackson, Ohio, who control the patent rights, has been designated by the name "Globeloy."

The material is essentially an alloy cast iron with silicon and chromium as the principal alloying elements. A typical analysis is given in Table I. In this table, taken from data previously reported, are shown the growth and scale loss under prolonged exposure at elevated temperatures in comparison with those of cast iron of normal composition.

The mechanical properties of the material as cast are quite good as the following list indicates:

|                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Total C.....             | 1.86%              |
| Si.....                  | 5.80               |
| Mn.....                  | 0.35               |
| P.....                   | 0.137              |
| S.....                   | 0.055              |
| Cr.....                  | 3.58               |
| Transverse strength..... | 2,230 lbs.         |
| Total deflection.....    | .137 in.           |
| Tensile strength.....    | 31,800 lb./sq. in. |
| Brinell Hardness No..... | 363                |

Despite the high Brinell hardness, no serious difficulty is experienced in machining the material. Fig. 1 shows its microstructure as cast and after use. Apparently the pearlite present in its as-cast material is, on exposure to elevated temperatures, spheroidized. Thus machinability can be improved, and, as will be shown, at no loss of mechanical strength.

Experience in one commercial application of the material raised the question of mechanical strength at temperatures above 1,600°F. A simple test was made to get a direct comparison of its strength, under such conditions, with a high strength cast iron.

The test pieces were bars  $\frac{5}{8}$  in. square by 12 in. long. These were tested transversely on 10 in. centers with the load applied at the middle. In making the high temperature tests, the bars were heated to temperature in an electric resistance furnace and tested as rapidly as possible and before the temperature dropped appreciably.

The results obtained (Table II) indicate that the material has reasonable strength, at elevated temperature and that its strength at room temperature is not impaired by annealing as is the case with either ordinary or high strength cast iron.

Trial commercial applications of the material have indicated that its relative resistance to growth and scaling under actual operating conditions is about as disclosed by the laboratory tests previously reported.

In Fig. 2 is a small box (6 in. x 8 in. x 3 in. deep) for holding small parts for heat treating. This box was tried out in a commercial gas-fired furnace. The photo shows it after it had been in service 112 hours at temperatures ranging from 1,600° to 1,750° averaging 1,635°F. It is still in good shape and would stand many more hours of service.

This new alloy has been successfully made in a cupola as well as in an electric furnace, and there is little doubt it could be made in an air furnace should production warrant it. A typical mix for producing Globeloy in the cupola is

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Silvery Pig Iron (10.00 Si, 6.00 Cr) . . . | 65% |
| Steel Scrap . . . . .                      | 35% |

The iron produced has excellent casting properties. No trouble is experienced in running very thin sections. The cost of production is quite low for a material of this nature.



#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Clip and turn in ten news-experience articles from current magazines or newspapers. Analyze each briefly as to content and as to structure.
2. Examine five issues of as many different journals and list the topics of the news-experience articles that they contain.
3. Turn in five ideas for news-experience stories that you can secure; explain where you would get them and what you would put into the stories.
4. Carry out the above assignments for news-information stories.

## FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

For classes which may wish to continue with additional writing of this type of article, some of the various types of articles which might be written are as follows:

1. Write an article telling how to make or do something, based on your own personal experience. This should be practical, of sufficient general interest, and something that can be readily made by the readers of the publication for which it is intended. It might be a new type of building, a useful appliance or device, a method for success with some crop, a way of feeding livestock, a farm management hint, control of some pest, a cooking recipe, a well-planned meal, for example.

2. Write another story of the same type as above, but based on the experience of someone else, obtained by an interview.

3. Write a story for general readers based on recent experimental work. Play up the practical application angle, if possible, in the lead. Material should be secured by interviewing the research workers responsible.

4. Write another story for general readers based upon experimental results on a recently published bulletin or article in a technical publication or scientific journal. If you can interview the author to get further information or personal slants, do so.

5. Write a short article based on a current extension activity or project along your major line of interest. Some extracurricular or off-campus work of a faculty member not doing extension work as such, would serve.

6. Write an article based on the activity or work of some organization or agency, either local or state.

7. Write a story for a farm paper, household magazine, or trade paper based on an idea which you found in a story clipped from a daily or weekly newspaper.

8. Write a short article of timely information that has no actual news quality, but which will be interesting because of timeliness and sprightly way in which it is written.

9. Prepare a four-page leaflet of information for distribution: Something a county agent might write on local pest control, that a home demonstration agent might write for use in canning demonstrations, that a farmer might send to potential buyers of his hybrid seed corn or other product, that a nursery or seed store might send or give to customers, that a builder or architect might send to prospective builders of homes.

10. Write a short story article or copy for leaflet for the purpose of making plain to the general reader, or to some special class of readers, the meaning of some technical word or phrase well understood by you but not to the possible

reader. Make it interesting. Show by use of specific examples how the term applies to the reader. For example, if you take ultraviolet light, apply its use to poultry or to bacterial ring rot of potatoes. If you explain the Brinell test to a landscape gardener, show him where to find the test mark on a new nursery spade. If you select nicotinic acid, tell it in terms of pork chops—if these contain the substance. Some suggestions for an assignment of this sort would be: Brinell test for hardness, boiler meter, standby plant, vitamin D, pH, FFA, REA, FSA, kwh, USP, nicotinic acid, soilless culture, photoelectric cell, homogenized milk, continuous-freeze ice cream, Gouda cheese, mastitis, nylon, fortified foods, photosynthesis, triploid, wind bracing, photoelastic, water walls, turbulent type, fly ash, centrifugal pump, "Hard" X-ray, clone, dynamometer, kaolin, *Chrysanthemum coreanum*, pyrophyllite, diesel, colloid, late blight, All American Selections, pectin, abrasives, diffusors, veneers, haydite, Underwriters' Laboratories Inc., Insp. Cord, open formula, calcium chloride, calcium nitrate, trisodium phosphate, miscible oil, cryolite, monohydrated copper sulfate, atomic radio, methyl bromide, cellulose acetate, grass silage, direct buying, fresno scraper, deep well cooker.

## CHAPTER 20

### COLUMNS, BRIEFS, AND NOTES

NOT long ago teachers of journalism in colleges and universities received a letter from the *Washington Post*, published at the nation's capitol, suggesting that this newspaper would be suitable for use by journalism classes as an example of a modern newspaper. With the letter came copies of a current Wednesday issue of the *Post*.

An examination of this particular issue revealed a striking characteristic of the present-day newspaper. Its thirty-six pages included twenty-six different "columns," departments, or features, signed by the writers, which in all cases but one were made up of short, timely discussions, news notes, briefs on informational topics. The twenty-six features did not include spot news stories signed by the writers, nor include news summaries in bulletin form in heads of stories, nor routine news forms such as those discussed in a previous chapter.

On the second page was a department headed "The President's Day," made up of five items, which was in effect a current diary of the activities of the President of the United States, written by the International News Service.

"Ringside Table" was a department dealing with entertainment at hotels, restaurants, and night clubs which included seventeen items. On the two editorial pages were six signed columns or departments of comment, five of which were devoted to short topics. There were two signed departments of short notes on the society pages and four such departments of briefs on the sports pages, in addition to regular news stories. A column entitled "The Federal Diary" presented various topics.

On a household page were three departments dealing with short discussions of home furnishings, foods, and answers to letters. Elsewhere was a column of movie gossip notes from Hollywood and

financial notes of news or comment. Still another feature contained notes on hunting.

A look through the pages of the *Chicago Daily News* shows similar signed columns of short items under the following heads: "What the Desk Sergeant Hears," "Sharps and Flats," "All Things Considered," "Automobile Trade Notes," "Stories of the Day," "Letters from Cooks," "Out Shopping with Ninon," "By Mignon," "Dictionary of Decoration," "Cooking School," "First Aid to Ailing," "My Neighbor Says," "The Barber Shop," "The Voice from the Grandstand," "Personalities," "Old Bill Suggested," "Other Store Features." Besides these, there were nine other signed syndicate columns.

This method of writing inside news, daily happenings, comment on news, gossip and timely information in briefs, notes or short accounts or discussions is a pronounced feature of daily newspapers of today. It is found in weekly newspapers, too, as well as magazines and other journals throughout the United States, general popular, technical, and scientific.

Facility in writing this news form will probably fit in with the other after-college work of students in technical journalism courses. It will give them another string for their bows. If they become county agents, home demonstration agents, or vocational teachers, the writing that they will do for local newspapers may well be done in this form in part at least. Local correspondents of periodicals in the fields of engineering, trade, industry, science, may often make good use of it.

**How they originated:** The brief or note just discussed is of course nothing new. It is merely enjoying a vogue. Short, often pungent paragraphs on editorial pages have long been common. Society items in city dailies and the items of country correspondence in rural weeklies are in this class. The use of short paragraphs under department heads has from its founding been a feature that made *Farm Journal* popular with its readers.

Writers of signed and syndicated features of news, comment, and gossip about Washington affairs have found the brief invaluable. It enables them to cover a number of topics in a single feature instead of one, and that broadens its reader interest. More-

over, the short items permitted them to present their material rather more interestingly than in longer stories.

The success of the news-comment weekly magazine *Time* rests largely on its policy of presenting the news and comment in short accounts, written in an original style. A good many other publications have adopted this method, wholly or in part.

The device of getting information across to readers by means of a diary, or a line-a-day method of writing has often been utilized by magazines in the past. But it has become especially important in the present-day magazine, especially in those devoted to the interests of women: "Line a Day" by Ann Batchelder in *Ladies' Home Journal* and "Diary of a Plain Dirt Gardener" in *Better Homes and Gardens*. Although not in diary form "The Man Next Door," by Harlan S. Miller in *Better Homes and Gardens* has been for many years an outstanding magazine department.

In the engineering, technical, and scientific fields, this method of writing in brief form also includes such material as business and construction notes, correspondent's items, abstracts of technical publications, review of books, and obituaries.

**Examples:** Examples of this short, lively way of presenting news and information coming from a number of different publications and fields follow:

#### HOUSEHOLD HINTS

Baby's silk jackets need special laundry care. Wash in suds of mild soap and warm water. Rinse thoroughly and gently in clear water of same temperature. Wrap in turkish towel until almost dry and then press on wrong side with warm iron.

If you have trouble removing stains from silver forks, dip them directly into soft silver cleaner and rub well with soft cloth. Since the cloth will then have quite a bit of polish on it, use for cleaning large pieces.—(*Chicago Sunday Herald-American*)

#### FARM NEWS KERNELS

##### Horses, \$20 to \$95

Morton (PNS)—At the Morton sales conducted by J. N. Frank Saturday, 20 head of horses were offered with \$95 the top price, while the price range for most of them was between \$20 and \$45. A

yearling mule colt sold for \$50. Dairy cattle brought a top of \$105. Stock cattle ranged in price from \$25 to \$40, remaining steady with the recent decline.

Pigs sold from \$6 to \$9; boars up to \$30; ewes from \$7.50 to \$10 and bucks from \$7.50 to \$11.50. Six goats were offered ranging from \$1.50 to \$6.50; seven bushels of turnips sold for 50 cents per basket and 11 ducks brought 55 and 65 cents each.

##### Snow Delays Husking

Snowfall up to 11 inches in parts of northwestern Iowa further delayed husking last week, according to the USDA weekly grain market review. Chicago carlot receipts were 1,090 last week compared with 972 for the week previous, however, indicating progress in other districts. The Commodity Credit corporation raised its asking price for No. 2 yellow corn in Chicago to 80 cents a bushel.

Soybean millers were reported to be disappointed with the high per cent of moisture in the beans going to market last week.

### Good Corn Husker

Pontiac—Francis Cashmer has husked 2,500 bushels of corn for A. C. Kleim, near Pontiac, averaging 140 bushels a day. This was in corn that is making 70 bushels per acre.—(Frank W. Bill, in *Daily Pantagraph*, Bloomington, Ill.)

R. F. D.

By Carlyle Hodgkin

(World-Herald Farm Editor)

### The Gadekens Struck Water

To drive along the Lodgepole valley from tiny Bushnell into Wyoming, you would scarcely think there is any important amount of water under the bare, gray hills to the south.

Yet just to the south of that highway the Gadekens, August and his son, Clyde, have struck, they tell me, what gives promise of being one of the best irrigation wells in the country.

They put down a test well and, with luck, hit a good flow of water the first time. As I recall, the water level is 32 feet and the draw-down is only eight or 10 feet when the pump is delivering 1,200 gallons of water per minute.

The Gadekens bought the land before putting down the well—bought it with the agreement that they weren't buying it unless they got a good irrigation well. Which sounds like a pretty good idea if it's a place to irrigate you're looking for.

### Feeling Fine

The western folk were all in good humor at the Kimball meeting—and why not? They raised a good wheat crop for a good price this year.

August Gadeken, Bushnell, reported 30-bushel wheat. Charles Norberg, Kimball, said his averaged 30, a small field of irrigated wheat going 50 to pull up the average. Vernon Lynn, Kimball, had a snapshot of wheat piled in his field—the pile looked like Pike's peak. He has just lately finished hauling it, he said. Haven Smith, Chappell, got a 33-bushel average.—(*Omaha World-Herald*)

### CHEESE IN NEW GUISE

An impertinent-looking turkey with a bright red cellophane face and elegant orange-and-brown ruff of fluted crêpe paper makes a charming hostess present for Thanksgiving Day. For his chest is formed of a fat, round, baby gouda cheese, of glossiest crimson, and his body is made of a chunky little cheddar. His ruffled brown tail has the proud eclat of a peacock's and his feet are firmly implanted on a beribboned box of canapé toast. The price is \$1.84.—(From "News of Food," by Jane Holt in *New York Times*)

### NOW IS THE TIME TO:

Pay the doctor.  
Feed the birds.  
Hold a box supper.  
Fix Rover's kennel.  
Get a new salt block.  
Break colts to halter.  
Put in a cistern filter.  
Clean the lantern fuel.  
Pot an amaryllis bulb.  
Keep batteries charged.  
Have your shoes half-sole.  
Take good care of feed bags.  
Start keeping farm accounts.  
Count the days till Christmas.  
Patch the poultry house roof.  
Have Dobbin treated for bots.  
Buy your wife a box of candy.  
Page through the family album.  
Read the second chapter of Matthew.  
Cut fire blight cankers from apple and pear trees.  
Eat apples, crack nuts, pop corn, tell stories, read books.  
Ask Mabel how in the world she makes such good sausage.  
Quit using washers or pennies when electric fuses blow out.  
Tell Junior his grade in algebra is better than any you ever got.  
Examine house plants for lice, white flies, scale or other pests.  
—(From "Topics in Season," in *Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife*, by M. Glen Kirkpatrick)

### GLEANINGS

#### Gratitude:

W. A. Langdon, Malone, New York, spinach grower, has a 10-foot statue of Popeye standing guard over his spinach acres. This likeness of the world's cham-

pion spinach-eater was a gift from the workers who handle Langdon's green-leaf crop.

### A, B, C, X, Y, Z:

Canned dandelion greens are making their appearance on American market stands. They are said to be chock-ful of precious vitamins. The new delicacy is replacing some European specialties which are no longer obtainable. (There are thousands of Americans who have been securing the vitamins in dandelion greens for the past umpteen years.)—(From *Better Farming*, Oliver Farm Equipment Company customer magazine)

### IOWA FARM KERNELS

Iowa, alone, has more hogs on farms than the combined numbers in 30 of the lower hog producing states in the U. S.

\* \*

U. S. citizens have eaten about 600 billion pounds of meat since Jan. 1, 1900, or an average of about 141 pounds per capita per year. Of this meat, 47 per cent was pork, 43 per cent beef, 4½ per cent lamb, and 5 per cent veal.

\* \*

A high-pressure sales campaign to "sell" Iowa farmers an inferior soybean, being sold under many names, with fabulous and ungrounded claims is in progress in this state. Iowa State College agronomists urge the use of seed of only the recommended varieties.—(From *Better Iowa*, Iowa State College)

### LINE A DAY

- 22 Cooked cereals are a sure-fire hit on cold mornings. Remember it's December—or near it. A few steamed dry figs cut up in said cereal will make the cheers unanimous.
- 23 Hamburg steak is far from humdrum if you broil it with halved tomatoes and bananas. Go together like school-girls and boy scouts.
- 24 Sweet basil (can't I ever keep off the herbs?) in a salad will make you hungry as well as satisfied. Can you beat it?
- 25 And just one more and no more—this time. Mix a little powdered sage into the next batch of b. p. biscuits. Use

them for creamed-chicken shortcakes.—(From "Line a day," by Ann Batchelder in *Ladies' Home Journal*)

### SALES OPPORTUNITY

Kansas City, Mo.—Corn Products Refining Co., 1001 Bedford Street, North Kansas City, manufacturer of starch, dextrine, etc., plans installation of motors and controls, switchgear, duct lines, conveyors and other power equipment in new additions to local mill, comprising several processing and production units for about 40 per cent increase in present capacity. Also will expand power plant, with installation of new 4,000-kw. turbine-generator unit and accessories, two boilers with rating of about 65,000 lb. of steam per hour, and miscellaneous equipment. Entire project is reported to cost over \$2,000,000. Work is scheduled to be carried out at once. Main offices of company are at 17 Battery Place, New York, N. Y.—(From "Sales Opportunities," in *Electrical World*)

### DEFENSE HOUSING, MIDDLE RIVER, MD.

Farm Security Administration, Washington, D. C., awarded the contract for six hundred homes for workers at Glenn L. Martin bomber plant, to Allied Housing Associates, Inc., Langhorne, Pa., \$1,581,000; four hundred homes to Stansbury Manor Corp., Middle River, \$1,078,000; and one hundred homes to Home Building Corp., Kansas City, Mo., \$284,000. Hale Walker, town planning consultant for FSA, and the Maryland State Planning Commission are working on the project.—(From "Jobs of the Week," in *Engineering News-Record*)

### TRADE LITERATURE

*Portable Belt Conveyors and Bucket Loaders*—Jeffrey Mfg. Co., Columbus, Ohio. Catalog 758 points out features and advantages of portable belt conveyors. Catalog 759 is devoted to portable bucket loaders.

*Synthetic Rubber*—B. F. Goodrich Co., Akron, Ohio. Catalog Section 8000 discusses in detail the properties of Ameripol D, including hardness, tensile strength, elongation, weight, color, odor and taste, elasticity and permanent set, tear and abrasion resistance, and resistance to flexing, oils and heat.—(*Coal Age*)

**Ques.:** Will you refer me to some source whereby I may obtain a detailed description on just how Indians tanned the pelts of animals—this for the purpose of a manuscript I am preparing?

**Ans.:** You will find an excellent article on Indian tanning, entitled "Skin and Skin Dressing," in Vol. 2, Bulletin 30, *Handbook of the American Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology (pp. 591-594).—(From "1001 Outdoor Questions," in *Field & Stream*)

### STARBEAMS

Let the Old Guard keep right on reading Willkie out of the Republican party, but those boys are not getting anywhere because, after each reading, the resourceful William Allen White of Emporia, Kas., who can write as well as read, sits down at his typewriter and puts Wendell back into the G. O. P.

Music is the universal language. And yet, if we should arrange a concert of orchestras from all the belligerent nations, a war would result over the selection of a conductor.

A Kansas Citian gets a lot of his economics out of the magazines which he reads standing up in the front of the corner drug store and he says he has figured out a good way to stabilize our financial system in case any emergency should happen. He would merely build a bank over Ft. Knox and open it up with a sign over the door: "Our Assets Are All the Gold in the World Worth Burying."—(From *Kansas City Star*)

### OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

By Victor H. Ries

Fall or spring planting, next to politics, is the world's most debatable subject. I like fall planting because it gives the plants a chance to get established before the perils of next summer. I think many of you will find the same thing is true, unless you live up North where your severe winters and cool summers make spring planting preferable. Woody plants can be set out any time until the ground freezes.

**THE COPPER-LINED SEEDBED** in my cold frame worked out fine this past season. If you remember, I used copper-covered sisal paper to linr the hole, then put in six inches of crushed stone and gravel and eight inches of sandy soil on top of this. The six-inch-deep copper basin held the water, so I only had to water once or twice a month. It was amazing what grand results I had from it. You could do the same either with this copper paper or with an inch or so of concrete reinforced with steel lath or chicken wire.—(In *Country Gentleman*)

### SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS

The opening of the Pennsylvania State College has been postponed for a week, until September 18, on account of the prevalence throughout the state of poliomyelitis.

The Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education has awarded the Lamme Medal for 1941 to Dr. Anson Marston, dean emeritus and for fifty years a member of the faculty of the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts at Ames. The award is the fourteenth made by the society for achievement in engineering education in memory of Benjamin G. Lamme, a pioneer in the engineering development of electric power.

A party from the department of geology and geography at Northwestern University will be engaged through the summer in the study of the pre-Cambrian rocks of the Los Pinos Range in central New Mexico. Drs. J. T. Stark and E. C. Dapples are in charge of the work, and will be assisted by Ralph Wilpolt, Mortimer Staatz, James Norton and Hugh Garrison. The project is financed by a grant from the university.—(From *Science*)

### OVER THE COFFEE

By Harlan Miller

Some of the experts tell me that the chorus of the Helzapoppin show here the other evening contained some of the homeliest girls ever brought to Des Moines by a Broadway hit. . . . Just couldn't get priorities on prettier girls, maybe.

\* \* \*

*I couldn't be so ungentlemanly as to agree with that. . . . But I'd bet \$5 I could recruit a*

*prettier chorus out around the Drake campus any morning of the week.*

Mark Thornburg, Iowa secretary of agriculture who will campaign for the U. S. senate next year, differs from some

Republican aspirants for high office in one respect; he can distinguish between a field of barley & a field of rye, & can tell a Jersey cow from a Holstein.—(From *Des Moines Register*)

**How to write them:** A reading of these short items and notes will reveal that some of them are spot news, some contain information told in news form, others are just plain information or advice, while still others are for entertainment only. Those that are news are written as news and almost always with a summary type lead. In fact some of them are nothing but leads for what could be developed into a larger story. The informational notes are usually written the same way. Items of gossip or entertainment may be written in any way that best lends itself to catching reader interest effectively. Often they are done in a manner similar to the human interest or fiction style news story.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Prepare a department for a newspaper or some other publication, made up of at least six one-paragraph items of current news or timely information. Make it a department such as a county extension agent, a vocational teacher, home service representative of a public utility, foods editor of a newspaper, or local correspondent for a trade or engineering weekly might put together. It might be a list of "What To Do This Month" items for farm, flower garden, or home.

2. Visit a city food market, a department store, a farm implement branch house, a wholesale house for engineering or industrial supplies, a county or state fair, a farm sale, a farmers' week audience, a large dairy manufacturing plant, a wholesale fruit and vegetable market, a large power plant, an ornamental nursery, a wholesale drug house, or some other equivalent place, and from the material gathered write a column of brief items of news or comment.

3. Examine the signed columns of shorts or briefs in several daily papers and prepare a brief report on how the same topic is handled by different writers—as farming, gardens, foods, petroleum, mining, fashions.

4. Make a brief report comparing use of signed columns or briefs in all the general daily newspapers in any one city—as Boston, Pittsburgh, Chattanooga, Buffalo, Cleveland, New Orleans, St. Louis, or Los Angeles. Or compare two competing newspapers, as *Cincinnati Enquirer* and *Times-Star*, or *Portland Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal*, or *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret News*, or *San Francisco Chronicle*

and *Oakland Tribune*, or papers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, or Dallas and Fort Worth.

5. Make a brief report on the use of short notes or briefs in four magazines in your major field. For example, home economics students might examine *Woman's Home Companion*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Refrigeration Engineering*, and *What's New in Home Economics*.

PART TWO

*The Feature Article*



## CHAPTER 21

### THE MAGAZINE FEATURE ARTICLE

**I**F YOU examine a copy of a magazine, you will find that its pages are largely filled with material which newspaper and magazine editors and writers call feature articles. These stories are normally secured in one of three ways: They may be written by members of the magazine staff; they may be written by men or women who are not associated with the staff but with whom the editor has negotiated for stories; or they may be written by "free lance" or occasional writers who submit their articles to the editor on their own volition. The proportion of material used by magazines from these sources varies greatly with the policies of the magazines. Some have a highly developed staff system and so depend largely upon their own writers to supply this class of material. Other magazines count upon securing from a large number of contributed stories the articles that will fit their particular policies and needs. Editors often make arrangements with well-known writers for special articles. The amount of material of this latter kind varies largely with the financial resources of the papers and the availability of writers who are qualified to handle particular subjects.

Newspapers, which also use feature articles, especially in their Sunday and magazine sections, secure them in practically the same ways, except that many of them also buy feature article material from news and feature syndicates. While the major emphasis in our discussion of feature articles will be on those designed for magazine publication, it must be kept in mind that the newspaper also offers a market for this type of material.

From the standpoint of the student of technical journalism who wishes to gain experience in reporting and writing, the newspaper type of feature article lends itself excellently as a medium. Campus stories may be found and written which may not have much if

any sale value, but they do furnish practice and they may often be used in campus newspapers and in student magazines in the fields of agriculture, home economics, and engineering. Technical news material also found on a campus is often the best possible material for magazine feature articles of informational value. Frequently the same material will serve both for a newspaper and a magazine feature, though requiring somewhat different treatment in writing.

**What is a feature article?** Just where lies the line of demarcation which separates a news story or a news experience story from a feature story or article is not easy to say—for the reason, perhaps, that there is no such line. In a newspaper there are news stories and feature articles; in a magazine there are news stories and feature articles. They have marked differences, but one will get into difficulties if he thinks of them as widely separate types of writing.

Suppose you take one issue each of four different magazines dealing with agriculture, home economics, engineering, and science. Ignore the editorial page, the fiction, the shorter news stories, the correspondence. Read through rapidly all of the longer articles, noting the following things: title, author, opening paragraphs, the main ideas or facts brought out by the article, the manner in which the story is told. Form as you read an idea of what group or class of readers would be interested in the story.

With this material in mind, investigate the following statements:

1. The feature article occupies a position between the news story and news-experience story on the one hand and the fiction story and the essay on the other, although its relation to the news story is much closer than to fiction and the essay.

2. Whereas fiction is concerned with imaginative material and the essay with the personal thoughts and reactions of the writer, the feature article has to do with the reporting of actual facts, happenings, movements, or the description of people, places, and things.

3. It differs from the news story primarily in this regard: The news story is what may be called a *two-dimensional story* while the feature article has *three dimensions*. The news story reports something that occurred at a particular time and place. It has no

before or after. Theoretically, at least, the reporter is an automaton for recording visual, auditory, or other impressions. This theory precludes his explanation of events or prophecy as to their effect. The news story has, in other words, only surface extent; it has little or no historical depth. The feature article, on the other hand, may include, besides the reporting of the main ideas, a history of their growth or development, a glance into the future, the ideas of the author upon the subject; it may be written in the first person.

4. While the feature article deals primarily with objective, factual material, it is related to fiction and essay in style, in organization of material, and in the right of the author to present his own ideas and reactions.

Perhaps we have now sufficiently delimited the subject to make an attempt at a definition: A magazine feature article is an account of an actual event, person, or condition, of interest to a considerable number of readers; it has latitude to present any material which will make clear the central theme of the story; and in it the author may incorporate, if he chooses, his own ideas upon the subject.

**Comparison of feature article and news story:** To illustrate the difference, recall the account in a previous chapter of Smith, the student reporter, who secured an interview with a farm crops professor on hybrid seed corn and learned that while aphids had damaged such seed corn severely, it had been found that certain hybrids were resistant to aphids. What he wrote from the interview was a news story. Or it might just as well be called a news information story.

But if Smith, the reporter, wished to use what he learned as an idea for a feature story, he would proceed to do quite a bit more of reporting. He would investigate the development of hybrid seed corn and find out how such corn had been created to overcome defects in open-pollinated corn. Aphids then would be revealed as still another defect to be overcome. He would not be content with interviewing only the farm crops man, but he would talk also with an entomologist who could give him facts about aphids, how they work, how often infestations may be expected.

He would want, further, to find out over how wide a territory

the aphid infestation had extended and what the damage was in other states. He would ask about hybrids in other states. He would come across human interest angles. It was first thought the trouble was some disease, and plant pathologists had been called in, who found that an insect and not a disease, was the enemy of the corn. One scientist had devised a handy new gadget to aid in the research that had been necessary.

So when Smith had finished his investigation, he had material for far more than just a news story. He had the facts in hand to write a feature article, suitable for either a state or a national farm paper.

For an illustration in the field of engineering, it was once news that water in large amounts had been escaping under the Hales Bar Dam on the Tennessee River, some thirty-three river miles downstream from Chattanooga. This dam later came under the control of the TVA. Engineers of the TVA employed a unique way for stopping this escaping flow by drilling a series of vertical overlapping holes, using a calyx drill. These holes were filled with concrete to form a cutoff wall down to solid rock, in some cases extending to depths of from 100 to 163 feet. This was news.

But engineers wanted to know more than that. So a reporter, on investigating, found that the dam had a long history of all kinds of trouble ever since construction was started in 1905, and water had always flowed under it. He found a long series of facts and legends about attempts made at various times to stop this flow. The reasons for the water flow were interesting. The new attempt to control was a different way of going about it.

The special drills used, the drilling operations, getting out the cores, use of asbestos-cement pipe liner, type of cement, and method of placing it, ideas tried and discarded, new machinery being used for the work, men in charge of the work—all these were things which the reporter had to investigate. Photographs—of the work, of pipe, of the cores recovered—and technical drawings had to be secured.

The story about all these things was what could be called a magazine feature article. Just such a story can be found in the

November 6, 1941, issue of *Engineering News-Record*, under the title of "Stopping a River Under a Dam." It is not signed, but was evidently written either by a member of the staff of this periodical, or by an engineer in close contact with the work.

A home economics student in a technical journalism class brought in a story that further illustrates the difference between a news and a feature story. Her story related that the farmer's daughter annually spends nearly twice as much for her clothes as does the farmer's wife. The facts were disclosed by a summary, recently completed, of household account records kept by a number of farm women of the state, in cooperation with state home economics extension specialists.

This was news, a home economics extension news story. It was a good news story. Written in a sprightly manner, it was good enough for the state newspapers, or might even have been carried across the country by press associations. Yet the instructor in the journalism course did not accept it as it was on an assignment to get a feature story on home economics extension work. So using this news as a tip, the student went to work to transform her news story into a feature article.

She had to find out how many farm women had kept these records and in how many counties. On examination of the state-wide summary she began to find other interesting facts. For instance, the farmer's son spent a lot more on his clothes than did the father. Clothing was only one of a considerable number of items kept in the record. Others were food bought, food produced on the farm, money spent for new equipment and furnishings in the home, cost of electric service in the home, how much was spent for movies and travel. She learned that many farm women and their daughters buy perfumes, that quite a number of farm women own formal party gowns.

As she pursued her inquiries further, the reporter found that keeping these household records was nothing new. This was an extension project that had been carried on in the state for about twenty years. Annual summaries for each year were on file in the home economics extension office. So she began to make com-

parisons between the first year, a year during the depression period of the early thirties, and the year just past. Immediately a vista of changes in farm household buying opened up.

She inquired of the extension specialists as to just what type of farm women kept these records. Were they from the upper bracket income group, the middle group, or the low income group? Were they wives of owners or of tenants? Did they live on large farms or small? She wanted human interest details and specific examples of things these women had learned from record keeping and of how buying practices had been modified in consequence.

To handle the assignment right, she would have needed to spend a day with the extension specialist in attending one or more county meetings to see the women who kept the accounts and hear their discussion of the year's records. This was not possible for the student reporter, but it was possible for a reporter who wrote just such a story for the household page of a farm magazine. Such a meeting, followed later by a visit to some of the homes of the farm women, to talk with them and to meet their families, would have supplied ample human interest.

Following all this investigation, the student reporter had the material for writing a feature article that would be informative, comprehensive, and full of interest. It would be all this, provided she presented and interpreted the facts gathered, so that such a story would be the result of her work.

To cite one more example, a senior student majoring in vocational agriculture, wrote a story as a journalism class assignment telling that John Doe, a vocational high school student, had been given the award of State Future Farmer. The story gave the details of the work and the accomplishments of young John which had led to his getting this award. This was news.

But the assignment was to write a feature story. So the student reporter traveled to the home of young John to get additional details and human interest. When he arrived at the boy's home, he found that John had three older brothers who had also been State Future Farmers in years past. So he visited all four of the boys, three of whom were now farming. He secured the stories of the four, took pictures of them. Then he talked with their father

and secured his story too, with facts about the home farm and the circumstances under which the boys had carried on their project work so successfully. When he finished he had a feature story good enough for any farm paper in the country.

To continue a comparison between a news story and a feature article, you will of course find one fundamental similarity. News stories and feature articles are always based upon actual facts, actual events, actual movements or currents of thought, actual people. There is no primary place in either for the fictitious or the imaginary. But even here we have to differentiate slightly, for the feature article may occasionally introduce fictitious characters, fictitious anecdotes, or other nonfact material as illustrative of the main facts of the story. This distinction will be elaborated later.

There are other minor similarities that will occur to you as you study the two forms of writing, but an analysis of the differences will advance us further toward a grasp of the characteristics of the feature article.

### NEWS STORY

**Scope**—The news story, and we are not here speaking of the ephemeral story of accident or fire, but of the more significant phases of the news, is normally much shorter in mere number of words than the feature article. It is usually limited to a single time and a single place. In one sense it is not a complete story. It is but today's installment of a continued story, to get all of which you frequently must have read the paper for weeks and months before today and will have to read it for weeks to come. This is true of many of the more important news stories.

**Newness**—The newspaper puts a tremendous premium upon the recency of its news. It must be new in two senses: The event narrated must have occurred within a few hours of the time of publication, and the account, to be untarnished, must not have been previously published, at least in the same form, in a rival paper.

**Seasonableness**—News is affected only in a moderate degree by the round of the seasons. The fact that it is summer makes

### FEATURE ARTICLE

**Scope**—The feature story is a complete unit. It may vary from a few hundred to several thousand words in length, but it is always self-sufficient, gives always, or should give, all of the data necessary to complete understanding of the question under discussion. It does not represent, then, a single point either of time or space. It has, in other words, a before and after.

**Newness**—The feature article, from the mere fact that it appears in a publication which is issued only once a week or even less often, cannot put this emphasis upon recency. The factor of newness in the sense that the stories must cover virgin or uncultivated soil is equally potent with the magazine as with the newspaper.

**Seasonableness**—With the feature article seasonableness is as important as timeliness is with the news story. In the

available certain types of stories, the vacation story, the hot weather story. Fall, winter, spring also exert their influence. Christmas, the Fourth, Thanksgiving bring their news stories. But, as affecting the great mass of the news, this element of seasonableness is negligible.

**Lead**—The lead of the news story is very closely prescribed. There are, of course, various kinds of leads, but each of them has its formula. The writer has an opportunity for originality only within the limits of these formulæ.

**Body Arrangement**—As in the case of the lead, the news story follows a fairly definite tradition in the arrangement of the body of the story. Normally the factor of chronology is of minor importance, and the facts of the story are arranged in order of their value with such omissions and abridgements as will make the outstanding news facts of the story most prominent.

**Author and Story**—Except in the case of well-known special correspondents, the writer of the news story is anonymous. He not only has no name, but he has no ideas, as far as his story is concerned. He may not tell what he thinks; he is limited to the objective facts which he sees and hears. He may not write in the first person and he seldom may use the second person of direct address.

**Style**—The keynote of newspaper style is exposition. The function of the news story is to reproduce, recreate, for the reader some event or idea. It is safe to say that, normally, the best newspaper style is one which is most clearly and vividly expository. There is little or no room in the news story for stylistic flourishes. The story is read for what is said, not for how it is said. There is, of course, considerable narrative material in news

case of either the agricultural or the women's magazine, many stories that are good at one time in the year are practically worthless at another. The writer has to bear this factor constantly in mind, planning his articles far enough ahead that they will have time to get into print when they will be most valuable.

**Lead**—There are no rules to govern the beginning of the feature article as there are in the case of the news story. There are, naturally, certain principles of effectiveness, for which quality the news lead is valuable, that must be observed—these will be discussed later—but for the most part the writer is untrammelled by any dogmatic limitations of form.

**Body Arrangement**—All that can be said in a brief space concerning the body arrangement of the feature article is that it follows no explicit laws except this pre-eminent one: The body of the story shall be arranged in such a way as to present most effectively the material of the particular story.

**Author and Story**—The feature article is usually signed. If not, it is understood that it is written by a member of the magazine staff. The writer, therefore, has a name and a personality, and the latter he may carry throughout the story if he wishes. He may say what he thinks about the matters under discussion. He may interpret, exhort, forecast. He may use the first and second person pronouns. He may thus add much to his material by projecting into it the charm of the personal and the intimate.

**Style**—The feature article, read at greater leisure and comparatively unrestricted as to length, may employ a much more varied style than the news story. Its purpose is not only to explain but, frequently, to entertain. To this end an interesting and readable style is an asset. The style should, however, reflect the tone of the article. Exposition, narration, description are all tools in feature article building. In general the feature article

stories, but in effect it is usually subordinate to the expositional purpose. There is little description for its own sake. This situation has developed from the nature of the function of the news story and the condition of haste under which it is normally read. There may be news writing for very high quality, even of literary excellence, but the news story is to be judged primarily on the effectiveness with which it recreates the facts.

**Constructive Purpose**—From one point of view all is grist that comes to the newspaper mill. The newspaper is a photograph of current events—those events, at least, which are important or interesting enough to attract a considerable group of readers. It takes life as it is and reproduces it. As long as there are sordidness, dishonesty, pettiness in the world, they are apt to be found in newspapers. Many newspapers try to emphasize the constructive, the wholesome, and the worthwhile elements in the news, but the very nature of the material with which they deal makes it almost impossible for them entirely to eliminate the other kind of material.

**Audience**—The modern newspaper is built for an audience of all ages and conditions. It is read by rich and poor, educated and uneducated. It contains material which will appeal to all interests. It does not specialize; on the other hand, it is very highly diversified.

may be, if the nature of the subject justifies it, more ornate, imaginative, free, in a stylistic sense, than the news story.

**Constructive Purpose**—The feature article must be constructive or helpful. There is scarcely a technical magazine in the country that will use articles which will not help to upbuild, encourage, inspire, or entertain. This condition rules out stories which present merely a destructive criticism of life. The article must help and encourage, not hinder or discourage. This requirement does not, of course, rule out all stories of failure, dishonesty, the darker and less wholesome side of life, if such stories can be presented in a way to illustrate a constructive purpose. If failure can be shown to be only the negative side of success, the writer may occasionally deal with failures.

**Audience**—Most magazines have set out, not to reach the entire public, as the newspaper does, but to interest some particular group or class of people. The farm papers are made for farmers and the families of farmers. Engineering magazines are made for engineers. The women's magazines are made for women. In other words, the magazine audience is a selected audience, and the material which the magazine uses must also be selected with this particular audience in mind. Every magazine, due to this fact and to others, has a distinctive personality with which the writer must get acquainted if he is to write successfully for the magazine.

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Examine three issues of a farm, engineering, scientific, or women's magazine. Determine as well as you can the source of the feature articles, that is, whether they were written by staff writers, by free lance writers, or came from some other source.
2. Write a short feature story. Do the best you can with this story on the basis of your casual knowledge of feature articles. This story should be kept, and later, after subsequent chapters have been studied, rewritten or revised.

3. Clip and turn in, if you can find such, the same story told in one place as a straight news or news-experience story, and told elsewhere as a feature article. An example would be a story of some disaster or striking event at some locality which would be followed in a day or so by a feature article about that locality.

(*Note:* During the study of this and the chapters to follow students should write as many feature articles as time and circumstances allow.)

## CHAPTER 22

### TYPES OF FEATURE ARTICLES

**F**EATURE articles can be analyzed on two bases, one the *source* of the subject matter and the other the *nature* of the subject matter.

Every article has a "home," a place where it "lives." One story may "live" in an office in Des Moines, another on a farm in Ohio, a third may be in a home economics laboratory at Oregon State College, a fourth in the railroad yards at Chicago. It is possible even to think of a feature story "living" not only in a single office, or a single house, or on a single farm, but in a whole town, an entire community. The story of a successful consolidated school, for instance, does not "live" merely in the school building. It includes the town and the community that made the school possible and are making it pay its way in value returned. One can even conceive of a story which "lives" in a whole state or even in the whole nation. The story of the development of paved highways may be handled as a state story or even as a national story.

**Feature articles classified as to source:** In short, we find that there are three kinds of feature articles on what we may call the basis of the source of material. These are:

1. The story that originates with a single person.
2. The story that originates in a single town or community.
3. The story that deals with an extensive district—county, state, or nation.

Does the story that you contemplate writing concern itself exclusively with a single person, a single home, or a single farm? Or does its scope take in a group or community interest? Or does it transcend even this boundary?

These are questions that you will have to put to yourself and answer with exactitude before you are ready to begin reporting

the story. Failure to analyze the scope of the story is very apt to lead to incomplete or one-sided reporting of it. You set out to get the story of a rural church that has revolutionized the social life of a backward rural community. The regeneration is largely the work of the minister, but is the story, in reality, the minister's story, or is it the story of the community? It is essential that this distinction be made. If the story is to be a personality study of the minister, an interview with him may furnish all of the material that is necessary. But if the article is to tell the story of the community and its awakening, the writer will probably need to do more than talk to the minister, although what he says may furnish the backbone of the article. The story will not be complete unless it reflects the attitudes and opinions of all the elements in the community, farmers, merchants, housewives, children. Only by doing this can it hope to recreate the atmosphere of this community and give the reader an adequate picture of its transformation.

Just such an article as this appeared in a magazine not long ago. In order to make it a dramatic story, the magazine reporter who handled it based the story on the personality of one citizen of the community and gave him the credit for what had happened in the community. He did not state, perhaps he had failed to discover the fact, that the story began a number of years before, when the local minister and a rural sociology extension worker from the state agricultural college, together planned the whole project. For several years the minister had quietly worked to get things under way. Then this citizen became aware of it, took a part, and proceeded to publicize himself as the man responsible for it all. After the article appeared, the magazine and the writer stood discredited in the community, which knew the real facts.

**Feature articles classified as to subject matter:** Of the genus *feature article*, when we consider it from the point of view of subject matter, there are a number of varieties; and to the successful producer of the product it is as necessary to know the nature of each variety as it is for the orchardist to know the kinds of trees in his orchard, their characteristics and life habits. The orchardist must know how to grow each kind of fruit, and having grown it, how

and where to market it. The problem of the feature writer is parallel. He must understand how to recognize and classify the germ of each feature story, how to cultivate it, and where to dispose of the story when it is matured. And this figure will lend itself to still another analogy. Just as there are hybrid and crossbred fruits, so there are feature articles in which are blended more than a single strain.

It is obvious that no classification of feature article types will be absolute. There will be variations from type and combinations of varieties. But unless the writer knows how to distinguish the particular type of material with which he is working in any particular story, unless he can analyze and classify it, he will be working at some disadvantage.

There are five types of feature articles:

1. *The news-feature article*, which deals with a news occurrence, such as a conference, convention, fair, short course, field day, election, experiment, project, construction.
2. *The process article*, which tells how to do or make something.
3. *The experience article*, which relates the experience of some individual or group of individuals.
4. *The information article*, which presents, in an impersonal way, general information or scientific facts.
5. *The personality article*, which presents the personality of some individual or group of individuals.

The journalism student, or any writer in fact, should keep in mind that the story or article that the editor of today wants most is one which has news quality, one which is based on news or which is timely because it is related to something that is news. This applies equally for any of these five types of feature articles. The writer who forgets this fundamental fact will have a hard time interesting an editor in anything he may write.

**The news-feature article:** If one investigates the contents of technical magazines, he will see that a large number of feature articles are follow-ups on news events. In fact, many of the longer articles in these magazines could be classed either as news stories or as feature articles. A typical feature story, however, will do

more than a news story. It will analyze and interpret the news, giving the background to events described and pointing out the implication of these events.

To this type belong stories of meetings and conventions, of fairs, shows and sales, extension campaigns, current fights against pests and diseases, and new research findings. Here, too, can be classified stories of great droughts, abnormal movements of farm population, such as that to the Pacific Coast in recent years; changes in agriculture taking place on a wide scale; coming of new crops; efforts to produce crops, seeds, and other products in this country which were imported before a world war broke; stories based on defense, war, and its aftermath as they affect the farm, the home, and any kind of industry or business. Introduction of new machinery or equipment which will mean important or revolutionary change is of this type—be it on the farm, in the home, or in industry.

The many activities of the United States Department of Agriculture, especially those since 1933 with regard to crop control, soil conservation, and aid to distressed farmers, and the more recent campaigns to produce more food as a defense measure, are subjects for news-feature articles. Great engineering construction projects of the past decade or so have been told in news-features. New developments in industry come likewise in this classification, as for example homogenized milk in dairy manufacturing.

Hardly a day goes by in which there isn't something in the news which needs a re-telling, an amplification or an interpretation in feature article form for one or more classes of readers.

**The process article:** This type of feature in its simpler forms has already been discussed in the chapter dealing with the short information and experience articles. But now we must consider it as a somewhat broader form than the story which, in a few hundred words, merely describes a device or a simple process. We must include under this type all stories which tell:

1. How to perform some definite, concrete process.
2. How to construct some specific thing.

The prominence of this type of article in technical magazines is obvious. Turn through half a dozen current magazines and list

the titles of stories of this sort. In the women's magazines you will find stories which tell how to perform a large variety of household duties—canning, room decoration, refinishing of furniture, and so on. Stories on house design and construction fall into this category.

In the agricultural papers there are almost as many stories of this sort: corn testing methods, farm building construction, farm water and light systems, drainage, concrete construction.

The process story is prominent in engineering and scientific magazines. In the former are descriptions of construction methods, new devices, and equipment; in the latter, descriptions of research techniques and apparatus.

The particular sign of this type of story, then, is that it shall give direction as to how to perform some helpful, necessary process or how to make some useful construction. It is a service article and must give information which will cause the reader to say, in substance at least, "I'm going to try that out." It must have novelty and utility.

An effective article of this type must be one which will apply to a fairly large number of readers of a magazine. There is little use to tell readers of a general farm paper the details of how to build a large greenhouse. A home magazine read by two or three million women is interested in plans for a house costing \$5,000 to \$8,000, but not in one costing \$50,000. Nor are many women interested in a recipe which calls for some ingredient which cannot be bought at the community grocery. It should be something which can be readily done or carried out by the average person, with equipment at hand, and without highly specialized knowledge. Beginning writers often fail to realize these facts.

A specific illustration concerns blue cheese. For years the United States had depended upon France, Denmark, and some other foreign countries for Roquefort and other similar blue cheeses. After Europe was involved in war in 1939, importation of blue cheese from Europe was cut off. Promptly the dairy manufacturing industry in this country began to make blue cheese. In most cases it was made according to methods developed by previous research work at the Iowa and the Minnesota agricultural experi-

ment stations. The making of such cheese in the United States was a good subject for news-feature articles, of wide interest to many classes of citizens.

But it would have been of doubtful value to use an article on the subject in a general farm paper or in the foods section of a women's magazine, giving details of how to make blue cheese. To make it required equipment such as only a dairy plant had or could install; it required either a cave or an artificially constructed room for curing, and only men with technical skill and experience could do it. On the other hand, the technical process article on how to make it would be an admirable story for a dairy trade paper to use.

**The experience article:** The experience article, in the definite sense in which we know it today, is a comparatively modern type, but the principle on which its effectiveness depends is as old as human intercourse. This kind of story gets its peculiar force from that subtle and pervasive something which newspaper men know as human interest.

Now, technical magazines are missionary in character and purpose—a respect in which they differ in degree from magazines of a general nature. In one guise or another practically all of their material is preachment, which is only another phrasing of the statement that the pre-eminent rule of their being is that they must be constructive. They have to keep not only in step with the development of the times, but a stride or two ahead. They must lead, instruct, build. But here they come upon another very deep-rooted human characteristic. They collide with the pride of men, who do not like to be told what they should and should not do. This puts magazines and readers into a paradoxical position: Readers want to profit by the good inherent in magazine preachment, but they will not tolerate sermons.

If you try to tell a farmer that his whole system of farming is inadequate, wasteful, unscientific, you will, in nine cases out of ten, run up against a stone wall of opposition. He will inform you that he has always made things go by following his own methods, and that they are good enough for him. If you expostulate with an experienced housewife that she is slowly killing her family

through ignorance of dietetics, she will laugh at you and show you that her children and husband are still drawing breath.

Yet the farm magazine must say just this sort of thing to the farmers, and the women's magazines must say just this sort of thing to the women. And in lesser degree the engineering and scientific journals are engaged in the same task.

The problem of the magazine then is to preach without seeming to preach. And it is just here that the experience story comes in. The experience article, instead of telling John White that his system of crop rotation is sapping the fertility of his soil, instead of telling him that he should abandon it for a different system, narrates the story of Amos Fitch, a practical farmer who has adopted and proved the economic value of the new system. Instead of telling mothers that meat and potatoes three times a day do not comprise an adequate diet for growing children, the women's magazine prints the story of a community where mothers have been induced to try a more diversified diet, gives the results of these experiments—and leaves the reader to draw her own conclusions.

There are three kinds of experience articles:

1. Personal experience.
2. Confession.
3. Experience of some person or persons other than the writer, which, for want of a better name, we shall call third person experience article, because it is told in the third person rather than the first.

*The personal experience article:* That the experience article is effective is largely due to the fact that it presents the actual testimony of real people. They have a local habitation and a name. You can, if you wish, go to their town and look them up. You can find their names in the telephone book. What they say or what is said about them is not, therefore, supposition or theory. It is testimony. They testify to the fact that certain practices have been advantageous or disadvantageous to them. They talk, as it were, to the reader, backing their assertions with their own personalities and records for probity.

In the personal experience article this effect is particularly strong,

for, in it, it is the writer himself who is narrating actual experiences, which he himself has had and for which he vouches. The story is intimate, personal, real. Instead of dealing with abstractions or impersonalities, it has the fascination which always accompanies a glimpse into the life of a human being—it has human interest. The author talks directly to the reader. He writes in the first person, frequently in a chatty, intimate style—much as if he and the reader were actually conversing.

There is no type of story that is more salable than a worthwhile personal experience article. The difficulty is that no writer has an unlimited number of personal experiences which lend themselves to articles. He is bound to exhaust his supply sooner or later. For this reason, although this kind of story is one of the best for the beginner to try, it cannot become a permanent reliance of the feature writer.

*The confession article:* The confession article is an anonymous personal experience story. Being unsigned, it provides an opportunity for an even more intimate and personal type of material than the personal experience story. From the point of view of human interest, it is more fascinating and readable than any other kind of feature article. You would like to read, would you not, the personal story of a blue sky promoter, how he works his schemes—prepares his bait and pulls in his fish? It would be difficult, perhaps, to get a blue sky promoter to write such a story under his own signature, but it is not out of the range of possibility that he might be willing to write an unsigned confession story.

*The third person experience article:* The third kind of experience story—that in which the writer reports the experiences of a person or a group of people rather than himself—is, from the point of view of the professional feature writer, the most important of the experience articles. This is true from the fact that, while it has the attraction of human interest and the force of testimony, the sources of this type of story are inexhaustible. There is not a county, scarcely a township, in the United States which does not contain material for a story of this sort that would be acceptable to some magazine.

The farm papers, especially, are using this type of article to

put before their readers the agricultural practices in which they believe. If a farm paper is interested in pushing the growing of alfalfa, it can do so most effectively by reporting the stories of farmers who are raising alfalfa with success. It can preach cooperation by relating the stories of successful cooperative enterprises. It can hammer away, issue after issue, by piling up these instances. And they are, remember, in every case the testimony of successful practitioners.

Engineering, science, and women's magazines have made an important, although somewhat slighter, use of this kind of article. But there is here, also, an unlimited field for the experience article.

In most cases the experience story should deal with typical rather than extremely unusual experiences. This rule is one of the hardest lessons to learn. The beginning writer almost invariably thinks that a story must be something extraordinary before a paper will publish it. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the story to get of a farm, farmer, engineering enterprise, or community is one illustrating some good idea or method, so that any other farmer or engineer, on reading, can apply the information contained in it to his own business.

**General information article:** It is easier to give a negative than a positive definition of this type of feature article—easier to say that it is not a process story, that it is not an experience story, nor a news-feature story, nor a personality story. But when all these negatives are stated there still remains a large class of stories which fall under the head of general information article. Positively, then, the information article is one which presents in an impersonal form an account of some movement, discovery, experiment, scientific data, condition of life, business, or other activity, art, or pastime. Stories, for instance, which describe the national park system of the country, or disclose experiments with vitamins in human diet, or discuss the question of farm leases, would be of this sort.

These stories transcend personal experience; they are derived from wider and impersonal sources. They deal with people only incidentally. Farm papers use many stories of this type which describe experiments carried on by the state agricultural experi-

ment stations and the department of agriculture, articles on scientific agriculture by leaders in agricultural investigation, and stories on agricultural economics. In women's magazines they are almost equally prominent, dealing with many of the problems of the home, with family relationships, community affairs, recreation, schools, health, and citizenship. Science furnishes many such articles—the results of the work of the laboratory, of exploration, of surveys. In the engineering magazines one finds general information articles dealing with every phase of engineering development.

Sad to relate, this is the type of story that a beginning journalism student is prone to write. It is so easy to extract the information from a textbook, a bulletin, a research article, a term paper, and the like. It can be written at a study table without a lot of reporting and digging. Yet it is the story which should be shunned by the student or beginning writer.

If the editor wants such an information article, he himself or some member of his staff can write it. Or if he prefers, he can have it written by someone who can speak with authority and whose name carries weight—the agronomy research man, the authority on foods, the head of the department of mechanical engineering, the chief engineer on a construction job. The last person under the sun he wants to write it is a college student.

**The personality article:** This type of article is, naturally, the story of a person. It is closely related to the experience story, but it differs in this regard: Whereas the experience story tells what someone has done, the personality story tells what someone is. It depends for its appeal almost entirely upon the elements of human interest and unusualness; and it has two primary effects—it is inspirational and entertaining.

Not every individual in the world is a fit subject for a personality story—probably only a few in a thousand. Such a person must be interesting. That means that he must have done something outstanding or unusual or he must have a unique point of view toward life. Find the person who meets these requirements, and you have the material for a good story.

This type of feature story is or may be practically identical with a personality interview. Often the writer uses the interview tech-

nique in telling the story. The most effective way to tell many a story is to let the personality relate it in his or her own words, as much as possible.

Writers sometimes miss the big element in a story, the important news or information angle, in an effort to create an effective picture of the personality. A man's lifetime of work, some notable achievement, some important information, should not be sacrificed just to set forth human interest and personal details about someone. There should be room for both in the well-written personality article.

Any college campus has a number of important men and women on the faculty and research staff who are worth good personality stories. The president or dean who has just retired from office, the man who has just completed some outstanding research, the faculty member awarded some national medal or honor, the professor who has just returned from acting as technical adviser to a foreign country, are illustrations. The sun never sets on the graduate students trained by a modest, retiring emeritus professor on one university campus. In his quiet way he has trained more important men in his particular technical field than any other teacher in the world. The student reporter who finds him at his desk in a little office on the top floor will have a real personality story to write.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Find five examples each of the three types of stories based on source of material.
2. List three subjects of stories which you think you could get and write up, and discuss the sources of information for each.
3. Find and study ten examples of news-feature stories. Repeat this assignment with each of the four other types of articles.
4. Write short feature articles illustrative of each of the five types.

## CHAPTER 23

### FINDING SUBJECTS FOR FEATURE ARTICLES

A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages.

Else tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

—Emerson.

**W**HEN it was said in the preceding chapter that there is a feature article subject in every county of the United States, the facts, it is trusted, were not too greatly exaggerated. But now it is time to make some modification of that statement—to try to see just what are suitable subjects for feature articles and, more specifically, where the writer can find them.

Let us first take a look at the subject from a fundamental standpoint, before coming to specific things. What are the commodities in which technical magazines—and often newspapers too—deal, as far as their feature articles go? They are:

1. News interpretation.
2. Instruction or information.
3. Entertainment.

It follows that one, two, or three of these qualities must be present in any particular subject before it can be considered a feature story prospect. These qualities set the limits of the feature story or article subject matter for any one magazine or publication. The purpose of a publication, its field, and the fundamental interests or needs of its readers, set the pattern.

So the first essential step in finding ideas is to think in terms of the publication for which you wish to write. The successful writer must understand something of the needs of this publication. Then he should find an idea that will lend itself to that magazine in subject matter and method of handling. An article of instructional value is not suited to a magazine that is mainly given over to news interpretation. A story that is so cleverly written that it is as

entertaining as fiction is not the sort usually wanted by a technical journal devoted to engineering or science, which is published for information and instruction, rather than entertainment.

**Analysis of the fundamental interests:** An idea for an article must be something in which people are interested, something that the public wants. If it is a general publication, it should interest a considerable number. If in a special field, it should be what will interest its readers. Although the question of what the public wants has been posed times without number and is still as deep an enigma as the Sphinx, we can analyze in a broad way the things that are of primary interest to people. It would be almost impossible to make a comprehensive list.

In other words, to find out what interests people, you can go back to what was said in earlier chapters as to what makes news. News is something in which people are interested and a good subject for a feature article is one in which readers are interested.

People are interested in life, health, conflict, or struggle.

They are interested in money—its acquisition or conservation—and in the whole process of the use of money in industry, business, marketing, and products.

They are interested in home and family, religion, culture, entertainment.

They are interested in romance and adventure.

They are always interested in patriotism, and at times when defense measures and war come to the fore, this interest takes precedence over almost everything else, and almost every activity or function is considered in its relation to defense and war.

Consider for a moment each of the widespread, practically universal, human interests just named and see if you do not recall innumerable articles based upon one or another of these appeals. This list by no means contains all of the widespread, fundamental human appeals, but it does suggest the stronger and more active ones. To these, as you scan your feature article material, you will need to add others. But the point that must be clearly envisaged by the writer is that a story which will make contact with one or more of these appeals has a strong basis of interest for most people.

Your first step, then, in determining the possibilities of any story subject, is to test it out on the basis of its human appeals. If it will not strongly recommend itself to a large group of people because of its relations to any one or more of these appeals, it is probably undesirable as a story subject.

**Other tests of feature article subjects:** It is not enough, however, to make sure that a story subject has a relation to a strong human appeal. There are other tests that must be applied.

1. *Novelty or originality*—In our comparison of the news and the feature story, we have seen that the latter puts much less emphasis on the importance of the recency of the facts related. But in another sense the feature article puts just as great a premium on newness as does the news story. Magazines, in other words, want original material, material which, handled in the same way, has never been printed before.

Put these questions to yourself regarding the subject you have in mind:

Has it ever been treated before?

Has this particular phase of the subject ever been treated before?

Has the experience of Will Arnold, as it bears on this subject, ever been treated before?

If the story you contemplate has been written before, has it been handled in a way upon which you cannot improve by inserting personality and style?

There are, of course, many general subjects, which are perennially reappearing in the magazines: such questions, in women's magazines, for instance, as food and dress; and, in the agricultural papers, such questions as new crops, purebreds, club work, and so on. And stories on these subjects will continue to appear without end. But—and here is the point—every new article on one of these subjects must treat it from a new angle, must present some new facet of the problem, must disclose some new discovery or experimentation or must present some new experience material.

2. *Seasonableness*—The next test of the feature story subject is the test of seasonableness. Does your subject conform to the requirements of the season when it will, presumably, be published? Some subjects, of course, are as good at one time of the year as

another, but most stories are better suited to one season than another. Analyze, for instance, the contents of current numbers of technical magazines and see how many of the feature articles—or rather how few—would be equally appropriate at any other season of the year.

In estimating the seasonableness of a story subject, one has to take into consideration the length of time it will take to write the story and submit it to a magazine and the length of time required by the magazine, in case the story is accepted, to get it into print. The first factor the writer can control, but over the second he is powerless. It is necessary to know, then, how long it takes to put a feature story through the editorial and mechanical mills. While spot news is sometimes handled more quickly in the weekly magazine, following is an approximation of the time normally required for feature material:

Weeklies—2 to 4 weeks.

Monthlies—2 to 6 months.

3. *Constructive purpose*—To a degree the question of whether or not a particular story subject has a worthwhile and constructive purpose will be answered when you test it out for its human appeals. But it will be well to scrutinize it definitely for this factor. The problem can be solved by a succinct answer to this question: Will the story be of some service—on the basis of one or more of the human appeals—to a considerable group of readers of some particular magazine?

4. *Adequate material*—Can you get enough material on the story to “cover” it adequately? You will probably run across many ideas for stories which present the difficulty of adequate treatment. For one reason or another, it will be impossible for you to “cover” some of the subjects that you think of. In such a case it would be a waste of time and energy to endeavor to gather material and write a story which was doomed through inadequacy.

Many students write stories in which they endeavor to cover such a subject as the labor question. Now manifestly a student, tied down to a college campus, cannot gather sufficient material to write intelligently and constructively on such a subject. In the first place, such a question should probably be left to expert

economists or those who have followed such problems (this point will be touched upon in connection with the next test). In the second place, material for such a story would usually have to be gathered from a wide variety of sources and would entail traveling over a considerable territory.

Another similar error of many journalism students is to think up an idea which has no local angle at all but which may be a good subject for an article at some distant point. An example of this was an idea submitted by a dairy student at Ohio State University of some experimental work in feeding dairy cattle at the California Agricultural Experiment Station. He had absolutely no way of getting the story except second-hand, through what he could read. It was a good tip for a student at the University of California. In fact, someone there did write it and sell it to a national farm publication.

In this same class at Ohio State University, an engineering student turned in a tip for an article which had its locale in northern Alabama. He could not get it, but someone down that way did, and shortly after it was carried by an important magazine. A home economics student submitted an idea for an article which could be gathered only in New York City. It was useless to her, but not long afterward the *New York Times* carried an article dealing with it.

It was in this same class that an animal husbandry student gathered material and wrote an article dealing with some recent Ohio experimental work on feeding livestock that had just been announced. He sold his article promptly to a farm magazine of national circulation. It was one he could get.

Another student sent a short news story to a livestock breed paper about some unusual winnings of the Ohio State University animal husbandry livestock at the International Livestock Exposition. The editor wrote back to him and asked him to expand this into a feature article.

5. *Your ability to handle the subject*—It is entirely within the range of possibility that subjects will occur to you which you have no business to attempt to handle—stories which, because of your limitations, you could not handle adequately. The labor story,

instanced above, may be taken as an example. Such a story may involve elements of which you are ignorant and of which you have at your command no way of becoming familiar. One way out of this difficulty is to treat the story as an interview, going to see someone who is qualified to speak on this question. But this is not always possible, and it is well, therefore, to give a wide berth to subjects which are beyond your depth.

It should not be inferred from what has just been said that reportorial initiative is being discouraged. An energetic, resourceful reporter can "cover" the great majority of stories. It may become a dangerous limitation for a writer to restrict his field to only such subjects as those with which he is personally familiar or expert. There will be many times when a writer can successfully handle stories on subjects about which he is quite ignorant. But there is treacherous ground to be traversed in such cases, and the writer must be thoroughly awake to what he is doing. He must remember that his first duty is to his readers, that he must produce an honest and trustworthy product. If there is danger of his failing to do this with any particular story, he had best leave it alone.

**Seeking the subject:** One of the mysteries of writing to the beginner is implied in the perennial questions: What shall I write about? Where does one get the ideas? Armed with our measuring stick of feature article tests, let us look about at the world of agriculture, homemaking, engineering, and science.

The old-fashioned way of writing for technical magazines was to take one's pen in hand and write—frequently on the first thing that came to mind. The result was often a discursive, rambling article, more closely resembling an editorial or an essay than a feature story as we think of it today.

The magazine of today wants a writer to deal with a definite topic, to say what there is to say and to stop. If the article written is to interest an editor, it must be on a timely subject, it should in most instances be of a practical and informative nature, and it should fit in with the editor's policy and appeal to the people in the territory covered by the publication to which it is sent.

At this point it will be valuable to go back to the chapter dealing

with the short information and news-experience stories and re-read what is said there about how to find ideas for that type of stories. Everything said there applies equally well to finding subjects for feature articles. In fact, as is pointed out in that chapter, many of those ideas for shorter articles are also tips for longer articles, if pursued at greater length or widened to include a larger scope. Some of the material which follows may seem to be repetition. Even so, the reiteration will emphasize the importance.

**Tips suggested by personal experience:** The place to start the search for feature article ideas is at home—in one's head. There are two reasons why this is the best place to start. In the first place, it would be uneconomical to neglect one's own experiences if one has any worth utilizing, and in the second place the personal experience story is, if other things are equal, of a type most easily handled and marketed.

So first look to your own home farm, your mother's kitchen or flower garden, your experiences in 4-H club work, or your projects in vocational high school work. Look to things in your home community of which you or your family have been a part. Look to the job you had last summer on a construction job, waiter in a summer hotel, worker in a dairy plant, temporary assistant county agent—or whatever it may have been. Back in your head will be ideas from any of these that may be the germ from which a good story may develop.

But do not imagine that everything that you have in the reservoir of your memory will make a good feature article.

You may have ideas on politics or prohibition or religion; these are not feature story material. You may remember a most enjoyable outing that you had at the lake; this is not feature story material. You may know something about chemistry; this is not feature story material. If, on the other hand, you have had any experiences in your outing or in your work in chemistry which are novel and the relating of which will aid or entertain other people, they may be the stuff of which feature stories are made.

You will note the qualifications. The experiences must be novel; they must be outside the ordinary, humdrum course of the average person's experience, and they must be capable of helping the reader

to realize more intimately one of the fundamental human desires.

**Write first of things you know:** A young college man looking for something to write was back home on a visit. His mother remarked to him that John was leaving, after five years as the tenant on the home farm. John was now buying a farm of his own. By asking his father, the young fellow found that there had been five tenants on the place in thirteen years.

"Why did those tenants leave?" he asked the folks. The father and mother went over their experiences with each tenant. The mother had kept a financial record over the entire period. From what his parents told him, the data from the records, and conversation with two of these tenants, the young man was able to write an article on "Why Father's Tenants Left" that was run on the first page of a well-known farm paper.

Good crop practices, success with feeding lambs on soybeans or grass silage, experiences with the tractor or silo, local community clubs or cooperatives, unusual methods in the home neighborhood in cow testing, fighting oats smut, or in a single variety cotton community—personal experience stories on such subjects as these will be welcomed by farm editors.

An agricultural student in a technical journalism class came to the instructor with a forlorn look on his face. He was working his way through school by frying hamburgers in a roadside restaurant from five to twelve every afternoon and night. He could sit up afterward and study at textbooks, but during the day, with classes and laboratories, he had no time to dig up material for articles. What could he do?

The instructor asked him to tell of his home farm, about the livestock there, the crops grown, marketing of products. It was a farm with poor soil in a hilly country. It was hard to make a living on it. Alfalfa was needed. After a number of trials, the boy's father had found a unique way to get a mixture of alfalfa, clover, and some other grasses established on one field. With pasture, they were able to buy some feeder livestock and feed it out economically. Some profit was made. They managed to get a few purebred animals and begin development of a herd.

"That's the story for you to write," the instructor told him.

“What better story could you write than that?” So the student did write it, and when it was finished, it was one of the best submitted that term. The student hadn’t realized that he already had at his finger tips and in his head all the elements of a good practical farm article, of farm management and good practices.

These suggestions would also apply to the farmer who wishes to contribute an occasional article to his farm paper. The things he knows about, with which he has had a profitable or unusual experience, which he has observed first hand, offer the ideas that will serve him best.

They will apply equally well to others in any type of activity or endeavor. They might be men in engineering or industry, the home economics graduate in business, a woman whose daily work is in her own household or who has outside activities in club or organization work.

The college faculty or experiment station worker, the extension staff man, will probably write on subjects related to his special work, utilizing the experiences which he has had in the field.

**Surveying one’s field:** The next zone of feature article possibilities is that which embraces the accomplishments of people you know. An investigation of this field should increase the scope of your search considerably. There are few prospective writers who have not in their acquaintance, intimate or remote, a few people who have accomplished things that will make feature stories. You may never have considered the fact that these accomplishments were noteworthy, but, now that you are looking for feature story material, they will assume a new significance.

There is still another source of subject material related to your own experience. It is possible that there are certain subjects upon which you have special information. Consider this possibility and, again, list the things that suggest themselves. What are some of the things that may come to your mind?—gardening, dress making, fitting cattle for show, the growing of sweet clover, beekeeping, interior decoration, farm machinery, music, cement sidewalk building, and so on.

Now the knowledge of any of these things may not furnish you, in itself, with feature story subjects, but the mere considering of

these questions may suggest some angle that is a possibility. Furthermore, if you definitely scan your field in this manner, you will be more ready to recognize the possibilities in ideas of a related nature that may subsequently come to you.

An extension worker, for example, has a fine opportunity to gather firsthand material as he goes about his work. The extension horticulturist will take a neglected orchard and assist the owner in pruning and spraying it. After the work has been done and a good apple crop secured, the extension man—or the farmer for that matter—has excellent material for a farm paper article. Often he can combine his experiences with a number of such orchards to make an article.

The possibility of surveying one's own field of activity is open for any worker. It applies especially to college students who can draw upon their experiences at home or on their vacation work.

The next step is to go outside of one's immediate environment and make a thorough analysis of this broader story field just beyond. The student may analyze the campus and surrounding community that he can reach readily. A free-lance writer can analyze the field that it is possible for him to reach with means at hand for travel. This writer, whoever he may be, can make a list of places where ideas are likely to be found. One experienced writer often charts on a map such places before he sets out on a trip to gather ideas and material.

For the man or woman who is on the staff of a magazine, the problem is quite different. His territory is probably coincident with that of the magazine. Furthermore, he is probably working largely under the direction and upon the assignment of the editor.

**Sources of tips:** It may be of value to journalism students to know how one veteran magazine writer who has had a wide experience goes about it to get ideas for the articles he writes. He travels to all parts of the country on assignment for magazines of national circulation. He sets down his method as follows:

He says that, first, he does a lot of reading. He subscribes to a number of daily newspapers from different sections of the country and he religiously goes through these, looking for ideas and tips. Any items of news that might have a future use is clipped and the

date and source noted on the clipping. He subscribes to a number of magazines and technical papers and goes through these in the same way. He is on all the free publicity lists he can get on, for material and publicity matter. This includes the information services and bulletin lists from colleges and universities. He answers ads in magazines which will bring him catalogs and pamphlets.

All these furnish a stream of information which comes across his desk constantly. It is to him a stream in which he fishes for ideas and tips. Many of his clippings are also classified and filed away, to be a storehouse of material for future use in article writing.

As this man travels, he talks with people in every walk of life. His experience is that ideas can be found in conversation with people who have an intimate knowledge of the farm, engineering, science, and home activities. County agents, home demonstration agents, club leaders, vocational teachers, the engineer in charge of a government irrigation project, the farm editor of a small city newspaper, contractors, bankers, farm organization officials, managers of dairy plants, all college extension and research workers, officers of woman's clubs, people with hobbies, men engaged in plant hybridizing work—anyone may be the source of a new idea for a story.

When on a trip to gather material, the next thing he does, after he has checked in at a hotel in a town where he stops, is to buy all the local newspapers he can find on newsstands. Even though he has a specific assignment and knows exactly what he wants there, he likes to sit down and go through these papers. Many a time something in them gives him a help on the story he is after, or a tip for another story he can get while there.

Then he goes to places where things are happening or where people gather. Fairs and expositions, meetings of organizations, farm and home week at agricultural colleges, large markets, annual banquet of a county livestock organization, a district garden club convention, or field days of any type. In the evening, if he is in a strange town and he can find no meeting to attend, he likes to sit in the lobby of a hotel. Here he meets government men, engineers, salesmen, and tourists, perhaps from a distant point he

expects to visit soon. He talks with people, he listens to them, asks questions—and picks up ideas.

Wherever he is, he uses his eyes. Anything he sees that looks unusual, out of the ordinary, is something to be investigated. Some of his most important articles, at times of national significance, had their origin in things he observed as he traveled. Years of training have made it a sort of second nature for him to drive along the road, visit a farm, go through a factory, observe some construction work under way and see there something that is out of the ordinary, unusual, as distinguished from routine. This is something that any experienced reporter, on a newspaper or magazine, acquires. It is a faculty which distinguishes the successful reporter from the routine hack.

Sometimes, he says, his best ideas come from nowhere—just a flash across his mind when he is doing something else. Perhaps only a psychologist could explain how ideas come in that way. He says that the quotation from Emerson at the head of this chapter is as good as any advice could be as to where the best ideas for future articles are likely to come.

**Where editors get tips:** Editors of magazines and their staff members must work just as hard to find ideas and tips for articles as do writers. They must keep in touch with all that goes on within the field or scope of the publication. They must keep apace with or ahead of developments. Assignments must be made to members of the staff or to writers who do work for the publication.

So a magazine office receives many newspapers, trade papers, bulletins, circulars, releases, and the like which are scanned by someone on the staff. Members of the staff often do a lot of traveling—to meetings and conventions, to colleges and universities, to industrial plants, to market centers, and other places—just for the purpose of keeping in touch with people and events and to discover ideas for article material.

An editor has another source for tips not generally available to an unattached writer. This is in form of letters. Readers, people with something they want publicized or promoted, others with some axe to grind or some complaint to make, all write letters to editors. These letters are read and answered. Often there is a

tip or germ for an article in them. For example, an article in a national farm publication not long ago caused a lot of vigorous discussion. To secure the material, a staff writer traveled through several states and interviewed dozens of people. The tip for it was a short letter of complaint which a livestock man had written to the editor.

Writers are constantly sending in tips in hope of getting an assignment. Then there is a constant stream of visitors to many editorial offices, many of which have suggestions of something they think should be written.

**An example:** Probably in the long run, more tips for feature articles, such as a journalism student might write, or which might be handled by a nonstaff writer along farm, home, and more general technical lines, come from daily newspaper stories than anywhere else. A specific example will illustrate just what a tip is.

Here on the left is a news story which appeared on the farm page of the *Daily Pantagraph*, of Bloomington, Illinois. On the right is a suggestion of how the story might have been handled as a feature article:

Good news for the McLean County farm bureau annual meeting today was brought from the American Farm Bureau federation convention in Chicago Thursday by local delegates—theirs is the largest farm bureau in the 13 midwest states.

A plaque recording this honor was to be presented Thursday afternoon at Chicago. Associate Farm Adviser Lloyd D. Graham remained over for the final session to bring the plaque for exhibition at the county bureau's banquet at noon today in the Bloomington Consistory building.

A. B. Culp, county farm bureau organ-

ization director, reported 2,437 members as of Nov. 30, 1941, a gain of 170 for the 12 months, declaring it was not only a big membership but one of unusual quality.

The McLean County Farm bureau already has three big cups and a silver plaque previously awarded by the AFBF. This county had the largest membership of all bureaus in the United States in 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937 and 1938. It was credited with the best farm bureau organization program in the United States in 1935 and 1937.

If a reporter were to go to Bloomington and follow up the tip in the story he would find a feature on one of the most interesting county farm organizations in the United States, waiting to be "dug up" and written.

It also concerns cooperative marketing and other services of various kinds; 4-H Club work, women's activities, cooperation with a Federal land bank.

The building in which all this is housed is one of the finest farm

structures in the country, modern in type and of interest to architects.

For women there is a modern kitchen near the office of the home extension agent for demonstrations and preparing meals.

There is a large auditorium for meetings.

So at least three stories could be written about what a reporter would find there—one for a women's magazine, another for a farm journal, and a third for an engineering journal interested in architecture and building.

If you are a writer on engineering topics and are especially interested in architecture and building, you might raise the question, after getting details of this Farm Bureau building in McLean County, if other similar structures have been built anywhere else in the country. On investigation, you would find that a number of county farm organization and service buildings have been constructed over the United States in recent years. The one on the Hale County courthouse square in Plainview, Texas, and that of Maricopa County, Arizona, in Phoenix, are two examples with architecture quite different from that in Bloomington.

**Query the editor first:** Since securing material for a feature article often involves travel and considerable expense, a writer who is not on an expense account cannot usually afford to go after stories unless he knows that an editor will want them. So the staff writer, the contributing editor, or free lance writer who is experienced will make it a practice to query an editor before gathering material for an article.

These queries should state in 50 to 200 words the essentials of the proposed article. It is better if several queries are sent in together, since two or three articles can just as well be secured on the same trip. On reading over the queries, the editor will decide whether or not the subjects suggested suit him. If they do, he writes back that he is interested and would like to see the stories. He will seldom give an order outright. If he is not interested, he will say so, and the writer need not bother. Or he can then query some other editor.

An advantage of the query is that it gives the editor an opportunity to indicate how long a story he wants and to offer the

writer other suggestions for handling the story to make it suitable to the magazine.

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Suggest and explain the significance of five fundamental human interests other than those listed in the text.

2. Read three articles in technical magazines and analyze them for the fundamental human interests upon which their appeal is based.

3. Suggest five subjects for feature articles which you think you could write and score them on the basis of the five tests given in the text. Count 20 as a perfect score for each of the five tests.

4. List the tips for feature stories that you find in an issue of a daily newspaper; a weekly newspaper.

5. Attend a meeting, short course, or convention. List the tips for feature articles that you are able to uncover. Describe each briefly.

6. Write a letter to an editor of some selected magazine in which you describe five stories which you believe would be suited to his publication.

7. Most of the assignments at the end of Chapter 19 will also apply here. Assignment 2 at the end of Chapter 18 is also an excellent one for securing feature article tips.

8. A standing assignment during the study of this and subsequent chapters should be the listing of tips for feature articles whenever and wherever they are come upon.

9. If there is an independent research laboratory or institution on or near the campus, visit it and see if you can find any tips for articles. Examples of such would be the USDA Insect Laboratory or the Battele Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio; the Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin; the USDA Hog Cholera Laboratory or the State Highway headquarters in Ames, Iowa; the USDA cotton spinning research laboratory at Texas A. and M. College.

10. Visit some enterprise in your community that is new or where there has been recent change or improvement of major importance. Gather and write a news-feature article suitable for submitting to a trade or technical paper most specifically interested. Also secure suitable pictures for illustrating it. Some possibilities for an agricultural student are a new large dairy barn, a new pure-bred herd established, a new livestock auction building, new structures or improvements at fairgrounds, new dairy or cheese plant, new branch house, new cannery, new seed store, new nursery, new local packing plant built. For home economics students, a new supermarket, a new women's specialty shop, a new section in a department store, or a new household equipment store would do. Engineering students might find the assignment in a superhighway, a relocated

highway, a bridge, dam, sewer, a new apartment house or school building, a new defense industry, or a new industrial plant.

11. Gather and write an article based on something you can find that is abandoned or deserted, digging up the history and reasons for the abandonment. Some possibilities are a college, a rural school, an old plantation home, farmhouse, ranchhouse, store, factory, mine, stone quarry, cider mill, grist mill, narrow-gauge railroad, interurban line, sawmill, ghost mining or lumber town, stillhouse, gunsmith shop, locksmith shop, pottery or brickyard, blacksmith shop, harness shop, buggy-maker's shop, wrecked ship, or deserted lake boat.

12. Write a news-feature article on something formerly deserted or abandoned, which has been restored, now used again, or put in operation again. Beginning in 1939, national defense, war, and wartime measures and economics produced a wealth of such ideas. For example, many old mines were re-opened and worked again.

#### FURTHER CAMPUS ASSIGNMENTS

For students who wish additional training in gathering and writing articles, there are many campus possibilities. Some of the following suggestions may not turn out to be what could be termed technical articles, but they will prove an interesting way to get the desired experience or in turn suggest something else:

1. Live laboratory material on campus—livestock on farms—white rat—flies and insects in entomology—monkeys in bacteriology laboratory used in infantile paralysis experiments—plant disease cultures kept going in plant pathology—virulent human diseases in test tubes—frogs and snakes.

2. Classes in overalls—sheep shearing—landscape gardening—engineering laboratory—farm machinery. Other classes wear white. Still others wear aprons.

3. Unusual places on the campus—veterinary clinic—psychology clinic (where co-eds go to get advice on love and wives ask about husbands or children)—museums—agricultural chemistry where analyses are made of materials sent in (husband sent in food to find if wife was trying to poison him)—meats laboratory—laboratory where soil samples sent in by farmers are tested—soilless culture benches in greenhouse—new orchid house—power plant—outdoor paint tests—service tunnels under campus—cyclotron laboratory—model flour mill—rolling mill and ore concentrating plant in new engineering building—sewing machine clinic—home management house—drapery fabrics testing—firing kiln in ceramics department—door that is always locked in engineering experiment station building—grass nursery—cheese laboratory—medicinal herb garden—model drug store in pharmacy building—that collection of concrete specimens an engineering professor has been gathering for five years now.

## CHAPTER 24

### GATHERING FEATURE ARTICLE MATERIAL

He wrote of lords and ladies  
(He lived in Arkansas).  
He wrote of countless millions  
(A "V" filled him with awe).  
His tales, indeed, were many,  
His sales, alas, were few;  
He wrote of things he'd read about  
And not of things he knew.

A TREASURED delusion of many novices who think they would like to write feature articles must at this point be dispelled. Following the inception of a bright idea, the beginner often thinks that he need only shut himself in his bedroom and, out of his inner consciousness, evolve a story. It is very doubtful whether this method will work consistently with any type of writing. One thing is sure, that it will not work in the writing of feature articles. The making of a feature article consists not of a single step, the writing, but of three steps—the inception of the idea, the gathering of the material, and the putting of the story into words. And the most important of these, if it were possible to make a distinction in a process where each step is integral, is the second, the gathering of the material out of which the story is to be made.

In the field of technical articles, the material in the article is more important than the way in which it is written. News quality and informational value are more essential than facility in composition. The writer cannot conceal laziness or lack of sound material by superficial cleverness in use of words and phrases. It is the "stuff" in the story that counts most.

The feature writer should think of himself first of all as a reporter—no more and no less than that. If he does think of himself as a reporter—a reporter for magazines, to be sure, but still a reporter, for he is dealing with fact and not with imaginative material—he will have the proper perspective, the proper attitude,

toward his work. The same qualities of perseverance, regard for the truth, ability to see the salient facts from a news point of view, that characterize the good reporter, are essential equipment of the successful feature writer.

**Mechanics of gathering feature article material:** Feature writing is a business, and it demands systematic methods. Every feature story writer must work out for himself some system for handling the mechanical phases of his work. It would be unwise to formulate a set of specific rules—much wiser to suggest a process that has been successfully used by many feature story writers and let the individual develop his own methods on the basis of these suggestions.

If a writer conceived a single idea and worked upon a single story at a time, the process would be very simple. But, fortunately or unfortunately, it is impracticable to do this, for the simple reason that one's output would be entirely too low to be worthwhile. On the other hand, a feature writer must hoard tips and material not only for immediate stories but for those of the future.

The first tool of the feature writer is a notebook in which he can record tips for stories wherever he may be and whenever the occasion arrives. This notebook may also be used to gather material. It should be constantly expanding and contracting as material is secured and then transferred to a filing system.

A separate filing system for feature story ideas and tips will be found advantageous. It need be only a simple card index, where, under appropriate heads, ideas may be transferred from the notebook, clippings pasted, and references and sources suggested.

When the writer begins to gather material on a particular subject he will need to start a folder labeled with the subject of his story. Into this folder he will put, as he collects his material, notes, bulletins, clippings, and articles. When he is ready to write the story, all of the data that he needs will have accumulated in this folder—and all that will remain will be the process of turning the raw material into the final product.

Having some sort of plan or method for gathering material will save time and insure a better story. When your story subject has been determined, look through your files for material that

bears upon it. Or there may be a chapter in an available textbook that deals with it. Read what you have found and acquaint yourself more fully with the subject.

Then list the places where you may expect to secure further material and the persons you will want to interview. Include in this list some sources which are not so very promising, but which might yield something of value. Many a time worth-while information and suggestions are secured where you least expect to find them.

As you set out to get your information, begin at the place which seems most logical. Often this is the place where you are known. Someone you know will be more likely to talk freely with you and give you further suggestions as to where else to go. Before you finish the calls on your list, be certain that you have the last bit of information you need for a complete story.

Let us see how this would work out with a specific example.

Assume that you are a student in dairy manufacturing—or dairy technology. You expect to write an article on milk as a food. That subject is too general, and too broad, but you expect to find some news angles that will make a suitable story. The news angle may turn out to be new research or it may relate to the place of milk in national defense.

After examining such related material in your file, you would logically begin the gathering of material by talking with one or more members of the dairy instruction and research staffs. Don't forget the dairy bacteriologist.

Your calling list will include some or all of these other places and persons for information-gathering interviews: The college or department of home economics, where some specialist in foods may tell you about different ways to use milk in the diet. The chemistry department, where someone will explain the fundamental food values of milk. The animal husbandry department, where information about livestock and poultry feeding uses of milk and milk by-products may be secured. The economics department, for information on marketing, distribution, and prices of milk.

With that it may look as though you have adequately covered the field, but wait a minute! Children drink milk. Often children

don't like milk and refuse to drink it. Yet children need milk as a food. Is there anything new in how to get children to drink milk? Who could tell you?

Probably a nursery school is operated by the school of home economics, and the person in charge is likely to know. So you go to talk with her. She shows you how mugs shaped as rabbits are used for drinking; or glasses with Walt Disney pictures on them. There are Mother Goose pictures in the bottom of cereal bowls which the children cannot see until they have eaten their cereal and cream. She tells you that the psychology department has been making a study of how to get children to drink milk.

That last is something new. At the beginning you hardly dreamed that a psychologist might know about milk as food. When you interview the psychologist, he tells you of experimental work that is being done in cooperation with the city milk council and the local association of milk distributors. So in turn you interview the young woman secretary of the milk council and the president of the distributors' association. You learn that the local children's hospital, the county medical society, and the community fund which aids in distribution of milk to the poor are all cooperating to learn more about milk and its use. So on you go to see these agencies.

By this time you have covered the subject adequately and are ready to begin writing. You probably have enough material for writing not one, but several articles. Because it is all secured in one community, it may be suitable only for a local or state publication. But it may also be possible that some angles of it would make a story for a national publication, a dairy trade paper, or some other more general magazine.

So much for a local feature story as a student reporter might handle it. Let us see how a feature writer would go about handling an article of nation-wide scope. One of the authors of this text was given an assignment not long since to write an article for a national farm magazine on seeds as they related to the world war—the cutting off of seed imports and the efforts being made to produce in this country the kinds of seeds formerly imported. The instructions were to make a thorough investigation.

This writer began by getting out of his files whatever information he had. He went through government releases and reports for the previous year or two to make himself familiar with statistics. He carefully read back numbers of seed trade magazines. He also talked with local men who were in touch with the seed business. He took a map of the United States and marked on it the important centers where seeds are grown, mainly in the West. He also made a list of seed growers and other persons in about a dozen states who should be interviewed. Then he was ready to start out. It was an assignment that could best be handled by driving.

The first stop was at St. Louis, to visit the annual convention of the American Seed Trade Association. Here he interviewed seedsmen from sections of the country he did not expect to visit on the trip. He also made the acquaintance of seed growers from the Pacific Coast and arranged to see them at their seed farms later.

He also had a talk with the seed statistician of the United States Department of Agriculture who had come from Washington, D. C., to appear on the program. From him he secured a mimeographed report on a recent seed survey. From a representative of a trade paper he secured a copy of a seed trade yearbook which was of untold value later.

Leaving St. Louis, the writer drove west through New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles. His real work began at Santa Ana below Los Angeles, where he interviewed a grower of tomato seed. Going north he went through California, into Oregon and Washington, and then turned eastward into Idaho, Montana and Utah, and Colorado. In these states he interviewed commercial seed growers and experiment station agronomists. As he went along, he took a good many pictures and gathered up others available. He also accumulated a large amount of printed and typewritten material, such as catalogs, bulletins, weekly reports to farmer growers, and copies of talks.

When he returned home, he had traveled nearly 12,000 miles in a period of two months and he brought back material for several articles dealing with vegetable, farm, flower, and herb seeds. An article dealing with the vegetable seed situation was written first,

since it was of most public interest; a paragraph at the end summarized the flower seed situation. A second article was written on forage and grass seeds, and another dealt with seeds of herbs and essential oil plants. Material for some other articles had also been gathered on the trip.

This may look like a tremendous lot of hard work, yet it was the only way a firsthand gathering of material could have been accomplished. To a greater or less extent, many present-day magazine articles are gathered in just this same way.

Suppose we look now at magazine feature article reporting in more detail from various angles.

**Reporting the experience story:** It may be contended that one does not have to "report" the personal experience and confession stories, but there is reason in the opposite view—that even in the case of these types of stories the writer must be a reporter. What he actually does, of course, is to interview himself. Now, although these types of stories are the simplest to report, it is not so easy a matter as it may at first appear. It is a difficult task to keep an unprejudiced attitude toward one's own deeds and ideas, but this is just what the writer must do if he is to produce an article that will interest a wide number of readers.

The gathering of material for a story which is to relate the experiences of someone else than yourself is a strictly reportorial task. You will employ the same methods that you would use in covering an interview assignment for a newspaper. Let us suppose that you have in mind writing a story about Arthur Harris, a farmer who has a reputation for his high yields of soybeans. You have heard of Harris from the county agent in his county, whom you asked for tips for feature articles. Your first step, probably, will be to write Harris, explaining what you have in mind and asking for an opportunity to see him, talk to him, and look over his place. You will want to make clear to him that you want to write a story about his work, that you are making him a business proposition from which he will derive indirect benefits. You put the matter, in other words, on a straightforward business basis.

When you go to see Harris you already have a conception of the nature of the story. You think that it is going to be a soybean

production story—and it probably will be. But it is unwise to have your mind too firmly made up as to what will be the central idea of the article until you have covered the story. Something may be discovered that will entirely alter the direction and emphasis of the article. But, with this precaution in mind, it is a good idea to have outlined, in thought at least, the main points upon which you want to secure information. You want to learn, for instance, the record of his yields over a period of years, his rotation scheme, his soil treatment, the source of his seed and its treatment, methods of cultivation, production costs, profit, size of farm, labor employed, horse or tractor power used. These may be the most important things, but they are not all. You will want to get a clear visual impression of Harris' farm and farmstead, you will want to meet his wife and children. You will need to learn about his other farm operations. It will be very important to get in Harris' own words some of his opinions of farming methods and the elements in his success. You must, above all, get a number of good pictures of Harris, his family, his crops, his farmstead, and any other things of special interest.

It will begin to appear that this is neither a small nor an easy task—but we are not yet through. The material that we have here has been secured from what we may call the *primary source*. But may there not be other material which you can use advantageously in this article? In short, are there any *secondary sources* which you should exploit? For instance, it may be well to talk to Harris' wife and get her story of their struggles and success; to see the county agent and learn from him what he thinks of Harris; to visit some of Harris' neighbors and get their points of view. It will be worthwhile when you get back from your expedition to go to the census reports to find out the average soybean yields in this state; it may serve you to read up in bulletins on soybean breeding and cultivation. Only when you have done all of these things, covered all of these angles of the story, and accumulated these data in your folder marked "Harris" will you be in a position to begin writing your article.

An experience story may be of the sort which reports not the achievements of a single individual, but the work of an organization

or community. In this case, one must thoroughly canvass the situation and determine carefully the primary and secondary sources. You are going to write, we shall say, the story of a rural women's club which is doing notable work. The club has founded in the market town a rest room for farm women, it has organized a traveling library and has been responsible for a lyceum course during the winter. The primary source for this story will be some woman who is a ringleader in the work, the president, perhaps, or the founder of the club, or its oldest member. From this woman you can get most of the material that will form the backbone of your story. But there are other sources that should be utilized. You should attend a regular meeting of the club, visit the rest room, talk to a number of the members, get the attitude of the men, both farmers and townsmen, toward the work of the club.

In the case of this story you run the grave danger of failing to cover the story, if you rely on one or two sources of material when several should be investigated. A writer for a farm paper once made a curious blunder which illustrates this point. In a story on a rural organization, he mentioned the work of a Mrs. A——, giving her credit for the organization's success. Several years later he learned that there had been two Mrs. A——'s and that he had written of the wrong one.

**Reporting the process story:** Although essentially the same, the task of reporting the process story is superficially different from the problem of covering any of the other types. You have, in this case, to gather and present material which will make clear to the reader "how to do something." You must yourself, in the first place, have a clear mental picture of the object or the process that you are going to describe. In the second place, you must have complete data on how this effect is achieved—the details of construction or the steps in the process.

In a story which tells how to make something—a barn, a concrete fence, a piece of apparatus, a breakfast alcove—there are three kinds of data that will be necessary in practically every case:

1. Materials and specifications.
2. Costs and labor.
3. The construction process, including all of the necessary steps.

In some cases all of this material can be secured by interviewing a single person. An agricultural engineer may be able to give you all of the material you need for a story on the construction of a sales pavilion. You may be able to get sufficient material from a new bulletin on the use of concrete on the farm to write the story about the concrete fence. On the other hand, it may be, as perhaps in the case of the breakfast alcove, that you will have to get the specifications from an architect, the lumber and paint quotations from dealers, and the construction process from a carpenter. The point is that in every story of this sort these phases must, if possible, be covered.

**Reporting the news-feature story:** It would seem at first glance that there is nothing more to reporting the news-feature story—a fair, conference, field day, lecture, or some other such event—than to attend, take notes of what transpires, interview the leaders, and see what is to be seen. To be sure, this kind of story can be reported in this way—must be, in fact—but in a great many instances there are other sources to which the skillful reporter will have recourse.

The reporting of fairs is one of the important jobs of writers for agricultural papers. There are two things in regard to the fair in which the farmer readers of the paper will be especially interested, the judging and the agricultural exhibits. The usual farm paper story of a fair consists of a more or less extended summary of the fair activities and a list of the awards in the judging contests. Farm boys and girls will also be interested in the junior contests and exhibits.

Is there anything more that a fair story should do? There is. The state and county or sectional fair is a reflection—and a very accurate one—of the agricultural conditions of the state, county, or section. The story of the fair, then, should reflect the spirit of the exposition and through it the spirit of the agriculture of the district which it covers. There is another source of worthwhile material for a fair story—the records of previous fairs. It is interesting and valuable to trace the development of the agriculture of the state by outlining or hinting at the development of the fair, making striking contrasts with the past.

In all of these meeting stories, the purpose of the feature article writer should be more than merely to present the surface facts. He must interpret the present events in the light of past events, and to do this may require considerable delving into the official records and old magazines.

**Reporting the information story:** The simplest sort of information or scientific story is that for which the material is secured from a single person, an expert or well-known authority. In this case the primary source of material is the interview with this person, although it is frequently well to amplify one's information by reading up on the subject in books, bulletins, reports, and magazines. It may also be necessary to interview more than one expert to get a thorough picture of different phases of the question.

Perhaps you are going to write a story on the function of the vitamin in the diet. You would naturally go first to the research chemist who has made investigations in this field. He can give you the bulk of the material that you will want to use. But before you go to see him, you should read on the subject as much as possible. After interviewing the chemist, another slant on the question can be secured by talking to an authority on dietetics to get the practical application of the theory of vitamins.

In many cases the information story is more complicated. We spoke in Chapter 15 of stories which cannot be secured from a single individual or even from a limited group of individuals in a single community; and many information stories are of this kind. They deal with state-wide or national movements or conditions—and present probably the most difficult task that the feature writer has to face: stories, for instance, which deal with the position of women in some profession or occupational field, with the fight on a plant disease, or with the growth of the use of electricity on the farm. To handle any one of these subjects the writer will have to utilize a wide variety of sources, and will probably have to take weeks or even months for the development of his material.

**Reporting the personality story:** In the reporting of the personality story, we are dealing, as far as the gathering of the material goes, with a much simpler proposition. The story concerns a single individual and will be secured as a result of an interview. What

was said in the chapter dealing with interviews in regard to the reporting of the personality interview applies here with equal force. The point that the reporter must remember when he secures this interview is that his purpose is to reproduce for his readers the personality—not merely the words—of the person interviewed. In other words, he needs to be keenly awake to visual as well as auditory sensations. He must be able to reproduce the appearance of the person and his surroundings. More than this, he has to capture this man's or woman's spirit, character, philosophy of life. The securing of material for this type of article is more than the routine interview. It requires keenness, insight, and alertness and is a supreme test of the reporter.

**Experiences in gathering feature material:** So far in this chapter, general suggestions concerning the gathering of material for the different types of feature articles have been given. Now it will be interesting and profitable to recount the experiences of feature writers, the authors and others, in getting material for stories, in order to illustrate the general suggestions that have been put forward.

**Gathering firsthand material:** There is a story told in the Bible of how on an occasion the Egyptians refused to give the Israelite sojourners straw for bricks, but ordered that, instead, the straw must be hunted for, each man for himself.

Before the feature article can be written, the writer must do precisely as did the Israelites in bondage, go out and seek for himself the straw, wherewith the bricks of his article are to be made.

After a writer has an idea for a feature article or after he has been given an assignment by an editor, the first thing he should do is to sit down and make an analysis of the material he may have already at hand and outline what he will need and where it may be secured.

If there is time, it is a wise thing for him, as was suggested earlier, to go through all of this material, refresh his mind on the subject, determine what are the essential and important angles. As he goes along, he may set down a list of the men he needs to interview, the places he will visit, the points upon which he wants

to get fresh or additional information. This done, his job is to gather the straw for his bricks.

**Call on the publicity man:** Suppose, for instance, that a reporter for a farm paper is to go to a state agricultural college to get certain information. He is a total stranger there. Where shall he begin? Some successful reporters begin by calling on the president or the dean of agriculture; they interview them and go on to other men on the college staff.

The method of one successful writer is usually precisely the opposite. If he is unacquainted, his first visit is to the bulletin editor or college publicity man, who is in touch with everything on the campus, and who can tell the writer just where the information is that he wants. There is no ceremony about getting to see him, and he will outline the whole situation in a few minutes and put the correspondent directly in touch with the men he wants to see. After this, if it is necessary, he calls on the dean or president. In fact, after he has talked with others, he can talk more intelligently with these and save their time by asking more specific questions.

This writer was once sent to interview the governor of a state on the administrative reforms he had instituted. The governor was a total stranger to him. He did not know a single man in the whole administration forces of the state. So, contrary to his usual plan, he went directly to the governor and explained what he wanted. After a few minutes of conversation the governor stopped him.

"I'll give you the interview," he said, "but before I do, I want you to spend about three days digging into what we have here. I want you to talk with our administrative board secretary, with our budget director, with our purchasing agent, and others. After you get through and find out all these men have to tell you, come back and see me. You will know then what I am talking about."

**Know the man you are to interview:** If the whole story is to be secured from one man, the matter is comparatively simple. Know the man from whom the interview is to be secured. Look him up in "Who's Who" if his name is to be found there, or in

any other place, or ask someone. If he is a farmer, the county agent or local banker can usually give one information about him. If these are not available, a grocer, the county auditor, the fellow who sells you a sandwich, the druggist even can sometimes help.

Or suppose that the man to be interviewed is the chief engineer in charge of the construction of a large dam. If this man is difficult to locate when you want to see him, one of his associates, or a salesman for a materials company may help you out. Possibly the engineer is staying at a hotel in a nearby town, and the clerk there can help you out. In fact, if you ever do any considerable amount of magazine reporting of whatever nature, you will often be surprised at the information about people that hotel clerks and managers can give you.

The point is to know your man, know what you want him to talk about, know what you want to get from him, before you go to see him, whoever he may be.

**Picking the place for the interview:** If knowing the man in advance is the first rule for getting a good interview, the second concerns the surroundings in which he is interviewed.

It is best to see a banker, a college president, a man of public affairs away from his office. At his office he is often interrupted, and his mind is on other things. If he can be seen at lunch or dinner, at the hotel or elsewhere, a much better interview can usually be secured.

A college president invited a staff writer to his home for dinner, and afterward they sat by the fireplace in his study and talked. The governor of a state once came down to his office early in the morning and talked to a reporter for an hour before interruptions began. Another governor took the same writer with him on a hundred mile auto trip which he had to make, after the reporter had waited at his office for five hours for a chance to speak with him.

Another governor was interviewed in a taxi ride from the state-house to a railroad station. To get an interview with two prominent farm organization officials, one writer had to travel with them on a train from New York City to Washington, D. C. At another time he rode with an official from Chicago to Omaha to get his interview.

But if the interview is with a farmer, whether for only a few minutes' chat or for a lengthy interview, the best place to see him is on his own farm in familiar surroundings—but when he is at leisure—in the barnyard, in the granary or hog house, by the kitchen stove, in the farm office. And the best time is on a rainy day or a Sunday morning.

Get the farmer at a leisure moment if possible, when he has a chance to relax—but get him. The latter part of this rule means that, about nine times out of ten, the farmer has to be interviewed at work, especially if it is summer. The worst possible thing is to ask a farmer to stop work while he talks with you.

A purebred livestock man who understands the value of publicity will stop work he is doing to talk with a farm paper reporter. So, too, will a producer of hybrid seed corn, a poultryman who sells baby chicks, or a grower of fruits or vegetables who sells his products under his own brand. Nurserymen and commercial seed growers who do a large retail or catalog business welcome a reporter for a garden publication or other magazine which has a garden department. A cattleman or sheepman of the western range country who sells feeder cattle or sheep is an easy man to interview. So, too, is a man who feeds livestock in large numbers and markets them on a central market. A man who operates a large farm or a number of farms talks readily.

All these are likely to be men who travel, who meet the public, and who often come in contact with reporters. But the average farmer is often much harder to interview.

So reporters have talked with farmers on top of threshing machines, in hay mows, on loads of hay, on straw stacks; have ridden manure spreaders, tractors, and loads of wheat going to town. They have followed a drag around a plowed field, have tramped along by men shucking corn; stood by while the farmer milked his cows, cleaned the stable, clipped the horses, sheared the sheep, fed the cattle.

In recent years, as power farming has increased, interviewing farmers has become even more difficult. It is hard to get a farmer who is driving a tractor that is pulling a combine or a corn picker to stop with you and talk, while his equipment and often help

must stand idle. Or a fruit grower spraying an orchard with a power sprayer. When he is irrigating a field, a farmer can't turn off the water and stop while he talks with the reporter, either, but must go on working.

Once a reporter stood outside and shouted questions at a tenant farmer who was inside a clover seed huller, repairing it. Another time in Kansas, when the county agent had gone along, the agent fed the hay baler while the reporter talked with the farmer, and then the reporter took the fork while the agent talked. When he left, the reporter had blisters on his hands—and material in his notebook which he used in a series of three articles. Often he has had to interview a farmer or someone else over the long distance phone.

The home economics reporter for a women's magazine, or the household department of a farm magazine, has some of the same difficulties. Oftentimes she tries to get her story from women who are attending a convention or a farm and home week program. It is almost impossible to do this unless she can get her subject off somewhere, where they will not be bothered as they talk. A good many times she will get much better material if she merely gets acquainted with the women and arranges to see them at their homes later.

A writer who is gathering material for an engineering story finds that many times he must get his interviews from men who are at work. This may mean tramping through a factory between humming motors or machines. Or yelling questions above the roar of a blast furnace. Or climbing up on a construction job. Information could be gathered to better advantage if the interview could be in the office or in a hotel lobby in the evening.

In engineering and industry, it is often difficult to get men on the job or the branch manager to talk. They prefer that you go to the "boss"—the general manager or to the company headquarters at some distant place. These are problems the reporter-writer has to solve. Often it will save time and facilitate work if a call is made at headquarters first and a letter secured, which gives you permission to get your story. This permission may not

be granted unless you are a staff representative of a recognized publication or have a specific assignment from an editor.

Recently a magazine staff reporter was told by his editor to get a story on the manufacture of a certain special product which had come into the news because of war, although it had no direct connection with war or defense in itself. The reporter found that this product was made by only one firm, which had a secret formula for it and secret methods of production. The manufacturer had a world-wide monopoly and was guarding the process by every means possible. Visitors are not allowed to go into the plant under any consideration.

The reporter went first to an old friend who taught a related technical subject in a university. He asked this friend to help him. The faculty man called a friend of his on the phone who was a branch manager for a local plant which belonged to the firm making the product. He told this manager that it would be a good idea for the whole industry if this article could be written. What could he do to help make it possible?

The reporter went next to see this branch manager and explained what he wanted. The branch manager called by telephone a vice-president of the company at headquarters several hundred miles away. The vice-president agreed that the article would be worthwhile. In turn, he made a phone call to the manager of the plant where the article was made and told him that he was to admit the reporter and talk with him. The reporter was also given a letter which would identify him.

A few days later, the reporter went to this plant. He was shown all through it. He was given the facts for his story, though not of course the secret technical details. He was told what he could not put in his story. After he had the story written, it was sent to the vice-president and to the public relations man of the company at headquarters to be checked. In due time the story appeared in the magazine. The reporter had carried out his assignment.

**Opening the interview:** One important thing is the point of approach, the way in which the reporter comes up to a man, introduces himself, and opens up the topic. If he knows the man

he wants to interview, the task is easy. If the man to be interviewed is a college man, a county agent, a banker, a man in public life, or a purebred livestock breeder, accustomed to meeting people and being interviewed, the opening has no difficulties. But when a reporter approaches an average farmer, who, perhaps, never talked with a reporter before in his life, it is a horse of a different color.

Farmers, living and working to themselves, are apt to be reticent with a stranger; they are modest and self-deprecatory. With many farmers these qualities are intensified into suspicion of a stranger and a consequent reluctance to talk freely with him about personal affairs, their business and farming methods.

In many cases the reporter can best open the conversation by telling the farmer his name and stating in almost the first moment just what his business is and why he has sought him out. If the farmer is a subscriber to your paper, he will recognize your errand. If not, he might reply:

“No, I don’t want your paper. I take too many papers already.”

For some farmers know the farm paper only through the subscription agent. Then the reporter must explain in more detail that he is not there to take subscriptions.

It is well to form the habit of sizing up a farmer as you approach him—in case you do not know much of him in advance, and if he appears to be a man not accustomed to meeting strangers, to have a ready phrase which will put him at his ease. One writer, in such a situation, often opens up in this way:

“Mr. Jones, I’m a queer fellow. I don’t have anything to sell you today. All I want is a little information.”

This usually brings a laugh from the farmer and, the ice broken, the writer goes on to state that he is a farm paper writer and that he is gathering information on soybeans, or the working of the new cooperative livestock marketing association in the county—or whatever it is.

Sometimes, however, one must conceal his real purpose. This is true when the information sought is likely to be uncomplimentary to the man being interviewed.

Some time ago a writer was sent out to get a series of articles on three different kinds of farmers, those who always make money, those who never make money, and those who are on the dividing line—sometimes do, sometimes do not. This meant that he must see farmers of the highest type, the average or run-of-mine sort, and the ne'er-do-well, shiftless ones.

Setting out in his car, he drove 2,500 miles or more through five states, doing nothing but searching for farmers of these three types and talking with them. Of course, the men he saw had to be hand-picked in advance by consultations with county agents, extension service men, and country bankers.

When he approached a man of the best type, he found almost always a farmer who was fairly well educated, a business man of ability. Without hesitation, he told him just why he had sought him out.

But when he approached the men of the other two types, he did exactly the opposite. He gave them no hint as to his real purpose in visiting them. Instead, he interviewed them on general agricultural conditions in the community. But as he went along, he kept edging in now and then a question as to methods the farmer followed, the number of stock, fertility, drainage, marketing, profits, amount of sales, yields from crops, ways of handling livestock. The information was not, of course, to be used against these farmers as individuals.

He made no effort under these conditions to take notes. He was afraid that the sight of a notebook might make his interlocutor suspicious and cause him to close down on information. But after he left, he would stop his car down the road a way, get out his notebook and write down the things he wanted to remember. More than once he stopped at neighbors for further information.

If in your interviewing, you need to call on a business executive, a manager of an industrial or engineering firm, you have first to satisfy this executive that you are a reporter, rather than an advertising man or salesman. You will usually be halted in an outer office by a secretary, to whom you must explain your business. If you can do this and get in to see your man, your next job is to

sell him on the idea that he should talk for publication or give you the information you need. You may have to convince him, too, that you can handle the material accurately.

If you can do this, you will frequently find that this executive is easy to interview. If your name is already known to him or if you are an editorial representative of a well-known publication, all this is easier than if you are a free lance writer. Sometimes a friend of yours who is well known to the executive you wish to interview will introduce you and vouch for you.

**Suggestions on interviewing:** Interviewing is in simple essence the process of asking questions that will elicit information for your article. Upon the questions asked, the manner of asking them, the manner in which the answers are received, depends the success of the interview. There are no set rules that can be given. A reporter can learn to interview only by interviewing and by profiting from mistakes.

It is often poor policy to ask the most important questions first. Rather, begin with some unimportant one, with some side issue, get your man interested and talking and then lead on to the thing you most want to know. Often a good way to begin, either with farmers or others, is to get your man to give you the history of the thing about which you want to learn.

This gives the man a chance to talk freely and without reserve. As he gets into the story, he unbends, thaws out, and makes the later close questioning more easy.

In asking questions, don't make the interview sound like an inquisition or a cross-questioning. The more nearly it can seem to be a conversation, the better it is. The skillful interviewer just sits down and talks with the man. But he leads the conversation, steers it the way he wants it to go, by means of his questioning.

The reporter seldom disagrees with the man he is interviewing. Even if he doesn't agree, he remarks that that is surely an interesting viewpoint, that he had never heard the matter put in just that way before. Once in a while it is necessary to disagree sharply and get an argument started. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the reporter should be courteous, even in the face of rebuffs. The one time he may have to insult a man to get him to talk.

One time a reporter called on a country banker, a pompous individual, to get some facts regarding land sales in the county.

"I don't have time to bother with you. I'm too busy to talk with strangers this morning," he snapped.

"Look here," the reporter spit back, and he shook his finger at him, "my time is just as valuable as yours and maybe a durned sight more so. My editor sent me a long way to see you. It's likely the banker across the street knows just as much about this as you do and maybe more. I'll go over and see him. Good day."

"Wait a minute," he called as the reporter turned on his heel and stalked away toward the door. "I'll give you a little time."

He took the writer into his private office and talked for more than half an hour, giving him the information he was seeking.

As a rule, the bigger the man, the more important he is, the more ready he will be to talk. The governor, the senator, the college president, the head of a farm organization, the successful business farmer are much easier to interview than the underling, the assistant secretary, the conventional-minded or shiftless farmer.

The careful reporter or writer will make good use of his notebook. One well-known writer tells that when he first set out to gather material for farm paper articles, he carried only some scratch paper in his pocket as he would have done on a newspaper assignment. But one day when he reached home he found he had lost the most important part of his story—one of the sheets was missing.

So he provided himself with a looseleaf leather notebook, just the right size to fit into his inside coat pocket or the hip pocket of his trousers. He can take notes in it all day long and at night separate out the different interviews and classify them.

The essential thing is to take notes. One successful farm feature writer knows shorthand, but he is the exception. It is well to take plenty of notes, making sure to get down figures accurately. When a man being interviewed uses some apt phrase, some rugged term, some peculiarly rural or provincial simile, the reporter needs to get down the exact phrasing—for that is the stuff out of which good stories are made.

It is a nice point of skill to know just when to pull out the note-

book. Seldom do it at the beginning of a conversation. Wait until the man is talking freely and says something that needs to be noted with particular accuracy—perhaps it is some figures. Then get out the notebook.

“Say, I better write those figures down or I’ll forget them or get them wrong,” is a good excuse. But once the notebook is out, keep on using it.

In fact, in dealing with a topic that is important, involved or highly technical, it is a good plan, to insure accuracy both of fact and of quoted statement, to let the man who gives you the information read and verify or correct what you have written.

This is a practice often followed on technical and scientific magazines. It is good practice for student reporters too.

Once, after preparing a series of popular articles dealing with a highly technical subject, a writer had every article read for errors by two different scientists in this field. When he first set out to get the information for the articles, he found these scientists reluctant to give him the information he wanted because they feared that a reporter not trained in this science would not write the articles accurately. So he told them that he would submit the articles to them before they were published. In this way he secured information that might not otherwise have been available.

**Value of records and reports:** Another rule in gathering material for feature articles is to ask to see any books, records, reports, or documents available—any printed or written material, in fact. From these make accurate copies of the figures or other material that you want. Many an honest man will give wrong information because his memory is false. Or he will speak in general terms when specific figures will mean something quite different, as you find out when you come to analyze them.

A writer who was investigating cooperative marketing once stopped to talk with the secretary of one of the oldest cooperative creameries in Minnesota. To his great joy, he found that this farmer, now an old man, had in his desk the complete records of this creamery for some thirty years. A poultry farmer in southern Illinois brought out of his house his account books showing records

for twenty-eight years of poultry keeping. An Indiana farm woman had records on her flocks for twenty-five years.

An Indiana farmer once showed a reporter his poultry cost accounts, records which the writer afterward learned probably cover a longer period than any other such poultry records in this country. Many farmers have farm account books going back for many years. These records, milk sheets, cost account books, bank statements, income tax statements, and what not, often furnish valuable information.

Copies of annual reports, bulletins, press releases, letters, clippings—anything of value that can be secured or copied—should be utilized. In getting a story from scientists and research workers, you will find that often they can supply you with reprints of “separates” of technical articles they have written. Often on engineering work of a public nature, printed copies of plans and specifications are available. In other cases, extra sets of blueprints and specifications can be obtained. The reporter takes everything he can that is available. A blueprint detail or the carbon of a typewritten sheet given him may be precisely the information he *forgot to ask about in the interview.*

**Human interest sidelights:** In talking with a farmer, use your eyes as well as your tongue. You will notice things about which you should ask. There will be little touches of human interest, which can be put into the story to make it more realistic. The farmer who came to the door with a lead pencil over his ear, the remark that a neighbor makes, what the son or wife says, these often give a clue. The little concrete anecdotes that a man relates often are the best of the story.

Once a reporter asked a country banker in South Dakota about the agricultural situation. For answer he arose and walked over to the cabinet where the bank kept its notes. He pulled out a drawer for the month.

“This drawer was packed so full of notes due on the first of this month that they could hardly be squeezed in,” he said. “Here it is the eighth—and look at it.”

He squeezed the remaining notes up—and the drawer was less

than half full. More than half of the notes had been paid off, around 300 of them, within eight days. That gesture was the most striking thing the reporter saw on his trip.

**Verifying story data:** A reporter should seek to have his story told to him over and over again, by as many people as possible, from as many angles as possible. He should verify what one man tells him by inquiring of a second and a third about the same set of facts or circumstances. He should cautiously inquire as to the veracity or reliability of people he has interviewed.

On one occasion, a reporter interviewed the president of an agricultural college on certain matters of agricultural policy in that state. A few minutes later the dean of agriculture gave him some information which pointed in exactly the opposite direction. So he found it necessary to take a whole day, talk with the farm management men, extension men, heads of several departments, and men off the campus, before he got the matter straight.

Sometimes the dean or the head of a department is not to be relied upon for accurate information. Involved in administrative duties, he fails to keep up with the particular subject upon which he was once an expert. Some assistant back in a laboratory is more up-to-date. The dean, speaking out of his experience, can give the broad background and interpretation. The assistant must be depended upon for late and concrete facts.

A department head who is generally recognized as a national authority in one line of scientific agriculture once gave a writer some information. When the latter checked on it, he found that it was incorrect. A half dozen experiment stations had disproved it. So the next time he was back on this campus, he went quietly to a friend who taught this subject and asked him about it.

"Yes, the doctor is still talking the same stuff he did twenty years ago. We know it's all wrong, but we don't dare tell him about it."

The reporter also learns to know, or at least finds out later by checking and inquiry, which men are faking or lying, which are seeking notoriety or undue publicity.

One night a reporter was in a western intermountain region town looking up agricultural conditions. Seeing the office of a

political headquarters open, he dropped in to gossip. The men there were all total strangers to him, but he soon had them talking. They told him in glowing terms that hard times were over, that prosperity had come back. And then in came the sheriff. He didn't look like the accepted movie version of a western sheriff.

"Sheriffs out this way don't have as much to do as they used to," the reporter remarked.

"The blankety blank they don't," was the unexpected reply. "With 208 bankruptcy notices to serve in one month and nine bankruptcy farm sales on the courthouse steps this morning, it looks like I don't have anything to do!"

The looks on the faces of the others were interesting to observe. Here was a man speaking the truth. He was giving concrete facts. The others had been trying to stuff an unsuspecting stranger with "bunk."

Not long ago a member of the editorial staff of a well-known publication in a technical field had to interview the branch manager of a large industrial concern. He had been warned in advance that this manager was a natural-born liar and could not be believed. Yet business diplomacy in connection with advertising matters made it absolutely necessary that he be interviewed.

So this staff writer first called on the leading competitor of the firm in the same city whom he knew well and frankly told him of his difficulty. This competitor went with him to call on the unreliable manager, introduced the reporter to him, and listened to the interview. Later on, this competitor set the reporter straight on the facts, explaining which were accurate and which were not. If the reporter had not thus safeguarded himself but had instead printed what this branch manager told him, he would have put himself and his paper in the proverbial hot water. This writer says that he still doesn't know whether the branch manager actually lied or whether he was just one of those individuals who likes to hear himself talk on any subject, no matter whether he knows anything about it or not.

There is the case of another man, an important executive in an industrial firm which is probably the largest of its kind in the country but with several important competitors. Editorial repre-

sentatives of several publications have to call on this man regularly. These men know that everything the man tells them has to be checked. He frequently distorts facts to the advantage of his products as compared to those of his competitors.

Men such as these are rare. A reporter may work for years without meeting one. Yet the careful reporter constantly checks and verifies, lest he be misled by something told him.

**Casual interviewing:** The experienced reporter sets everybody to talking who will talk, not only the man or men he sets out to interview, but the conductor on the train, the man he meets at the dining room table in the hotel, the passengers in the Pullman smoker, the hired hand, the threshing crew, the stenographer or secretary, the office boy, the hotel clerk, the man sitting next to him in the lobby.

Anecdotes could be told by the score of valuable information secured by chance in this way. By setting to talking two contractors whom a reporter found by chance in a smoker one night, he learned the inside of some of the most notorious graft cases in roads and public buildings in the northwest. A man on the back steps of a street car in Indianapolis gave the same writer some valuable information regarding land sales in North Carolina.

This reporter found that a stranger sitting in the lobby of a hotel in North Dakota was the manager of the local dairy plant who told him of increased dairy production in that county. In western Texas, a stranger proved to be an official of a Federal land bank with information on farm conditions. In a Nebraska restaurant the stranger turned out to be the dean of engineering at a Pacific Coast university. The salesman buying gas ahead of him in an Idaho town gave him a specific bit of information from his firm headquarters in Chicago that was just what the reporter needed for an article he was gathering. The man who came into the club car as the train was going through Connecticut was an industrial engineer with a firm making war explosives and had a viewpoint of defense and war matters which the reporter could use.

This method of getting information on a tip from strangers does not always work. There are times when the reporter fails to

establish a friendly contact with the stranger, and he may be repulsed or rebuffed. But it is always worth the effort.

**To summarize:** A reporter or writer of articles goes to original sources for his material. This may mean talking with one man in the engineering experiment station who is working to develop dishware that will not break. Or it may mean covering a state, or a trip clear across the country. He interviews men and women who know, who have had experience—be it growing pecans in Georgia, building a new type land leveler for irrigating fields in California, hybridizing water lilies in St. Louis, or designing a new woman's glove in New York City. He sees many, checks, verifies, takes notes, gets facts. He travels and sees and asks at firsthand. He either takes or secures pictures.

The farm paper reporter comes to know of many things. He knows that a broiler industry has developed in Delaware and in the Ozarks; that news of a hybrid sweet corn may be found at Purdue, Connecticut, and Idaho; that there is new information on hogs at the Iowa Station; that in New York he can learn about dwarf fruit trees; that some of the most valuable farm cost account work is in Illinois; that a new hybrid grain sorghum has been developed in Texas and another in South Dakota—and hundreds of other things.

So, also, do reporters in other fields accumulate equivalent knowledge.

The best feature reporting can be done only after a writer comes to know these things. The more he knows, the wider his acquaintance, the better able he is to gather material and to judge or evaluate ideas and information. Until he acquires experience and judgment, the young writer must make up for lack of such by hard work and eternal vigilance in checking and verifying.

The wise reporter gathers much more material than he can possibly use. If he comes home with three or four times too much, he can pick, choose, and discard.

Three-fourths of writing a feature article, be it for a farm paper or any other paper or magazine, is a process of gathering material—and one-fourth is writing.

It is the material that is all-important. The facts make the story. Clever writing can seldom if ever conceal the absence of facts. It is the beginner, the inexperienced hack or the lazy man who tries to put across a story by stringing together neatly turned phrases and puns. The writer who tells a story that gives information or gets results makes his impression by marshalling facts.

A farm writer of considerable experience says that in all his years he has had only three compliments paid him that he really appreciated.

A brother writer said to him one time:

"Say, you are the most prodigal fellow in the writing business. Every time you write a single article you waste enough material for me to write a whole series."

On another occasion this man had secured a story of national importance. Three men knew the facts, but he was able to see only two. Shortly after the story appeared, he met the third, a grizzled old livestock farmer.

"Say, young fellow," this old farmer said to him, "I don't know where you got all the dope in that story you wrote about me. But you didn't have a lie in it."

On a third occasion, not long ago, he came to an isolated ranchhouse out in the range country of Utah. The rancher was away so he introduced himself to the rancher's wife and grown son. He began to explain who he was, the farm magazine he represented, and what he was after.

"You don't need to tell us who you are," interrupted the woman. "We read that magazine. We have read your articles for years. We never dreamed that you would ever find us, way out here."

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Find tips for an experience story, process story, news-feature story, information story, and personality story; discuss the sources of material for each.
2. Make a carefully prepared plan of an interview for a feature story.
3. Read five magazine feature stories, list the sources of information that seem to have been used by the author, and discuss other sources that he might have utilized.

4. Take one of the following topics, ask in four different departments on the campus if there is any news regarding this topic, and see what you find: paints, gardens, irrigation, cotton, wool, lubrication, nitrogen, nicotine, aluminum, soybeans, alfalfa, rubber, seeds, pork, concrete, grass, steel, coal, tomatoes, peanuts, oranges, longleaf pine.

## WRITING THE FEATURE STORY

ON YOUR desk are a typewriter, some piles of notes, a folder of clippings and data, a few bulletins, a reference book or two.

These are the raw materials. Out of them you are to fashion a story. But how? What are the steps in the process? In what way can this raw material be best converted into a finished product, one that an editor will want to pay for and publish and that his readers will read with interest and profit?

Consider an analogy. You are going to build a house. You have the lot, the lumber, the bricks, the cement, and all the rest of the materials. But before you can begin the excavation or lay the foundation, you must draw up your plan. You must decide in the first place what kind of house it is going to be. Then the size and the shape and the arrangement must be worked out. And finally blueprints have to be made to guide you in the various steps of the construction.

A story is a structure. If it is to be interesting, effective, complete, it must be planned just as the house is planned. A "blueprint" must be made to guide you in "building" your story, and into this blueprint must go all that you know about the "architecture" of the feature article.

**Preliminary planning:** Different writers have their own methods of going about the job of preparing to write an article. But they all plan their work. The experienced writer may, in the case of short or simple stories, perfect his plan in his head. More often he jots down a rough outline of the story to guide him in its construction. For the beginner in writing this is essential, and it is helpful even to experienced writers.

However, before making an actual outline, a certain amount of preliminary planning is advisable, for which the writer may well set down the answers to the following suggested questions:

1. For what particular publication or type of publication is the story intended? If you have an assignment from an editor or are a staff writer, that of course is settled. But if not, then you must have some aim in mind. Until you do have, you cannot settle upon the method of handling your material. You cannot know about style, use of technical terms or words, length of article, scope to be covered, and other details.

2. For what kind of reader are you writing the story? It is apparent that stories for farmers, for chemical engineers, for city people, for women, or for boys or girls, will be written differently. The failure to realize this—to picture the reader of the story—is one of the most frequent causes of failure among beginners in feature writing. Usually one will want to have a particular publication in mind, although with some kinds of stories it will be enough to have a type of publication in mind. But you can't stop even here. You need also to try to picture the typical reader of this publication and write your story as you think he would like to have it written, or, better yet, as if you were talking to him in a friendly, intimate way.

A certain magazine writer on subjects drawn from his particular field of technical information and experience was asked to write a department for a magazine with which he was unfamiliar. Before he would undertake it, he asked the editor as to who his readers were and where they lived. The answer was that the readers were people of middle to old age and of moderate or average means who lived in smaller cities and towns in certain sections of the country. By directing what he wrote to readers such as these, this writer has been able to conduct his department successfully. His writing here has had to be quite different from what he writes for publication elsewhere.

3. What form will your story take? Sometimes there is just one possibility. But at other times you have to decide whether it will be a process story, a personal experience story, a third-person experience story, an information story, or perhaps a news or interview type.

4. What should be the central idea of the story? Set it down in a single sentence. A good feature article must be a unified

whole, with a singleness of purpose. It must have a big idea, and everything in the story must put across that idea. To this end the writer must have a clear conception of the idea, and this he can best secure by writing it out. It may never appear in that many words in the story itself, but it may be the keystone of the whole structure, none the less.

5. What will make a good beginning? This is so important that as the reporter works to gather his material, he should be on the lookout for the ideas with which to start his story. By the time he is ready to plan his story the beginning should be framing itself in his mind, although he may later, when the actual writing begins, be able to discover a better beginning than any of which he has previously thought.

6. What manner of writing should be employed in the story? Most stories contain both narrative and expository elements (as well as description, of course, although it is usually a minor factor), but one or the other of these styles will need, for the sake of unity of effect, to predominate and constitute the typical method employed. The same is true of the person used. It is well, however, to plan to make some use of the first person in most stories, even though the third person is to be employed predominantly.

7. What about illustrations? Pictures and drawings, or plans if it is a technical journal story, constitute important feature article material. The experienced reporter endeavors to secure photographs as the story is gathered, if they are available, and often takes his own pictures on the spot. A journalism student, however, or one who did not have opportunity to travel in gathering material, may not have pictures at hand. If not, plans may be made for securing them elsewhere.

**Make an outline:** Either before or after considering these points, the writer will read through his notes and other material gathered. Perhaps, as he reads, he will roughly classify them by putting them in little piles on his desk. The first real step toward writing is *the making of a written outline of the order in which the material is to be used in the article.*

This outline will probably be rather rough in form, but it should give ample support to the central idea or purpose previously determined. When completed, it should be studied with some care,

to see if it cannot be improved by rearrangement of the essential points into a more logical order. When this revision is finished, then the actual writing is begun.

**Building the story—the first draft:** First, of course, the writer must put down the lead he has decided to use, making sure that it suggests the central idea or purpose of the article.

Then he follows through his outline, working out each division or element in it by setting forth facts, explaining details, quoting an authority, relating an experience, making a point clear by means of an anecdote, amplifying with statistics.

In the process of arranging and setting down in words our material, we are confronted with a problem that is so individual to each story that only a few general suggestions can profitably be made. Into one or another, however, of a few typical forms or arrangements of material, most feature stories will fall.

Many feature articles, especially those of the news-feature type and less frequently the information type, may be handled just as the news story is handled, with an inverted pyramid arrangement. This would be the case with stories that have a strong news element.

Other articles, particularly the experience stories of all kinds, will be written largely as chronological narrative. The task with these articles is to tell the story of the experience of some person or some group of people, and the narrative which traces the history of the experience is usually the most natural and effective method.

In many stories of this sort the writer can effectively employ the flash-back device. That is, he can begin the story, not at the beginning, in a time sense, but nearer the climax of the narrative and then go back, after this more interesting material is presented, to pick up the antecedent events.

Process stories can best be arranged in a logical sequence. In such articles the major task is to make clear how to do something. The notes for the story will usually include data on the materials to be used, the steps in performing the process, some description of the finished product, and the costs.

The reader should be given, first, a clear conception of the goal of the process, the finished product. Then he must be given information as to the materials necessary. After that the steps in the process can be recounted in the order in which they will be

taken. Finally some idea of the cost should be given, if this factor has any bearing on the reader's determination to do or not to do the thing that you recommend. Sometimes, if the question of cost is important, this material should be put nearer the beginning of the story, probably after the description of the finished product.

In cases where one fears that his story will be dull if it is told in the conventional expository manner, if it lacks human and dramatic interest, he may cast it into fictional form, putting over his idea by means of imaginary incidents and characters. This device will be used especially in the case of process and information stories, which are characteristically weak in human interest.

With this type of arrangement, the fiction is merely a vehicle to carry the idea of the story, to make it possible to tell the story as narrative rather than exposition.

There is, however, a distinct danger in handling stories in this manner. Fiction, to be good fiction, must create a sense of reality. It must make the effect upon the reader, not of fiction, but of actual events and people. And just this is one of the most difficult tasks of writing. Unless the author is able to create this illusion, to make his characters and incidents live, he had better leave this type of treatment alone.

**Revising the article:** It is a good idea, once you are launched upon the writing of the first draft, to keep right at it until you are finished. After a writer gets into his story, he gets keyed up and writes with something of inspiration. This inspiration, this driving force should not be lost. So good advice is to keep right on writing. Do not bother at this stage to look after such details as the spelling of a word, the initials of a man quoted, or some exact figure not immediately at hand in your notes or material. All that can come later.

After the article has been written it needs to go through a "curing" process. In the first place, the facts of the story, the figures, names, dates, statistics, quotations, and spelling should be very carefully checked.

Then it will be well, time permitting, to put the story away for a few days, to let it "get cold." When the author is able to do this, he can reread the story with a perspective that he does not have when the story is coming hot from his typewriter. He

can go over it as a critic rather than as an author and can revise the manuscript to its advantage.

The writer should be "tough," "hard-boiled," when he revises his "stuff." That often means rewriting the lead or maybe throwing away what had seemed a clever lead and drafting a new one which better opens up the story. You may have to throw away part of what you have written, condense two pages into one paragraph to cut down the length, or enlarge a vital part. You may take the shears, physically, cut up your copy, and rearrange its divisions. As you work it over, you may change sentence structure, insert illuminating phrases, find a more suitable word.

The more experienced a writer is, the more likely he is to spend more and more time on this revision. Many a story that was mediocre in the first draft becomes a smoothly told, effective product after it has been worked over by an experienced hand. The novice, the hack, the lazy one, and the one who imagines that he was born with a heavenly gift of writing may think that he can turn out a well-rounded, finished article at the first draft, but not the experienced writer.

After the revision and the checking have all been done, then the final chore is to make a finished or final clean copy to send away. This, too, should be gone over at least twice before it is submitted. The final draft should be in good form. Necessary minor corrections may be made neatly between lines or in the margins, but the manuscript must be clear and plain, and neat. It is preferable for the writer to make this finished copy himself, even if not skilled in typewriting. It gives him another check on the manuscript.

If the student wishes to see how some of the most successful present-day writers work over and revise their copy, it will be of interest to look at the book "Breaking Into Print," edited by Elmer Adler and published by Simon and Schuster. This gives photographic reproduction of typical pages from actual manuscripts of about twenty leading writers of the day.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments in connection with this chapter should consist of the planning, outlining, and writing of as many feature articles as is feasible.

## CHAPTER 26

### FEATURE ARTICLE BEGINNINGS AND TITLES

WHEN a manuscript reader or an editor picks up an article submitted for consideration he is certain to be influenced to some extent by its outward appearance. That may not be altogether fair, but that's the way it is. The manuscript may have merit within, but if it is unattractive without, it suffers a disadvantage which sometimes weighs heavily against it. Editors are human and are unconsciously influenced by externals to favor or disfavor the manuscripts that come to their desks.

Successful writers, known as such to an editor, may get by with something less than a manuscript that makes a good appearance, but successful writers take no chances; they dress up their articles so that they make a good impression at first glance.

What are these external factors that help to set up an attitude of favor or dissatisfaction?

They are, briefly, the physical appearance of the manuscript, its title, its beginning paragraph or paragraphs. The first of these will be considered in a later chapter, but here we will consider the matter of feature article beginnings and titles.

What quality in a manuscript's beginning will make a favorable impression on an editor and the reading public?

Just one—it must be interesting. That is an old, much worn word, but there is no other way to describe what it takes to give the opening paragraph or paragraphs an appeal.

There are two ways by which you may make the beginning interesting:

1. By putting interesting material into it.
  2. By making it interesting by the manner in which you write it.
- The well-written article usually employs both ways.

Of the first, more need not be said than that it is inseparably connected with the choice of a subject. If you try to write on a

subject which is not inherently interesting to readers of the publication for whom you intend your article, you are seriously handicapped before you write a single word. It is sometimes possible to take an unpromising subject and "put it across" by sheer skill in writing, but not one writer in many can do it.

Consider for a moment two beginnings to a story called "Fit for a Queen—Worth a King's Ransom." The first of these beginnings is such a beginning as many amateurs put upon their stories. The other is taken from a well-known magazine. The articles tell the story of the scarcity of chinchilla and the successful effort to start a chinchilla farm in California.

Chinchilla, the rarest of furs, may, in a few years, become much more plentiful. For the little fur-bearing rodent—the chinchilla, a native of the South American Andes—is being raised on chinchilla farms in California, through the efforts of the late M. F. Chapman, who first imported live chinchillas and succeeded in breeding them.



Last winter, being momentarily in funds and wishing to give my wife a fur coat, I strolled into a furrier's on Fifth Avenue, New York. I told the doorman: "I wish to look at a chinchilla coat."

"Yes, sir."

He bowed and disappeared, but looked at me so oddly I thought there must be something wrong with my appearance. Checking up furtively in a mirror, I found my apparel in order, and then reflected that after all I probably wasn't this store's type. But when a suave salesman heard my brief announcement, and gave me the same odd stare, I began to wonder what this was about, anyway.

"Well," he said, catching himself quickly, "we don't have a chinchilla coat in stock at the moment; you see there's some little difficulty about getting the skins. But I could show you a chinchilla cape?"

"I had thought about a coat."

"Ah—would you step back?" the salesman inquired. "I could show you the cape, and then perhaps I could find out what could be done about a coat."

So we stepped back, and took seats in an alcove, and presently a model appeared, wearing the cape. I suppose you know what chinchilla looks like: the luminous, pearl-gray of the center of the skin; the rich, warm white of the edge, breaking into gray at each movement of the wearer; its depth, beauty and overwhelming voluptuousness. I knew as soon as I set eyes on it that I was looking at one of the great furs of the world. But I no sooner knew this than a certain discomfort began to creep in on me. . . .

I turned to the salesman. "And how much is the cape?"

"Twelve thousand dollars."

I drop a time curtain here, to denote the lapse of a painful ten seconds, and pick up at the point where we were all laughing merrily, ha-ha-ha, and I was saying no wonder my wife liked chinchilla and the salesman was saying as a matter of fact it suited them just as well to keep the cape in stock right now. . . .

So then we talked about chinchilla in general, and I asked the price of a chinchilla coat, assuming it were possible to get the skins.

"Sixty thousand dollars," said the salesman.

"Bid or asked?"

"Both."

"You mean, if you had a chinchilla coat just now, you could actually find somebody willing to pay you sixty thousand dollars for it?"

"My dear fellow, I could sell it, spot cash at that price, in one minute flat, simply by picking up that telephone."

"What makes it so expensive?"

"Partly the beauty of the fur, partly the demand for it among people able to pay any price for what they want, and partly the scarcity of the skins. The chinchilla is a small Andean animal that has been hunted so much, trapped so much, and protected so little that it is almost extinct. For these reasons, chinchilla has become a fur that makes Russian sable seem cheap. I assure you that this little cape represents our best effort in collecting skins, over a considerable period of time, and that it would be impossible, in New York City today, to assemble a much larger garment."

"It's a wonder that somebody wouldn't have the bright idea of raising these animals in captivity, the way they've done with silver foxes."

"Somebody has had that bright idea. It's being tried, I believe, somewhere out in California, though I don't know with what success."

After this harrowing experience, you may realize that I was rather vividly aware of the chinchilla, and likely, on my return to California, to try and find out more about it. So, in fact, I did. I tracked the chinchilla to the farm, just outside Los Angeles, where it is being raised; I invaded its cabinetmade, scientifically-insulated lair; I made its acquaintance and fell for it even harder than I had fallen for its fur.

The first contrast between these two beginnings is probably the one that came to you *before* you read them: that one is several times as long as the other. But this is a superficial difference. A feature article beginning should normally be just as long as is necessary to get the story away most effectively and interestingly. There isn't much question which of the two beginnings quoted here is more interesting. And the reasons—at least some of them—are that the longer beginning is dramatic, emphasizes the unusual,

contains human interest, has touches of humor—in short, creates a much richer and more vital atmosphere than the other.

Take another set of examples:

The housewife can save a great deal of time and worry over her cooking problem if she will follow the plan of frequently cooking two dishes for successive meals from the same basic material.



If I were asked to name just one thing that had made meal getting come easy to me, I should without hesitation say: It was learning the gentle art of cooking once and eating twice. By which I do not mean fiddling around with warmed-over stuff concocted of odds and ends—dear, no! I mean two entirely distinctive dishes developed out of a once-cooked basic material.

Here again the one beginning is more interesting than the other. We shall see as we go further some of the reasons for this discrepancy.

**Functions of a good beginning:** The impression should not be created by anything that is said about the feature article beginning that it is a separate entity from the story proper, that it is a problem aloof from the general problem of the writing of the feature article. On the other hand, the very first requisite of a good beginning is that it shall put the story under way. The beginning, in other words, must be an integral part of the story. It is just as illogical, just as great a waste of time, to write a beginning which is not an integral part of the story as it would be, say, for a salesman to try to sell stock in a company by talking about the weather. This may be a very interesting subject, even more interesting than the stock, and the salesman may know a great deal about it, but a discussion of it will not advance his business a jot. If you are going to write about cooking once and eating twice, that idea must be introduced very soon in the beginning of the story.

A second thing the beginning must do: It must set the limits of the story, tell the reader with some exactitude just what the scope of the story is. Every story is part of another, a bigger story. You are going to write about tractors. You may write about

tractors from the point of view of the experience of Horace Webber, a farmer; or you may write about them from the point of view of Adams County; or of a state; or of the United States; or of the world. Each of these possibilities represents a certain field with specific boundaries. Which one of these stories you are writing—the scope, in other words, of your article—must be made clear to the reader very soon in the beginning, for otherwise you will leave him groping without a chart of the territory that you are to describe, and he may get tired of such blind wandering.

Again, the feature article beginning must give some hint of the central idea which you have in mind especially to drive home by means of the article. This does not mean, of course, that the central idea must be stated explicitly as it is stated, for instance, in the question of a debate. So bald an exposition of the main theme of the article would usually be unattractive and defeat its own end—one doesn't as a rule read debates either for pleasure or instruction. But your task is, nevertheless, to present a central idea—just that—to get it across, to inform or convince your readers concerning it, or to entertain them with your handling of it. It is necessary then that this central idea should be foreshadowed very early in order that you may have a foundation upon which to build. Consider the following beginning:

Open up one of your latest school geographies and you will find therein a crop-production map of the United States showing a Corn Belt, a Wheat Belt and a Cotton Belt. There is no mention made of a Rice Belt, but some day it will also be included, and it will appear on the map as a narrow strip of land about sixty miles wide, extending from the Colorado River in Texas across Louisiana to the Mississippi River, a distance of about 500 miles.

What is this story to be about? It takes no great discernment to answer. The writer has taken care of that: He has informed his readers, by implication, what the central idea of his story is to be, and with this basis set he can go ahead without difficulty.

One further thing the good beginning should do: It should set the "tone," the atmosphere, of the article. By "atmosphere" is not meant the locale of the story, but rather the spirit with which the author approaches the writing of the story and the spirit which he wishes to evoke in his readers. There is a decided difference

between, let us say, the atmosphere of humor and the atmosphere of inspiration.

If you are going to write a humorous article you will not employ the same tone you would employ if you had in mind an article which would inspire and uplift your readers or give them detailed information on how to operate a piece of mechanical equipment. Successfully to "put across" a humorous article you must get your reader into a mood for humor just as soon as possible.

To inspire your reader you must get him as soon as possible into a state of mind which is receptive of inspiration. If an article is to carry information, make that plain, so that a reader looking for entertainment or soul uplift can pass it by.

In other words, the beginning must hold out a warning to the reader as to the posture of mind into which he must compose himself in order to get the most out of the story. This tone or atmosphere is indicated by the choice of incidents and the choice of words. The incidents and the words which introduce a humorous article must be humorous; the incidents and words which introduce an inspirational article must be inspirational.

Below is the lead of an article which had just recently been published when the first edition of this text was written. While the story itself is now history rather than news, it can still serve to illustrate a successful way for beginning a farm feature article that was to set forth a regional news event of considerable proportions:

On an afternoon in late September, just as the sun was casting half-mile shadows from behind a distant shelter belt, I watched a tenant farmer on a 640-acre farm in the Red River Valley of North Dakota drive a reaper around a seventy-acre field of sweet clover that he was cutting for seed.

As he stopped at the corner where I waited, to unhitch and call it a day, I introduced myself and stated my mission. A man past middle age, he was, hair touched with gray and face brown and wrinkled.

He listened to me, and as I talked a twinkle kept playing around his eyes. I paused for answer.

First, he tinkered with a loosened bolt. Next, he relit his cob pipe and blew a cloud of smoke into the clear Dakota air without saying a word.

Then his face broke out into a broad smile.

That smile was the miracle of North Dakota.

For it was as typical as anything I saw in 3,000 miles or more of travel throughout the Northwest in September and October, of a change that came over the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota during the past summer and early fall.

It was symbolical of the miraculous something that almost overnight turned the spirit of the people in this vast inland empire from the bottomless pit of discouragement and pessimism engendered throughout four or five long, lean, bitter years, onto the upland and mountain top of optimism and hope.

You will note how it accomplishes all four of the things that we have specified:

1. It is a part of the story—so intimately a part that, although the rest of the story is not reproduced here, one knows what it will be about.

2. It sets the limits of the story, both geographically and as to subject matter.

3. It points directly at the central idea of the story, which we are able to phrase—(something like this: How Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota agriculture has got back on its feet)—without reading beyond the beginning.

4. The tone of the beginning—although this cannot be so well ascertained without reading the article—is in harmony with the material of the story.

And this beginning has other virtues. It is so definite and concrete that the reader can *see* the farmer and his smile. In turn, this farmer and his smile are used as symbols of the central theme of the article.

It has a mild but effective injection of human interest. The use of the first person introduces direct testimony as to the conditions under discussion.

The phrasing is original. In a fraction of a sentence—"the sun was casting half-mile shadows from behind a distant shelterbelt"—a vivid picture is presented of the prairie landscape. The unconventional construction of the sentence, "A man past middle age, he was, hair touched with gray and a face brown and wrinkled," is rugged and original.

The short paragraphs at the climax of the beginning give a tenseness to the narrative and by their very physical appearance heighten the effect.

Finally the epigram, "That smile was the miracle of North Dakota," completely catches attention, while at the same time it puts into concrete form the essence of the story.

In the *Saturday Evening Post* of November 15, 1941, was a story by Elsie McCormick, entitled "Death in a Hard Shell," that was unusually vivid and effective, both in its lead and throughout its succeeding paragraphs. It was a technical article in its essence, from the field of medicine and entomology, yet filled with both mystery and dramatic facts. It was told simply, plainly, and without verbal pyrotechnics. Written by an experienced newspaper woman, it is a model of reporting and writing of scientific material for the general reader. The story opens thus:

Down the length of a seventy-five-mile valley in Montana runs a river of mystery, though to the passer-by it hardly looks the part. It is an orthodox little mountain river, with shrubs and trees lining its banks and stony shoals reaching out into the narrow stream. On the east side of the valley rise the sparsely wooded hills of the Sapphire Range; on the west, the jagged Bitterroot Mountains. The river is shallow enough, in many places, for a child to wade across.

A hundred years ago Indians believed that the western side of this river and especially the mountain canyons were inhabited by evil spirits. When white settlers came they observed that, although dwellers on the east side were immune, those who built their houses on the west ran the danger of falling victims to a strange illness.

It began with chills, an aching head, and painful joints and muscles; then a raging fever developed, and a red rash flamed out on chest, back, arms and legs. Rocky Mountain spotted fever was the name that was given to this terrifying and usually fatal sickness.

When it was discovered that the disease was the result of a bite from an infected hard-shelled tick of the variety *Dermacentor andersoni*, the mystery merely became deeper.

On both sides of the river one finds the same vegetation, the same animals and the same ticks. Human beings go back and forth; cattle are driven from one side to the other; wild animals wade the shallow river. Yet this stream seems to prevent the passage of the sickness as effectively as if it were the Atlantic Ocean.

This mystery has never been solved, despite the efforts of brilliant and persevering scientists. In 1922, Dr. Roscoe R. Spencer, of the United States Public Health Service, stated: "One of the most hopeful signs that I know is the fact that the east side of the Bitterroot Valley seems to be free from the disease, though the same conditions prevail as on the west side. This would seem to indicate that Nature has devised an immunity. Once we have established what this is, we will be well on the road to success."

Exasperated research men admit that they still do not know why the ticks are harmless on one side of the stream and likely to be virulently infected on the other. In the words of a discouraged young laboratory worker, "It's enough to drive a man nuts."

But, in spite of the sickness, the beautiful Bitterroot Valley attracted settlers. On the safe and fertile east side, dairy farms, truck gardens and cherry orchards began to flourish. Here, over fifty years ago, Marcus Daly, the copper king, established a great horse farm which produced many champions of the American track.

The more rugged west side also drew settlers—men and women who laughed at the stories of an illness bounded by a narrow river. Though many of them lived cheerfully to a ripe old age, there were others who did not laugh long.

A child who fell victim to the Bitterroot type of spotted fever, known generally as the "hot strain," had one chance in two to get well; an adult's chance was less than one in five. Patients who were over sixty years of age faced a hundred-per-cent certainty of death.

The death rate for the valley is much lower now and the cases fewer, but the fight against spotted fever, there and elsewhere in the country, has been an extremely costly business. No infection has a more impressive list of laboratory martyrs, nine research workers having lost their lives in the fight against the disease. Before the development of the vaccine, the mortality rate for laboratory-acquired cases was exactly 100 per cent.

Research work on spotted fever is now centered in the million-dollar Rocky Mountain Laboratory, maintained by the United States Public Health Service and located in Hamilton, on the east side of the Bitterroot Valley. Here Dr. Ralph R. Parker, a pioneer in spotted-fever research, directs a staff of 114 men and women. His way of peering out at the world suggests gentle bewilderment. This expression is deceptive. Under his easygoing manner lies the fortitude that has helped him face, almost every day for twenty-five years, the risk of infection and possible death, and has kept the dangerous work going despite the loss of one staff member after another.

Probably his laboratory is the only plant in the world constructed with a special eye on the housing and thwarting of ticks. On the third floor. . . .

**Making the lead interesting:** The beginning is so important that one feature writer has advised that, if necessary, as much time should be put upon the beginning as upon all of the rest of the story. It should be written over and over until it reaches out to the reader, grasps his interest, and pulls him down into the heart of the story.

But by what methods can one accomplish this end? How can one make a beginning interesting and at the same time make it

meet the requirements that we have already discussed? There are several answers. One is: Make the beginning specific, make it create in the reader's mind a picture—of a place, of people, of an incident. To accomplish this, one may make his beginning out of:

1. A description, of people, places, animals.
2. An incident, either real or imaginary.
3. An anecdote.
4. An historical instance.
5. A bit of conversation.

Of these, all but the first are not only specific but also narrative. They have life, action, movement, drama, and these factors heighten immensely the interest value. The following beginnings, as well as the one analyzed above, illustrate these points:

About seven years ago a German farmer by the name of John Kasmeier made his appearance in Pottawatomie County, Okla., bought a forty-acre tract of sandy upland and announced his intention of making his home there. When he further declared that he would make a living for himself and his family on the farm he had purchased there was a great deal of talk as to whether or not the man was in his right mind.

"The idea!" said one neighbor to another; "I wonder if he really thinks he can support that family of his on forty acres of land when it is all the rest of us can do to support ours on 160 acres. He will be thrown on the county for support."



"Mom," yelled Bobby, waving a green card. "Look what Teacher gave me."

Mother was all pleased interest. "Well, now, just what is it?"

"I got weighed in school," explained Bobby, with some pride, "and she said I was seven percent underweight—and it's because I don't get enough to eat."

"She said *that!*" Mother's face was very red. "I'll thank her, who never had a chick nor child, to tell me *I'm* starving my children! Why, every member of my family is thin as rails and you take after them. The idea! You can just go back and tell her whenever she's good and hungry she can come over to my house to get filled up."



Earthquakes are earth-surface disasters, for most of us. They wreck cities, set off avalanches, start tidal waves, all where we can see them—and perhaps suffer from them.

But not all earthquakes are surface affairs. Many of them are of the "deep

focus" variety, where the real center of the disturbance is scores or even hundreds of miles below the outer rind of the earth's crust.



Sodden curtains of rain lashed our coupe and blacked out all surroundings as we swished into Hattiesburg, Miss., one night this summer—and smack past a boulevard stop sign!

A steady red light began to glow through its misty halo a block beyond. As we stopped, I became aware of a slickered policeman sloshing toward us.

"Now we get it!" I muttered darkly to my wife. "He saw us run through that blinker."

The officer looked at our license plates, then tapped on the door. I lowered the glass. "So you're from out of the state," he observed. I nodded glumly.

Fumbling in his garments, he produced the thoroughly official-looking tag reproduced on this page.

Surprise and relief left me witless. The cop grinned and stepped back. "Watch the red lights," he counseled significantly. "They're mighty hard to see in all this rain. Go right ahead."

But we didn't go ahead. Normally we would have pounded along to a larger city. Because of that friendly gesture we stopped a day in Hattiesburg, finding it fully as hospitable as the introduction promised. In revenue to Hattiesburg's business establishments our visit meant less than \$25. That doesn't seem like much until you realize we are only units of a great and growing army.

With travel in America stimulated by Europe's *Visitors Not Welcome* sign, 60,000,000 of us—almost half our total population—are getting acquainted with our highways this year. We are traveling in 25,000,000 automobiles, enough to move our entire citizenry at once.

And we are spending as we go.—(*American Magazine*)



Twenty people were seated around the table in the county agent's office. They were engaged in a serious discussion of the agriculture of that county. Included as part of the agriculture of the county was not only the condition of the land, its fertility, its erosion, its drainage, but the level of living in the community, the health of the people, the condition of buildings and all the other things that go to make up rural life.

Instance after instance was related of the way the operation of the land and its present condition affected the ability to produce economically and of the way it affected the health and well-being of the people who live upon it.

One of the most startling instances related was that of a member of the . . .  
—(*Ohio Farmer*)



"Our government have keep on you the scrupulous eye." Both little men bowed and smiled. "Our government realize great vastness soybean will be in

world trade after war that is to come soon. You will please to show us records all experiments you have made.”

It was a fall afternoon in 1936. The elm shadows were long across the campus of the University of Illinois. Dr. W. L. Burlison, chin deep in the complexities of the new schedule on Agronomy, looked up at the two Japanese officers standing beside his desk. They bowed again and showed their credentials. They made polite, pop-valve noises while they fingered the round snouts of the cameras in their coat pockets.

They admitted that Japan was worried about the potentialities of the Illini, the Chief, the Giant Green, the Funk Special and many another of the 660 varieties of soybeans that American scientists have developed during the past twenty years. They asked cautiously, but eagerly, about the goings-on in the two big rooms of the U. S. Soybean Laboratory at the other end of the hall where thirty young men punched and stewed the 19% of oil and the 40% of protein in the soybean into new industrial shapes even then threatening the dominance of the great Manchurian acreages just conquered by Nippon's army.

Dr. Burlison gave them little satisfaction. But this year they know the answers. —(*Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife*)



During the summer of 1914, just prior to the opening of that war in Europe, which, if memory serves me right, was to end all wars, the Old Chief had placed upon his broad shoulders the reorganization, care and management of two additional plants situated in nearby towns. These plants, together with their factories, had been acquired (or wished-on) the good firm that we worked for, by means and virtue of a control-merger, merger purchase or some other form of magic bookkeeping, whereby we handled production costs.

Both plants were approximately 300 hp and in each case the men who . . . —(*Power*)



Again, if one can put into his beginning a statement which is startling, striking, arresting, either through what it says or the way it is said, he will be able to reach out from the printed page into the center of the reader's consciousness. Often several such statements may be piled one upon another in the beginning. Such striking statements may take the form of:

1. Statistical material of startling dimensions.
2. Figures of speech.
3. Epigrams.
4. Analogies.
5. Quotations or paraphrases.

The following illustrations should be examined carefully for their employment of these devices:

White, Adrian of Hollywood says, brings men to women's feet. White, Paul Gallico says, makes you look like a trained nurse. White, Hindus say, purifies the soul. White, scientists say, reflects the sun's rays and, ergo, is a great insulator. (Put a white and a black cloth over ice in the sun and see how much more slowly the ice under the white cloth melts.) And white, say international fashion authorities, may not be news, but the new ways of wearing it this summer give it more character than any other color.



"Biddie doesn't live here any more!" Thousands of sad, serious poultrymen of the Midwest have been chanting that dirge as mysterious death losses of from fifteen to fifty percent mowed down the egg producers in their farm flocks. This in spite of improvements in the housing, feeds and management of growing stock.



A yearly national farm fire loss of \$100,000,000 is a pretty stout sum, and, unless you are better acquainted with this world's goods than I, that much money is just a lot of ciphers. I can't comprehend it, but I *can* understand that the huge total is the basis for my stock company's five-year building insurance rate of \$31 per thousand of valuation, and the reason why our mutual insurance company daren't give me coverage for more than two-thirds of the value of my place.

Just how much value to put upon shelter from Midwestern winds has been the object of investigation among 340 farmers in twenty-six Nebraska counties—how much in dollars and cents, that is, for they are practical and thrifty men. At least \$326 annual saving per farm was their answer.



A farmer operating several hundred acres got \$613.85 worth of cabbages from one acre at a cost of \$100.45, a net profit of \$513.40.

A farmer raised \$548 worth of cabbages and \$106.50 worth of sorghum sirup from the same acre in the same year, a total return of \$654.50.

A farmer, upon a fifty-acre field, in one year, raised 200 bushels of potatoes, 40 bushels of corn and 25 bushels of peanuts on each acre, the total value of the yield being not less than \$250 an acre.

A man who farms extensively grows 446 $\frac{3}{4}$  bushels of corn on two and three-fourths acres; and again 445.2 bushels of corn on two and two-thirds acres.

A farmer had a field that yielded 300 bushels of potatoes to the acre, worth at least \$225, and the same year also yielded 30 bushels of corn to the acre, worth \$22.50; 50 bushels of Spanish peanuts to the acre, worth \$37.50; and turnips and rutabagas for winter feed, worth \$25; making a total of \$310 to the acre for the entire field.

The same man did all these and is doing them now. He is not doing them as experiments, though they are in the nature of experiments, but as part of his regular farming operations. He is doing them upon cut-over upland in Bradley County, in Southcentral Arkansas. He is doing them in a section that is supposed to have a climate that enervates, that very quickly makes plants as well as people lazy. And he is not a man from another section with a more bracing climate and supposedly with more energy. He is J. W. Richardson, born in Arkansas.



Ganameda, or Hebe, as she is better known, was the youngest daughter of Zeus and Juno. According to the mythology of the Greeks she was the goddess of youth and cup-bearer to the gods. She has been celebrated in song and poetry as the bearer of the wine cup at the festal board and the personification of the graces of youth. But the Ganameda of this story is a grade Jersey cow. (Ganymede, or Ganameda, according to Bullfinch's "Age of Fable," was a Trojan boy, successor to Hebe, as cup-bearer to the gods.)



A hungry Indian catches a beaver and takes the skin to the dealer to exchange for supplies. If no other Indian appears that morning he will probably realize the value of his goods; but if ten trapper Indians appear simultaneously the price of pelts will notably shrink, not because the fur is less valuable but because of the dealer's advantage.

The farmer raises his crops and his animals and sends them to market upon exactly the same plan—that is to say, he has no advance information as to what others are doing, as to what will be the demand for his goods or as to the probable reward of his labor and investments. This is not business; it is barter, the foundation of which is faith, hope and hazard. This fact of itself, more than all other influences combined, tends to hold farming back among the primitive industries; nor will it emerge into a real business until it manages in some way, at least in certain particulars, to pass the barter stage.



This little apple went to market,  
 This little apple stayed home,  
 This little apple went with the culls,  
 This little apple rotted down,  
 The last little apple cried: "Oh, please use better market-  
 ing methods on me."

Having come through a season bespattered with five separate sprays, having attained a bright red color and size above the average, Red Apple had just cause to be proud of itself as it hung on the tree. More justifiedly this apple could be proud, for it was grown on a farm known as one of the most progressive

in the community. Farmer Jones was in constant touch with authorities on fruit growing and followed the best methods of getting larger crops.

Farmer Jones happened to be short of help last year so he betook himself into the orchard with a picking sack round his neck. Careful placing of the ladder and handling of the fruit were his end, but not his practice. Red Apple was in the way. Red Apple was knocked from the tree. The ground was disked and soft, so, brushing the dust from Red Apple, Farmer Jones put it with the rest. The picking sack was bumped against the ladder, but Farmer Jones could see no hurt.

Red Apple came to the sorting table.

"Sound as a berry," mentioned a sorter, for he couldn't see the crushed cells, under the skin.

"A peach," said the man on the grader as Red Apple fell into the bin with others of its size.

"I don't see why the Old Man doesn't grade his fruit a little closer," said the experienced packer who had been brought to the orchard at high wage. "There is a lot of stuff here that shouldn't go in. No wonder the Old Man gets lower prices for his stuff." This was said as he handled over Red Apple and a few more like it. "These bruises are the thing that spoils a package of fruit."



A summary beginning, not necessarily cast in the form of a news summary lead, may be an effective way to begin a story. Such a beginning may summarize:

1. Results of conditions or movements with which the story is to deal.
2. Causes of conditions or movements which the story is to trace.
3. Predictions as to future results of conditions or movements to be described in the story.

Five years of cow testing on the B. R. Lewis farm in Carroll County, Ill., have increased the annual production of his grade and purebred Holstein herd from 150 to 325 pounds of butterfat. Mr. Lewis' herd of twelve cows averaged 325 pounds of butterfat last year, with their main feeds alfalfa and silage and without any grain or mill feeds. The best cow produced 450 pounds of butterfat.

This increase in production is due to the York-Fairhaven cow-testing association, in finding out the low producers and selling them and also to better methods of feeding and care. One year three cows were sold because they did not produce enough to pay for their feed and care. Several other cows were sold at other times. A purebred bull, whose dam has a seven-day record of nineteen pounds butterfat at three years old, heads the herd.

Your face tells time—not in hours—but in years. Comes the fateful day when we first see, reflected in the mirror, the lines around the mouth, the eyes, and, yes, that frown that won't go away. They are the lines that betray age—and careless grooming.



This article is a chronological report of improvements to a steam power plant that started with an investment of \$500 for combustion instruments and ended with the installation of a top-pressure plant costing \$53,785.



This is the story of genuine mahogany and how it has grown and been utilized for generations under another name in the country which is the world's largest consumer of this wood. It is the story of mahogany in the United States.



"The best Percherons of the future—possibly within ten years—will come from the small farms."

I pricked up my ears at this, for I was sitting at the time in the parlor of a beautiful home on what is decidedly not a small farm—one doesn't call 1,600 acres "small" in Tazewell County, Ill. A. L. Robison & Sons are not small farmers. They have been importing and breeding Percherons for years. They have a large herd of purebred Shorthorns. They raise sizable crops of corn and oats.



A generalized fact lead is one that makes a general statement—and runs the danger of being little more than a platitude. This lead is usually a poor type to use, since, from the very fact that it is general, it lacks the qualities which arouse interest. Examination of hundreds of leads has shown this to be the method of beginning most used by college professors, technical men, farmers, and beginners. A professional writer will use the type about once a year. Both of the following beginnings might better have been handled in some other form:

Beef production in the Corn Belt, like most of our farming business, has been undergoing wide changes in the last few years. It still has its ups and downs, its problems and its worries, but the turn is ever toward a more stable business. Until recently the beef making business has been largely the feeding of cattle grown on cheap land. That has reached its limit. The amount of cheap land will diminish. Fifty years ago they were raising cheap steers here to be sent east to be fed. There is lots of country better adapted to growing feeder cattle than anything else, so there will always be a fair supply of feeders. It is not

a business, however, for every man. It requires no small skill, for the successful man not only must be able to feed right but he must buy and sell right.



Many of the general farmers of northern Ohio secure a part of their income from the sale of butter which is made from the milk produced by a few cows. Their small dairies do not furnish enough milk to make it economically profitable to send it to the cities as whole milk. Much of their butter is taken to the local country grocery and traded for groceries or sold for cash.



The novice is especially prone to use two other devices to bring the beginning into close contact with the reader: questions and direct address. Both of these methods can be used effectively, but they have their dangers, the greatest of which are that they are too obvious and too easy.

A story which starts, "Do you know that," or "Have you ever thought of," employing both a question and direct address, is apt to be the work of a lazy man. It is lazy because it is trite and because the transition from the question to the answer—which is the story—is too obvious. Good question and direct address beginnings can be written, as the following illustrations will show, but the beginner should be sure, before he employs it, that this type of beginning is best suited to his purpose.

What is it all the world is looking for? Why do we love fairy-tales when we are seven, tragedy at seventeen, realism at twenty-five, romance when we are forty, dreams when we are ninety?

Escape!

To the child of seven, the fairy-tale is a spinning, many-hued pair of wings to carry him out of this uncomfortable world into one more like his expectations. To the old man of ninety, dreams are the misty chariot that he slips gratefully into, to escape from a self grown too full of effort, too empty of beauty.

And all the way along, in between, we are trying to escape. From our dull or driven lives, from somebody, something, just a little hour of escape.

Into New York every day there pours a stream of people from all over the country. They come for many things, but one thing is common to them all, the belief that here they will find a little escape. To them this is the City of Escape. And the first pair of wings they reach for is the theater, that country that lies "east of the sun and west of the moon," the Land of Pretend.

For a long time the present writer has been watching the kind of time the seekers after escape have at the theater. It has been found that there are many

obstacles between the seeker and his happiness. He sets out confidently, in spite of the exorbitant price he has paid for his pair of wings at the hotel desk or the ticket agencies. But he rarely escapes. He has been tripped up by that gay, tricky back yard, Broadway.



Look at your feet—everyone else does! Then look in the mirror to see what they're doing to the rest of you. Is your face tired and drawn, muscles tense, mouth drooping? Do you slouch? Legs ache?

If your answer is "yes," you've started your quest for beauty at the wrong end. All the bleaches and creams in the world go for nothing if just one small corn decides to assert itself. If our feet hurt, we hurt all over—what's worse, we show it! When we handicap our feet with shoes that are too short, poorly shaped, or extremely high-heeled, we're punishing our whole bodies and making drudgery out of homemaking.



What is a college education worth to the young man entering business? How does the university graduate stack up against the self-trained man in the struggle for success and prosperity? At what value does a big employer appraise the A. B. or B. S. degree of a youth coming to him for a job?

These questions hit home with peculiar force today, as our halls of higher learning are emerging from the shadow of the depression and preparing for the largest enrollments in their history.



Have you got to the point where the morning coffee has lost its old-time flavor and aroma, where little worries annoy you unbelievably, and all your friends seem to be getting a bit "queer"? If so, don't be alarmed, for your case is very easy to diagnose. You are merely "roof ridden." What you need is a simple tonic that can be found only in the great outdoors. So pack up your troubles, real and imaginary, and go camping for a few days.



**The feature story title:** Unlike the writer of the news story, who does not usually put a heading on what he writes, the author of the feature article is customarily responsible for the title to his story. Only a second of reflection is necessary to see that this is a very important part of his task. The title is the first thing in the manuscript that strikes the eyes of editor and reader. If it is effective and intriguing, they are apt to investigate the story; if it is dull, uninteresting, commonplace, they are apt to turn the page.

The discussion of this topic also applies to the shorter news-experience and information story.

Different magazines use different kinds of headings. They vary as to length, style, and use of subtitles. It is important, therefore, before writing the title to your story, to study the titles in the magazine to which you intend to send your manuscript. It is also often well to give your story several alternative titles, from which the editor can pick the one that he likes best.

There is only one chief qualification of the material that should go into the title—it must give the reader as clear an idea as possible of the central theme of the article. But when it comes to the words that may be employed, the variety and interest of phrasing that may be given the title, the possibilities are unlimited.

As with the beginning, the title must be appropriate in tone to the nature of the story. An article that is straightforward and practical will want a straightforward, practical title, while a story that is unusual or fanciful should have a title harmonizing with these characteristics. Below are a few suggestions for making titles interesting:

1. The title should have in it the elements of a full sentence, although the verb may sometimes, as in the newspaper heading, be understood. In other words, avoid what are known as label titles. The following:

They Found Trees a Good Investment

is better than:

Trees For the Farm.

2. Titles for personal experience stories should usually, though not necessarily, have in them the first person pronoun, either expressed or implied:

Everybody's Going But Me.

I Tuck My Garden To Bed.

We Have a Fifty-Foot Lot.

Our Family Likes Frozen Foods.

Let's Pull Up Our Socks.

My Best Cake Recipe.

What Soybeans Have Done For My Farm.

3. Titles for third-person experience stories should usually have

in them the name of the person or thing concerned or the third-person pronoun:

That's Where Their Money Goes.

They Rescued Themselves.

Two Old Houses Take Their Medicine.

John Fall Was Driven To Potash.

4. Titles beginning with "how" or "why" are sometimes successful in putting the gist of the story into the heading, though beginning writers should not get into the habit of using them too often:

How Finley Tops the Market.

How the Smiths Feed Calves.

5. Articles of informational nature, especially those of a more technical character in engineering and technical publications, often have titles which express or imply in brief way the central idea of the article:

Preparing Baker Mountain Kyanite For Market.

Stoker Licks Rival Automatic Heat In New-House Installation.

Success With 2,500 Pounds.

Five Months With Lilies.

Chicks That Hatch Early.

You Asked About Rayon.

Here's a Hallowe'en Broil.

6. Quotation and paraphrase may be employed to good effect:

"Just Able To Be Around."

"Shine, Mister?"

"I Hear You're Working In Washington."

"I am an Army Wife."

"It's Just Good Business."

"You're the Prettiest Mommy On Earth."

Two Characters In Search of a Diet.

It Did Happen Here.

Such Is Wife.

Meals That Make Cents.

Fair Exchange Is an Adventure.

All Quiet On the Fashion Front.

Yes, We Have Some Tobacco.

7. Figures of speech may be used:  
Soldiers of the Pines.  
Green Country and Yellow Cheese.  
Hot-Dog Manners.
8. Alliteration:  
Hot and Hearty.  
Tea Drinkers and Cattle-Ticks.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Find five feature article beginnings and analyze what makes each of them effective.
2. Write three beginnings to a feature story of your own and discuss the degree in which each of them fulfills the functions of a good beginning.
3. Find in magazines three beginnings which you think are ineffective. Rewrite them.
4. Make a list from magazines of twenty-five titles which you think are particularly good.
5. Rewrite five titles which you think are ineffective.

## CHAPTER 27

### FEATURE STORY STYLE

**A** STORY is told in the Bible of how the Spirit of the Lord took the prophet Ezekiel up on a high mountain top and showed him a valley covered with dry bones. On command of the spirit, the prophet prophesied and the dry bones rattled, stirred and came together. Again he prophesied to them and they stood up and were clothed with flesh and armor. A third time he prophesied, and the breath of life came to them and they stood, a great army of living warriors.

The feature writer must take the dry bones of fact, from his notes, documents, bulletins, books, cost account sheets, tax reports, tables of experimental data, halting and disconnected phrases, bits of information gleaned here and there, and infuse them with the breath of life so that his article may become a living, organic unit.

Instead of prophesying to the dry bones of his material, he must give his story, as it assumes shape, three qualities, originality, imagination, and personality.

What is it that makes one man's poems so different from all the others—or one man's pictures, or one man's music? The answer is to be found primarily in the three qualities that we have named.

In the same way it is these qualities which give distinction—what writers call style—to feature articles.

**Originality:** Originality is the seeing—and the writing—of things in a new, an original, way. We say of a man that he is “an original,” meaning that he is a little queer, unconventional or abnormal. Originality in writing means much the same thing. It may be carried to the point where it becomes eccentricity and abnormality, but in its measured use it lifts writing out of the humdrum, the trite, the commonplace. Most novices err in the direction of too great restraint. They are afraid to “let themselves

go." But just that quality of freshness and unrestraint gives originality to what one writes.

Originality manifests itself in writing in the use of words that are sharp-edged, apposite, undulled by use, by the insertion of the homey, colloquial phrases in which a farmer, for instance, has described his place, by the use of novel comparisons, analogies, figures of speech.

**Imagination:** Imagination is a first cousin of originality; in fact, originality grows out of imagination—the power to recombine the elements of experience, one's memories, into something new that he has never seen or heard.

Imagination is one of the three most potent forces in the world. The others are intelligence and passion. By means of imagination, working upon the raw materials of knowledge and driven by the motive power of passion, all new ideas are born into the world. That is where discoveries, inventions, religion, the forward jumps of science come from.

In the work of the feature writer, imagination must recombine the materials of knowledge, the data, the figures, the words, into something new and significant, vivid and alive. One takes from a bulletin a table showing the results of feeding steers three different rations. To an unimaginative and casual glance it is only a group of black figures on white paper. But look at it closely, read it over, with the mind concentrated upon it, searching its implications and significances. It becomes something quite different. One does not see a piece of paper with black figures. In their place are farms scattered over a dozen states, farmers going about their tasks, animals in paddocks and fields—this whole business of feeding livestock modified just a little, made a little more profitable, by means of those black marks on white paper.

**Personality:** Personality in writing is, of course, the putting of one's self into what one writes—the putting of one's trademark on the article that he has manufactured. This is an element of originality and is valuable for that reason.

How does one put personality into his writing?—largely by letting himself go, by being natural, by writing more or less as he talks and thinks. Many a beginner will stumble along awkwardly,

haltingly, unnaturally, dully as he writes his feature articles, whereas when he writes to a close friend he gives his letter all the attractiveness and interest of his personality, his unique point of view. It is well to note in this connection that a writer needs to know what kind of writing he can do best, what kind of subject matter he can handle to best effect, what kind of style he can most successfully employ.

**Qualities of feature article style:** Granted that all of one's writings should be permeated with originality, imagination, and personality, there are still other important characteristics of feature article style.

Perhaps the best advice that can be given to a novice is to tell him to write his story just as if he were telling it. If you are writing a story for farmer readers, imagine yourself sitting with the farmer of a winter evening, after his wife has cleared the table—talking, discussing, explaining. How will you talk under such circumstances? Not, most assuredly, as if you were giving a lecture. You will chat informally, asking and answering questions, narrating incidents, bringing up cases of other farmers that you know. And as you talk your interest will grow, you will become enthusiastic, warmth will creep into your voice, you will speak with sincerity and earnestness.

Now these are just the qualities that make a feature article interesting, a simple, clear, warm, enthusiastic statement of what you have to say. If it is a process story you are writing, you will do it just as you would tell a farmer out in his barn, working over a recalcitrant tractor, how to repair the machine.

The style or tone of any particular article, then, should conform, as we have seen in the case of the beginning, with the nature of the subject matter. A matter of fact story should be told in a matter of fact way. An experience, or personality story, and often times a news-feature and information story, should be told with greater effort to make the telling interesting and attractive in its own right.

As was hinted in an earlier chapter, the best recipe for interesting writing is the employment of the specific, the concrete, as opposed to the general. This is true because of the way our minds work.

We read with our eyes and our ears much more easily than with our minds. We can "grasp" an incident or an anecdote, illustrative of an idea, much more readily than we can grasp the idea itself. Many people's minds are almost wholly untrained for the assimilation of abstractions, and for anyone, no matter how well trained his mind, the illustration is more easily assimilated than the generality.

Practically, this means that feature articles should be full of concrete instances, illustrative matter, anecdotes, analogies, just as in conversation one stops the thread of his argument or exposition with a "take the case of," or "that reminds me."

**Feature story diction:** The diction of the feature article should be simple, easy, natural, colloquial. Especially must one watch the quoted material to give it the ring of reality and sincerity. When you are quoting someone, quote him as he talked. For example, we use contractions in our speech—"isn't," "aren't," "I'll," and so forth—and these should be used in the reproduction.

Colloquialisms and slang have their place, especially in quotations, for we are trying to write as people talk and think, and not a large percentage of people are rhetoricians. This does not mean that one should cultivate a style that is slouchy and undignified, but that one should cultivate with all of his powers of application a style that is natural, easy—and real.

**Suspense and drama:** Two further elements of interest in feature article style are suspense and drama, both of which have been discussed in other connections in earlier chapters. How was Nick Bjorka, who came to Minnesota twenty years ago with \$50 in his pocket and went on a rented farm, able to become the owner of 240 acres of good land and a prize-winning herd of purebreds? If that question is posed at the beginning of the story about Nick Bjorka, you have created in the reader's mind a suspense—and an eagerness to learn the answer. And more or less that suspense can be maintained throughout the story, and, if it is, the reader's interest will probably be maintained for the same length of time.

Drama is struggle. It so pervades all life that a writer could scarcely avoid employing it if he tried. But that does not make any less important the conscious use and heightening in one's

writing of this element of interest. It is well to tell what Nick Bjorka accomplished, but it is equally important to tell what obstacles were met and overcome, for the accomplishment is in part at least measured by the difficulties that had to be surmounted. There is drama in the laboratory, in the affairs of the home and community, on the farm. And if the writer is alert to them, these struggles will furnish him with an infallible bait for his reader's interest.

How one writes any particular story is suggested by the standards and preferences of the magazine for which he is writing. Some editors are very catholic in their tastes, others enforce fairly rigid restrictions as to style. Some farm and engineering journals, for instance, prefer articles which are practical and straightforward and give scant consideration to stories which are too "popularly" written. These facts indicate the importance, in this connection as well as in others, of making a thorough, persistent study of magazines, to see how they are made, what policies guide the editor, what subjects he is most interested in, how he wants them written and other aspects of the magazine.

If, however, you are writing for a magazine which does permit the dramatic telling of facts, especially if you are drawing upon technical material, scientific research, stories from the field of engineering and industry—then go ahead and do your best. Some of the most effective material in the world is that from science, engineering, and industry. Imagination is the greatest asset the scientists and the engineer have. There are dramatic possibilities of the highest order in the work and lives of the men and women of the technical and scientific world. Make use of them.

**Some practical hints:** In writing an article for a particular magazine, follow the style of that publication with regard to the mechanical details of writing. This applies to spelling, use of capitals, use of figures, statistics, technical terms and symbols, drawings and graphs, and the like. As an illustration, if a magazine of large circulation does not include statistical tables you should not submit an article which includes them. It will then be necessary for you to put into sentences and paragraphs the essential information contained in the tables. Not many magazines

of today, except those published for technical readers, use drawings or graphs.

General magazines, especially in the farm, women's, and garden field, do not use trade names. So instead it will be necessary to use a word or phrase which will describe a product. Thus, instead of "Blackleaf-40," use the term nicotine sulfate. Do not say that it was a John Deere or a Farmall tractor but that it was a general-purpose tractor, and give horsepower if that is essential. You would not write that Mrs. Jones has a Westinghouse or a Hot Point electric range. Use phonograph, not victrola; camera rather than kodak.

Most general magazines as a rule do not make specific mention of one product or material when there are competing materials which also might be used. Thus it is better to write "shortening" rather than lard, vegetable oil, or crisco, in a cooking recipe. If, for example, you write of spraying roses with bordeaux mixture, it is well to point out that good results are also secured with dusting sulfur and with various commercial sprays and dusts.

Neither is it good policy to draw comparisons between two different things or materials, to the detriment of one. For example, do not say that Jersey cows are better than Holsteins; that gas ranges are more economical than electric. You are at liberty, however, to cite experimental evidence, but make sure you identify it as such.

Still another point to keep in mind is that it is often unwise to draw comparison between home-made products and commercially made products of the same sort. This would apply to home-mixed fertilizers and commercial complete fertilizers mixed by the manufacturer; to home-made equipment of various kinds. You can tell how the farmer made the poultry waterer but don't say that it was cheaper than one he could have bought.

When you write for trade and technical papers, however, these conditions do not apply in many cases. Most trade and technical papers do give trade names, names and addresses of manufacturers, and sometimes include prices. This is what the reader wants from his magazine. Those specific details are part of the news to him, the things which make the periodical most valuable.

Engineering periodicals might run an article, based on actual tests or experiments, which would make comparisons between materials, equipment, or methods.

**Good examples of feature articles:** In the earlier editions of this textbook, a good many examples of different types of feature articles and stories from magazines and newspapers were included. It is perhaps better that each succeeding class in technical journalism find its own examples in current issues of various publications and that each student find examples of special interest in his or her own field. The few examples which follow have been selected to illustrate interesting writing and they closely approximate the type of stories which college students might gather and write.

This first story, which appeared in the Columbus, Ohio, *Citizen*, was written by a staff reporter who visited Farmers' Week on a university campus, saw something unusual, and proceeded to find out what it was. It is an excellent example of a story which one writer may find but which other reporters, looking for the more obvious things, so often miss.

### COLUMBUS DAY BY DAY

By Jim Fusco

ON A TABLE in Ives Hall where farm equipment is being exhibited for visitors at Farmers' Week at Ohio State University, lies an old rusty trap, pieces of fur still clinging to it, and thereby hangs a tale.

It begins with the purchase by Everett Antrim, former Furnas Ice Cream Co. executive, of a large farm south of Morral in Marion County last year.

Mr. Antrim found the farm quite wet, couldn't locate the outlets for his tile system of drainage, couldn't even locate the tile.

He learned that the tile lines had been laid more than 50 years before. So in order to find something of the system he began searching for the man who laid them, if he was still living.

He found the man, quite old, in a Marion Hospital, apparently on his deathbed. So he hastened to see the man who drew from a good memory and sketched the location of the tile on the farm.

"But," said the old man, "there was one 10-inch outlet tile which didn't work very long. About 50 years ago a trap was laid near the outlet on the banks of the Scioto River. That trap disappeared.

"I always suspected that an animal got caught in that trap and dragged it into the tile, thereby blocking it and dying."

Mr. Antrim went back to the farm, located the tile and, sure enough, he found an old trap, the skeleton of a coon visible, in the tile 150 feet away from the outlet into the Scioto.

I LISTENED TO Virgil Overholt, extension agricultural engineer at Ohio State University, tell this story and I could see then why he took so much pride in that and other drainage tile exhibits which attract the attention of farmers at Ives Hall.

"That incident, and others similar to it, prove that tile outlets should be protected with a grating so that animals can't enter," advised Mr. Overholt. "The tile will admit an animal but once they

enter they can't turn around and go back. So they go forward until they die.

"In Delaware they found a 100-pound hog imbedded in a 22-inch tile."

**MR. OVERHOLT** pointed to some tile exhibits more than 100 years old, especially noting a piece that came from the farm of John Johnston, believed to be the father of the drainage system in America, who laid down 16 miles of tile in about 1835.

He also showed me a piece of tile which, made in England, had carried water for more than 100 years near Philo, O. And there was an ancient piece of tile, made on a potter's wheel and molded with the fingers.

As to drainage itself in Ohio Mr. Overholt is an expert. He told me that this state has more public drainage ditches than any state in the union—25,000 miles of them built at a cost of \$36,000,000.

In addition farmers have invested \$72,000,000 in their own drain tile, using public ditches as outlets.

The following story, which appeared in the *Des Moines Sunday Register*, illustrates how a college or university campus can often disclose a feature of entrancing interest. That it is an abandoned campus adds to the interest. Notice how the writer has built up the human interest by the use of specific and exact details. This story was illustrated with a layout of four photographs.

### A SCHOOL DIES—BUT LIFE LINGERS IN ITS MUSTY HALLS

By Louis Cook, jr.

There's a victrola in the physics laboratory at old Des Moines university. It's wound up. A fresh needle is in the tone arm.

When the lever is shifted the disc goes around and out comes "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," by the Columbia saxophone quartet.

In the 15,000-volume library a volume of Westermarck's "History of Human Marriage" is set out on a table, open to page 50.

The reagent bottles in the chemistry laboratory are half full of sulphuric acid. The organ on the second floor of arts hall

is open, the music on the organ rack is a choral prelude by Ferdinand Saffé.

Like a ship abandoned in mid-ocean is old Des Moines university in Highland Park. The sails are all set, but she isn't going anywhere.

A student riot over dismissal of several faculty members, one of whom was charged by school officials with failure to teach anti-evolution, culminated in final closing of the school.

It had been operated by the Baptist Bible Union of North America.

That was in May of 1929.

Since then the only "long term" occupants of the school have been a squirrel who lives under an eave of one of the buildings and a partly dismembered skeleton in the pharmacy college.

About 85 per cent of Ohio's huge drainage system, he said, will be found in the 20 counties in Northwestern Ohio which once constituted the "Black Swamp." Construction of ditches there began in 1851 when medical authorities urged measures to stop the advance of malaria and cholera in that region.

In fact, said Mr. Overholt, there is a cemetery now in Hancock County which still bears the name of Cholera Cemetery because nearly all buried in it died of a cholera epidemic in the middle of the last century.

The "Black Swamp" lands, as a result of drainage, today have the highest agricultural land values in the state, he said.

And charges that drainage system chases wild life away are absolutely false, he asserted, for the fact is that fertile lands provide food for wild life and the birds follow the ditches during their daily migrations.

"Most of the pheasant hunting is done in counties having good drainage systems," he said.

The Highland Park American Legion post had quarters in the old administration building basement for a while, and church organizations and other groups have met there at times.

A custodian and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Carter, have been living in one of the dormitories since April, and they find the plaster falls faster than they can get around to sweep it up.

There are two four-story dormitories, a fieldhouse, an engineering school building, and a four-story liberal arts structure on the campus. The administration building burned a year ago.

Under receivership for many years, the property was sold a week ago for \$150,000 to an attorney acting in behalf of holders of \$203,000 in bonds on the property.

**The bondholders hope that with the school in private hands it will be easier to convert the institution to some use.**

So far, efforts to start the school up again or to convert the building to some other use have been unsuccessful.

There's money wrapped up in the school. Most of the buildings are old, but well constructed. The fieldhouse, with its basketball court and lockers, was only a few years old when the school closed.

#### Pianos

In the music department are four Steinway grand pianos, as well as numerous upright practice pianos.

The delicate balances in their dustproof cases in the chemistry and physics departments are as good as new; there's experimental equipment in the stock rooms which never has been unpacked.

Everywhere on the campus are signs of suddenly-uprooted young folks. On a dormitory wall is a schedule a student made out for himself showing that he arose at 6 a.m., tidied his room between 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., studied medieval history from 12:45 p.m. to 2 p.m.

**A picture of Mary Pickford hangs on the wall in another room; a calendar shows that New Year's came on Wednesday in 1929; bureau drawers are half opened; discarded ties hang in the closets.**

Custodian Carter has his problems. Scarcely a day goes by but what he must rout out curious youngsters prying around the school. They climb the fire escapes, slip through windows, race up and down the echoing halls, when they get an opportunity.

**So far the chief loss, however, has been in the theft of football equipment from the field house.**

Carter admits the place gave him "the willies" when he first came there, as it does most of the infrequent visitors who are shown through the dusty, ice-cold halls.

Now, however, Carter enjoys roaming around the institution, doing what he can to keep the place up. When he has a moment to spare he looks through a book, or glances at the paper dated May 1, 1929.

There are items there heralding a new airmail service for Des Moines, and reporting that at Sioux City, Ia., bank clearings for the first few months in 1929 were 10 million dollars ahead of those for a similar period in 1928.

*Business, people said, just was getting into its stride.*

It would be easy for the food editor of a daily newspaper to prepare an article of information on how to bake clams. But Dorothy Sweet, foods editor of *The Miami Herald*, of Miami, Florida, has done it in the feature article below by giving an account of how clams were baked at a party. This made it news as well as information. Further details as to how clams are baked elsewhere helps to make this a feature story. It was illustrated with a page layout of six informal, human interest pictures taken at this party by a staff photographer.

(Mrs. Sweet, the writer, is a home economics graduate from

Iowa State College, where she also took courses in technical journalism. Her article, which follows, is thus an example of a type of writing which a home economics graduate may be called on to prepare, in which she can combine her knowledge of foods with training in writing.)

### OLD-STYLE CLAM BAKE

By Dorothy Sweet  
Herald Food Editor

There's no party as much fun as a clam bake! With the roar of the sea in your ears, the tang of the salt air, a full moon above . . . and clams coming off the bake to be dipped in drawn butter or hot sauce, what a perfect setting and what fun!

It was a traditional clam bake, as old as our country and one of the best examples of New World cookery, that Mr. and Mrs. Millard Chase invited 25 friends he other night at Baker's Haulover.

If you're interested in history, clam bakes go back to before the War of Independence, an outgrowth of early settlers' necessity of making the most of what they found in the New World.

History tells us that it was following a clam bake that the small colony of Rhode Island attacked the British, long before Lexington and Concord.

During such a feast word was spread that an English ship had gone aground outside Providence harbor. Right then and there, with the good food to spur their courage, a party of the men was organized.

#### Many Varied Ideas

The ship was boarded, the British beaten and the boat burned. . . .

There are several schools of clam bake enthusiasts. For instance, the Long Islander likes chicken added as one of the frills to the essential clams. In Rhode Island this is considered heresy. There, sea food alone is considered proper.

The real essentials of a clam bake are, of course, the clams—and more clams. With these should be served potatoes (Irish or sweet) and sweet corn on the cob if possible.

And don't forget the butter. There must be pounds of that, drawn butter into which to dip the sweet, hot clams as they come from the bake. There must be butter for the potatoes, too, and the sweet corn must be dripping with it.

Chase followed the Long Island school, and the chicken steamed to a juicy tenderness in the bake had an unforgettable flavor.

#### Chase's Method

This is Chase's method, one which could be followed at home on a smaller scale:

Out on the terrace behind his place at Baker's Haulover, beside the inlet, a fire was built. All through and over the charcoal fire were placed flat rocks to heat red hot.

When the fire was raked down and the red hot rocks leveled off, (cooks worked very fast so as not to lose the heat) sea weed wet with sea water was thrown over the coals. Over this was spread a layer of half broilers wrapped in banana leaves. Then a layer of wet sea weed, then Florida lobsters, seasoned and wrapped in parchment style cooking paper.

Between each layer of food must go more sea weed and in successive layers, baking potatoes, yellow bantam corn in its husk, individual yellow tails and last several layers of clams in their shells.

A topping of sea weed and a bucket of sea water for more moisture is added, then the whole covered with big tarpaulins. The canvas must be held securely to hold the steam; rocks and heavy pieces of wood will hold it to the ground.

#### Cooks Hour and Half

From an hour to an hour and a half is necessary for the cooking. With this method the food may be removed in courses. However, the clams are the thing. No matter how many frills are added to the "bake," clams are served and eaten before, during and after the meal.

Each item of food must be seasoned and wrapped separately before the party. The Florida lobster is split alive, seasoned and wrapped without cooking, which makes it far more tender and juicy than the method usually used of boiling beforehand.

You will need no coffee with your clam bake—beer or ale is the traditional drink. You will not really need knives and forks, either, for the food is best when eaten with the fingers.

The proper method of eating at a Cape Cod clam bake is for the guests to lie flat on the sand on their stomachs with their plates in front of them, letting the butter drip as it will.

But even with knives and forks and a table there can be no formality about a clam bake—and appetites whetted by sea air are tremendous.

There is many a method for baking clams. In Maine a pit is dug and the layers built in there. George Rector uses

a wash boiler. In Charleston the “bake” is built over sheet iron.

#### **Ideal for Florida**

For Florida Chase’s method seems ideal, as is his type of party. Here, where the weather is perfect for picnics and outdoor parties, a clam bake should become a part of our life.

This type of party is equally well adapted to the small group or very large. Since the food is all cooked at one time, it would be just as easy to serve 200 at a clam bake as 25.

Perhaps in our usual barbecues for large gatherings, we are missing a good bet—why not a clam bake instead?

We recommend it!

How technical stories of nation-wide and even world-wide importance can be found on a university campus is made evident by this next example, telling of a new process for making bricks developed by two scientists of the University of Wisconsin. This story appeared in the weekly *Press Bulletin* of the University of Wisconsin, as an information story from the campus to newspapers of the state. Note that it is written mainly in pyramid news structure form. Yet because it gives the history, the background, and the significance, it is also a good technical feature article.

#### **BETTER, STRONGER BRICKS**

Because they refused to quit working during their spare time on an idea they conceived almost 10 years ago, two University of Wisconsin faculty members today are the discoverers of an improved process under which many stronger and more lasting building bricks are being made in many factories scattered throughout the nation.

The process, which is technically described in the brick industry as “controlling the pH factor in clays,” is more popularly known as the Barker-Truog process, because its discoverers are Prof. George J. Barker, of the State University’s mining and metallurgy department, and Prof. Emil Truog, of the soils department.

The entire process was worked out by the two men on funds supplied by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation at the University. A patent covering the use of the new process is being issued to the Foundation, which is a non-profit corporation, established and directed by a

number of alumni of the University, with the primary purpose of promoting scientific research on the Wisconsin campus. Funds coming to the Foundation through use of the patent on the Barker-Truog process will go to aid further research at the University.

#### **Control Is Important**

The new process is simply built around the controlled addition of sodium carbonate—commonly called soda ash—to the clays from which building bricks are made. The soda ash is actually added to the clays at an advantageous point during the manufacturing process.

**The mere addition of the sodium carbonate to certain clays is nothing new or startling in itself, but its “controlled” addition—and that word “controlled” should be underscored—is important because it is the heart and soul of the Barker-Truog process.**  
Clays vary considerably from one part of the country to another, even at spots

only a few miles apart, so that the amounts of soda ash which should be added to different clays to obtain the best bricks vary considerably and must be carefully checked and constantly controlled. Therein lies the valuable secret of the Barker-Truog process.

#### Make Thousands of Tests

Tests conducted on thousands of bricks made from hundreds of different clays from all parts of the country have revealed conclusively that those bricks made under the new process are much better and stronger; their moisture absorption is lower and therefore they withstand water better; they can withstand constant freezing and thawing much better; and in some cases their color is much improved and thus they make more attractive brick houses and other buildings.

Addition of the sodium carbonate to the brick clay is not very expensive, but what additional expense is incurred by the manufacturer is offset by savings at two points—in the power used to make bricks, and in the waste resulting from bricks broken in the process of manufacture. Less power is used because the raw clays when mixed with the soda ash become more plastic and flow through the machinery more easily. Less breakage occurs in the manufacturing process because the bricks are stronger and less brittle right from the start.

#### "The Bunk" at First

The two Wisconsin scientist-engineers conceived the idea of making better building brick by treating all kinds of clays with controlled additions of soda ash when they were working on problems with the Wisconsin Clay Products association almost 10 years ago. During the early years of the research work, ceramics (clay products) experts in the brick industry and at other universities said "it can't be done" and asserted that the whole idea was "the bunk."

But Barker and Truog continued their research relentlessly year after year. They obtained clay samples first from all parts of Wisconsin, then from all parts of the nation. Hundreds of samples were tested for their component minerals. Gradually they worked out the precious check and control system under which they could add the soda ash to the clays to make better bricks.

Then they began the job of actually producing better bricks under their process, first in the laboratory where they could control all conditions perfectly, then in the brick manufacturing plants of the state and the nation. The ceramic experts and the brick manufacturers had to agree then that building bricks were considerably improved under the new process.

#### Barker Is Honored

During the last few years, Prof. Barker presented a number of scientific papers before meetings of the American Ceramic Society, in Chicago, New Orleans, and Baltimore, explaining the principles of the new process and demonstrating their soundness. Members of the society were convinced, and several months ago Barker was elected a fellow of the society for his outstanding work in the field, and in recognition of his productive scholarship in ceramic science and notable contributions to the ceramic arts and industry.

In the meantime, representatives of English chemical companies became interested in the process. Just before the war started a load of clay was sent to England. Tests have been made on this clay, vastly improved bricks were produced, and now patents have also been obtained in England as well as in Canada on the process.

Someday, after the war, this new brick-making process will undoubtedly help rebuild a better England from the ruins of the island's "coventrized" towns and cities, Prof. Barker believes.

Stories of farm experience are written constantly by staff members of farm papers, by farm editors of newspapers and by freelance contributors. The following, from the *Chicago Daily Drovers Journal*, will illustrate how this type of story is handled effectively.

It includes careful reporting, specific details, human interest, and the way of telling is made effective by direct quotation in part.

## FIND FARMERS EAT GOOD MEAT

(By Staff Correspondent)

Montmorenci, Ind., Jan. 22.—According to packer figures, the bulk of good beef from the corn belt finds its way to cities along the Atlantic seaboard. The middle west, and many of those who finish out the beef, take a quality that is a little less desirable.

But in the experience of two young Indiana farmers this is not true and they have staked quite an investment to back their opinion that farm folks appreciate—and will buy—good beef as well as good pork and good sausage.

The men in question are Bob Howell, 32, and his brother, Dick, 28. Near here on highway 52 across the road from the farm which their grandfather settled a good many years back, they have put up a slaughter plant in which they do custom work as well as killing for their own meat trade. Getting supplies for the latter business is simple—they just bring some hogs across the road from the farm. Bob has been operating the farm for several years and annually feeds out around 300 hogs. A good share of these he raises. Some cattle are also handled.

### Butchered for Neighbors

The start of the Howell plant was the demand on the brothers by neighbors who wanted hogs or beeves slaughtered. Going to the farms was inconvenient and doing it at home wasn't much better, especially as demands increased from year to year.

So Bob and Dick put their heads together and the result was the present plant. It is of glazed tile construction, boasts a five-ton ice machine and a boiler to provide hot water for hog scalding. Carcasses are carried on overhead rails from the killing floor, through the chilling room and into the cooler.

"We kept the investment down by doing nearly all of the work ourselves. By furnishing the labor we had more to spend on the plant and equipment. We thought we had it plenty big for a starter, but we will have to build another refrigerator room this spring to take care of the extra business. We will use the new

room for handling meat in pickle, or that which has been cured.

"No, we haven't any visions of becoming second Swifts or Armours. We don't want the business too big but just large enough to provide enough work to keep us busy and a steady trade."

### 100 Hogs a Week

So far it would seem that they have done pretty well. Each week this fall and winter they have been killing around 100 hogs and 10 beeves. About 75 per cent of the work, sometimes more, runs custom slaughtering. They charge \$2 per head for hogs in the medium weight classification and \$3 for hog over the 300-pound mark. Cattle are killed for the hides. Their cattle kill is mostly yearlings ranging from 700 to 950 pounds.

Seven men are working in the plant—the two brothers and five neighbors. Greatest demand in the meat that they themselves kill and sell is for ham, bacon and smoked sausage. "We can't keep up with the demand," they say. No short-cut methods are used. Meat is kept in the pickle for three weeks. Smoking takes 48 hours, usually, but depends quite a bit on temperature. All ham and bacon is hickory smoked. Getting the hickory isn't much of a job as there is plenty of it around here. The smokehouse also is of tile construction and is located a short distance from the new tile slaughter house.

Neither Bob nor Dick ever thought that they would eventually be butchers—at least part-time butchers. Neither has had experience in the line outside of what they have picked up in recent months and what knowledge they acquired in their first butchering work for neighbors. However, watching them presiding at the block, or splitting a hog or steer carcass, one would think they had been in the business for many years.

### Taught and Coached

Prior to their present jobs Bob ran the home place across the road and raised and fed hogs—and still does. Dick was active in 4-H club work and after college taught in high school and coached athletics. But he says he much prefers his present job and the chance to build up a business.

The work may be harder but it is also more interesting, he says.

One might think that a locker plant might work well in connection with the present plant, but the brothers think otherwise. For there are a number of successful locker plants in adjoining towns and another one might be one too many. But as it is, much of the meat that they kill finds its way into lockers in nearby communities.

"It isn't often that a new business exceeds expectations as much as ours has," said Bob as he cut off some steaks. "We didn't have a chance to advertise or to do promotional work. Business came in so fast that it has been all we could do—and more, to take care of it. Rural people appreciate good meat, and will pay for it, if they know where they can get it.

### Worth the Difference

"On some of that which we sell we naturally have to charge more than the chain stores. Take fresh pork, for example. We charge 20 cents a pound—the chains 13 cents. But we tell our customers to try a pound of ours against two pounds of the 13-cent product. After it is fried down it isn't hard to tell which is actually the cheaper—and the better tasting."

Probably the biggest quality difference is in beef, he says. Good beef is fed around here, but little had been finding its way onto local tables prior to the opening of the local plant. But the Howells have found that farm folks want good beef. Not only are they killing good steers for their own needs, but they also buy good beef. The biggest trouble, they find, is to keep a beef quarter around long enough to get the proper aging.

From the broad field of engineering come many feature articles which make good copy for newspapers and general magazines as well as for strictly engineering periodicals. The following story was written by an Associated Press man and appeared in the Rochester, N. Y., *Times-Union*. It is based on the news that because of war needs, an old mountain ore mine has been reopened. The reporter has dug into the history and tradition of the mine to get the facts for his feature account.

### ADIRONDACKS IRON MINES REOPENED

Tahawus.—(AP)—Towering, timber-cloaked Mt. Marcy looks down on a startling scene of hurrying men and machines now conquering virgin forests of the Adirondacks to get something that makes white paint whiter.

These hard-fisted men, with machines that mock the rugged rock of the wilderness, are bringing into the resources of this nation's production a fabulously rich iron ore bed discovered 115 years ago by an Indian—and abandoned 31 years later to hikers.

In the primitive fastness of Essex County—where Theodore Roosevelt became President of the United States on the night of Sept. 13, 1901, when President McKinley died of an assassin's bullet 275 miles away in Buffalo—the famous Tahawus Iron Mines are being reopened for the precious titanium in their ore.

### Clear 75-acre Site

It is titanium, one of the biggest reasons the Tahawus vein closed in 1857, that makes white paint whiter—and does other national defense chores that the National Lead Company of New York City does not discuss openly.

Workmen are clearing a 75-acre site around Sanford Hill for open bench mining of the ore. The vein, estimated to contain more than 100,000,000 tons of ore, is 514 feet wide, 1,667 feet long, and of unknown depth.

Construction is based on ultimate plans to mine 5,000 tons of ore a day. A mill will separate ilmenite, the substance yielding titanium, and the iron ore will be stored for later marketing to steel firms. Storage is being provided for 500,000 tons of ore.

Titanium clogged the furnaces of the old Adirondack Iron and Steel Company when crews of more than 200 men worked the mines during the 1840's and 50's. The

difficulty of transporting the ore out of the Adirondacks was another that was never solved satisfactorily, and for these two principal reasons the Tahawus mines were closed.

### Needed by Paint Industry

The paint industry now requires titanium to add whiteness, covering quality, and water resistance to paint, and the textile industry uses two million pounds of it a year in treating rayon. The bulk of the nation's supply came from India before the war, but titanium deposits are now being developed in Florida and Arkansas—and at Tahawus.

Opening of the Erie and Champlain canals in 1825 spurred a number of enterprises in the Adirondacks, and the Elba, near Lake Placid, iron was being mined by Archibald MacIntyre. A New York state comptroller for many years, he was associated with his brother-in-law, Judge Duncan MacMartin of Broadalbin, and David Henderson, a mining engineer.

The Elba workings had begun to fade in 1826 when a St. Francis Indian named Lewis Elijah walked into camp one day and showed Henderson a piece of ore. It was the purest ore Henderson had ever seen, and he set out at once with the Indian to find the vein.

Near the headwaters of the Hudson, the Indian showed Henderson a vein five feet high. Henderson hurried to the Land

Office at Albany and a tract of 6,808 acres was purchased for 10 cents an acre.

### Won Gold Medals

Works were built and the first blast furnace finished in 1938. In 1851, MacIntyre ore from the Tahawus mine won gold medals at a London exposition in competition with ores from Norway and Sweden.

But the development of new fields in the "iron range" of Minnesota, and the difficulties with titanium and transportation, doomed Tahawus to a short life. The Adirondack Iron and Steel Company closed in 1859, and a trustee was appointed.

In 1876, the upper part of the MacIntyre property was leased to the Preston Ponds Club for a vacation spot, and the rest was taken over the next year by the Adirondack Club. There are about 30 families now members of the Tahawus Club, successor to the Adirondack Club, which leased the property in 1898 and is still popular with hikers and campers.

Theodore Roosevelt was vacationing with friends at the Tahawus Club 40 years ago this month when word came president McKinley had been shot at a meeting in Buffalo. The vice-president was bumping through the night in a buckboard wagon along a road to the Tahawus post office to confer with his secretary and political leaders when McKinley died.

For her foods article in the women's section of the *Chicago News*, a reporter visited the meats exhibit at the International Livestock Exposition. What she saw there in a display of more thrifty cuts of meat gave her opportunity to put news quality into her story of information about such cuts of meat:

### DISPLAY OF ECONOMY MEATS

By Mary Starr

Prime ribs of beef, loin lamb chops, porterhouse steak and center cut ham slices bowed from the limelight at the meat exhibit of the International Live Stock Exposition this year. They make way for an extensive display of the more thrifty cuts of meat. The array of economy cuts carries good news for you if you have found that your food dollar doesn't go as far as it once did.

The secret of economy in meat buying

is to explore the possibilities of the less familiar cuts rather than invariably asking for steaks, chops or roasts. The price you pay for meats doesn't influence the food value you receive, for the less expensive cuts are just as nutritious as those you might consider more choice, and when properly prepared they can be equally inviting.

An impressive thrifty cut of beef is the beef heel pot roast. It should be prepared by browning it on all sides, then adding a small amount of liquid and cooking slowly with a cover. The meat will be tender and

deliciously flavored when cooked in this way.

Other economy cuts of beef shown in the exhibit are the beef-blade steak, cross-cut beef shanks, rolled plate of beef, beef short ribs, the arm pot roast, beef brisket and the beef heart.

The shoulder pork roast is a good buy at the meat counter because it has but a small amount of bone and a high percentage of meat. Pork, as you know, is especially important in the diet because it is such an outstanding source of vitamin B.

#### Country-Style Backbones

Pork country-style backbones give you an opportunity to serve a delicious old-fashioned dinner without a strain on your pocketbook. The fresh pork picnic also is worthy of your consideration. If you like pork chops, take a tip from the display and ask for the blade rib chops—they usually are less costly.

Ham remains one of the favorite American meats even though its price has put a premium on its use. The shank end of a ham is an economical buy because it contains a high percentage of lean meat to bone and is as tender and delicious as any section of the entire ham.

#### Economy Cuts of Lamb

As a whole, all lamb cuts are tender and can be cooked by either roasting or broiling. For variety or because you like the flavor developed by braising meats, you may prefer to cook some of the thrifty cuts in this way. Lamb-shanks, well-browned and cooked with vegetables until tender, give a hearty meal that has a definite appeal for the men in the family.

Lamb choplets are one of the most interesting cuts displayed in the exhibit. The choplets are made by cutting a pocket between the ribs and lean of the breast of lamb, opening it along the side or at the flank end.

Stuff the pocket with ground lamb, then slice between the ribs, giving an ample and attractive serving of ground meat enclosed with a strip of lean. Lamb chop-

lets should be browned, then covered and cooked with a small amount of liquid until tender.

#### Riblets for Stew

Lamb riblets also come from the breast of lamb. They are excellent for stew and are made by removing the breast bone and cutting between each rib. Veal riblets are made in the same way and are equally usable.

The breast of lamb, which is very inexpensive, is also attractive when boned and rolled.

#### Thrifty Roasts

The leg of lamb isn't the only possibility for a lamb roast. More economical is the lamb shoulder roast which is both tender and delicious. The cushion-style shoulder of lamb is square in shape and has the bone removed. When a savory stuffing is inserted and the meat roasted, it puffs up like a pillow and can be easily carved into attractive servings. Pork shoulder can be prepared in the same way and makes a larger roast.

#### Shoulder Chops Less Costly

Rib and loin lamb chops make way for shoulder chops of lamb when economy is important. Shoulder chops contain a lot of meat and can be either broiled or pan-broiled. When slowly cooked, they are both tender and flavorful. Ground meats and stews have long been over-worked as budget balancers, but they should not have lost their appeal. The not only thrifty but smart homemaker should double her efforts to serve them attractively so that her family will not tire of seeing them on the menu.

#### Valuable Meat Specialties

Nutrition conscious as you are, you will make meat specialties an important part of your weekly menu. The best known meat specialties are liver, kidneys, heart, tongue and sweetbreads. Liver, with its bountiful supply of iron and vitamins, should always be served at least once a week.

Many stories from scientific fields make good copy for newspapers as well as for technical journals, when written plainly in terms that the layman can understand. As mentioned elsewhere in this textbook, *Science Service* has in recent years been making just such stories available to newspapers. The example given below is a typical one

of this type. While it is rather brief and might be classed as either a news or a news-information story, it has all the elements of a feature article also. This was taken from the *New York Times*, but it doubtless appeared in many other newspapers:

#### TOOTH DECAY AND FARM SOIL

Houston, Texas. (Science Service)—Deaf Smith County, in the Texas "panhandle," may give to the world a chemical formula for preventing tooth decay, it appears from preliminary studies reported by Dr. Edward Taylor, director of the dental division of the Texas State Department of Health, at a recent meeting here of the American Dental Association.

The sound teeth of residents of this county so impressed a dentist in one of its towns, Hereford, that he suggested that a study of local food and water intake might prove valuable.

Following this suggestion, the teeth of forty-three native-born continuous-resident persons in and around Hereford, chosen at random by a teacher and an NYA worker who knew nothing of local conditions, were examined. Not a single decayed tooth or filling was found in these people, whose ages ranged from 2 years to past middle age, Dr. Taylor reported.

Equally if not more impressive was the finding that people who moved into the county from other States, with the usual number of cavities and fillings, after having lived there a few months ceased to develop further caries. Even a few cavities in teeth brought there as much as five years previously with active decay had ceased to be active and the cavities had

acquired hard glazed floors and surfaces.

Tooth decay in Deaf Smith County, according to conclusions reached so far, is only about one-half as much as the lowest amount heretofore reported in the United States and much lower than the average.

Deaf Smith County is part of a high level plain, the top soil a dark, sandy loam, below which there is clay containing a high percentage of calcium carbonate. Moreover, wheat ground in Hereford mills has a high protein content and is about six times as high in phosphorus as the average standard flour. Milk samples at a local creamery contained 30 per cent more phosphorus than accepted standards.

"This indicated that possibly all vegetables, dairy and meat products of the area are comparably high in these elements so necessary to building and maintaining tooth tissue," said Dr. Taylor, who noted that every rural and many of the urban homes have one or more windmills, drawing water from a depth of 70 or 80 feet—water that has abundant fluorine and calcium.

Dr. Taylor declared his group believes a formula can be arrived at which will produce a high degree of immunity to tooth decay by the proper combination of fluorine, phosphorus, calcium, vitamin D and possibly other factors in the food and water intake.

The following three stories illustrate well the kind of story suitable for publication in magazines. Any one of these stories could have been prepared by a college student in journalism. Two are from *Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife* and one from *Concrete Highways and Public Improvements*.

#### DELAWARE'S NO. 1 FARM-TO-MARKET ROAD

(From *Concrete Highways and Public Improvements*)

Started in 1912 as a privately financed boulevard, the Coleman du Pont Highway, Delaware, has turned out to be one of the most important farm-to-market roads in the United States. Building of this 16-ft. concrete highway went

on for a number of years, with Senator Coleman du Pont supplying the funds for its construction. In 1917, the road was turned over to the Delaware State Highway Department, which was organized during that year. Senator du Pont continued to furnish the bulk of the funds required for the original construction until its completion in 1923.

Since 1929 the State Highway Department has been transforming the Coleman du Pont Highway into an express route between Dover, the state capital, and Wilmington, the largest city in the state. The old slab has been utilized wherever it could be and widened to conform to modern standards of two-lane width. Where superelevation on curves has been necessary and where the old alignment was considered too dangerous, new concrete has been built. The entire north-bound lane, however, is entirely new pavement of portland cement concrete.

The Coleman du Pont Highway is now divided for 45 miles between Wilmington and Dover. Of this, 36 miles has a 50-ft. parkway separating the two opposing 24-ft. roadways. This construction extends from Dover to its intersection with the Elkton Road at State Road, Delaware. The other nine miles from State Road to Wilmington is a seven-lane divided highway, the four lanes comprising the south-bound roadway.

Future plans of the State Highway Department propose the dividing of opposing traffic streams on both U. S. 13 (du Pont Highway) and U. S. 113, another main north-south highway, for the length of the state.

Justification for making the du Pont Highway one of the country's most modern and safest roads is found in the heavy traffic that has developed in the last decade. For, what started as a privately financed boulevard, is now one of the most important farm-to-market roads in the country, as well as a strategic main artery on the national defense system.

Usually, engineers classify farm-to-market roads as those on a secondary system which assure reasonably quick delivery of farm produce to centers of use and distribution by way of the state's main roads.

The Coleman du Pont Highway, however, qualifies as the state's No. 1 farm-to-market road. In a single year the following amounts of produce moved over the road:

One million crates of poultry—approximately 20,000,000 birds—from the "broiler" country of south Delaware and the Maryland eastern shore;

More than 213,000 bu. of peaches. These came from the Deep South as well as from local orchards;

More than 1,120,000 crates of cantaloupes, 950,000 crates of strawberries, and 2,000,000 bu. of potatoes;

During the strawberry and melon seasons, fruit from as far south as Florida is trucked over this highway.

Traffic counts along U. S. 13 indicate how extensive the truck traffic is:

A count made just north of Dover showed approximately 6,000 vehicles per 24 hours, 20 per cent of which were trucks. Half of these were out-of-state vehicles.

On traffic north of the intersection of the Coleman du Pont Highway, and Elkton Road, where Maryland traffic merges with that from south Delaware, the daily average was found to be 14,000 vehicles, with more than 3,000 trucks. At this station more than half the trucks bore foreign license plates, many counts at night showing that out-of-state trucks were more than twice the number of Delaware trucks.

Over Memorial Day, 1941, over 35,000 vehicles passed this station on one day and more than 100,000 were counted in a 72-hour period.

The maximum traffic, of approximately 37,000 vehicles per day, is at the town of State Road.



### OUR FAMILY LIKES FROZEN FOODS

Mrs. Raymond Silvanus of Illinois Comes to the Farm Kitchen as a Guest Cook

By Miriam Williams

(In *Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife*)

Imagine enjoying May's rhubarb, June's strawberries, July's green peas, August's corn-on-the-cob and December's prime pork roast when April gardens are just being planted! Perhaps you don't have to imagine, but are, yourself, having dinner this coming Sunday of last spring's fries, and green limas and peaches from your own cold storage locker. For one of the fine things about frozen foods is that they know no season.

*Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife* folks experienced a bit of luxury living when our latest Guest Cook, Mrs. Raymond Silvanus of Lake County, Illinois, prepared delicious meals from her own farm-produced and locker-frozen foods. We invited this up-to-date young woman to come to Philadelphia and our Farm Kitchen to show our readers how one progressive farm family makes use of a locker plant in helping solve its food problem. Her story is helpful, we believe, to all farm women who plan a year-around food supply, whether they have lockers or not.

Since Mr. Silvanus was comparatively free in February when we arranged for the trip, he came, too. They brought with them, packed in dry ice, a whole assortment of frozen foods—tender green peas and baby limas, corn-on-the-cob, succulent asparagus tips and French cut green beans, pink rhubarb, plump red strawberries, and golden peaches. Also there were two beautifully cleaned and cut frying chickens, beef cut in neat pieces for chop suey or stew, and a wonderful crown roast of pork with the center stuffed with sausage. Everyone who sampled these foods at the Farm Kitchen praised their good color and fine fresh flavor, for they were prepared and cooked just right.

The Silvanus rule about lockers is this: *you take out just what you put in*. They believe it pays to choose fruits and vegetables at their prime, to follow approved methods as to treatment before packing, then put them into modern containers and rush them to the locker plant, which in their case is four miles away. Important, too, is the fact that their plant at Mundelein is well equipped, with a pre-

cooling room for meat, a sharp freeze room where a 20° below temperature is used, and locker rooms kept at zero. The operator, Mr. Bauer, an expert meat cutter, has experimented with wrapping papers and containers, and buys the best in quantity lots for his patrons.

We figured that it would cost \$124.75 to purchase at city market prices the frozen fruits and vegetables which Mrs. Silvanus put into her locker last year. This included 380 pints of fruits and vegetables and 25 packages of corn-on-the-cob. As for meat, in a year and a half they have put in for freezing 2 lambs, 1 veal,  $\frac{3}{4}$  beef,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  hogs and 30 chickens. They estimate a saving over retail meat prices (by the half or quarter carcass) of \$85, minus the cost of cutting, wrapping and storage at the plant.

They use two and sometimes three lockers, at a cost of \$25 a year, and usually make one weekly trip to the locker, on Fridays when Mrs. Silvanus buys groceries. During fruit and vegetable season, of course, they go as often as there are fresh things to put in. What Mrs. Silvanus cannot freeze, she cans, and this includes tomatoes, baby beets, pears and some peaches, besides pickles, relishes and preserves.

I know that the account of all these foods must make you think that "she has a large family." The fact is Mr. and Mrs. Silvanus have just one small, and adorable, daughter. But they have two hired men most of the time and lots of company. As Mrs. Silvanus said, "We probably spend more on food than is necessary, but it makes a big part of our entertainment. We enjoy our home, so have invited guests at least twice a week, and folks drop in besides." To be prepared for any emergency, she keeps a well-stocked emergency shelf of such foods as canned date-nut bread, tuna fish, shrimp, cake and muffin mixes.

Our Guest Cook brought with her some University of Illinois bulletins giving directions for freezing fruits, vegetables and meats. (We suggest that you write the Extension Division of your own State College for such help.) These, with suggestions gained at meetings sponsored by her Home Advisor, Mrs. Helen Volk, and her own and her neighbors' experiences, give her a real knowledge of frozen foods.

And by the way, have you tried frozen rhubarb? It's a favorite with the Silvanus family. It is cut fairly long for sauce, fine-cut for pies, and packed in containers without sugar. Other fruits, as berries and pitted cherries are packed in layers with sugar. Mrs. Silvanus fills cartons quite full, finding that they settle enough in the journey to the locker plant to allow space for expansion in freezing.

Mrs. Silvanus cautions against over-blanching vegetables. Dip them in very cold water to cool quickly. She picks vegetables early in the morning, when at their prime, and has them in the locker by noon. She never does more than 16 pints of peas or one crate of berries at a time, and often does asparagus and rhubarb the same day.

We noted that Mrs. Silvanus used paper containers entirely, trying several kinds. She feels that modern waxed and lined paper containers have these advantages over glass jars: they stack and store better in the locker, they don't break

and, most important, vegetables can be cooked without thawing, which retains flavor and vitamin content.

She has tried many kinds and cuts of meat, and feels her success is due to careful wrapping and low storage temperatures. Pork, Mrs. Silvanus suggests, should be used within four months, but she has carried poultry, beef, lamb and veal almost a year.

A near-by family, the Earl Kanes, like frozen cranberry relish, to serve with July 4th duck, also frozen. Another neighbor, Mrs. Lewis Mills, has successfully frozen cauliflower, packing tender flowerets and lower stems, to be creamed separately. She also froze 40 quarts of cottage cheese, and her family found it as fresh as ever six months later.

Such ideas as these are helping to write a new chapter in food preservation on the farm—one which makes possible a year around supply of fresh foods.



### A NEW WAY TO PAY THE DOCTOR

(By Carroll P. Streeter)

(In *Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife*)

One day last summer I called on Leon Adams, a young farmer in San Juan County, Utah. He was riding a tractor around an alfalfa field at a merry clip, just finishing the second cutting. And he could do it serenely, despite the fact that his wife lay in a hospital sixty-three miles away, where she had just had a serious operation. For not only could he be sure that she was getting expert medical and nursing care—which is amazing in itself when you know San Juan county—but he knew that the doctor and hospital bill would be only \$73.

The explanation was simple. Adams and 266 other farmers insure themselves against sickness costs through the San Juan County Medical Co-operative Association. Every year they pay a definite amount, an "insurance premium," of \$35. Except for a few possible extra charges in special circumstances, they know that this is going to be their sickness bill for the year, no matter what happens.

They have exchanged the risk of a big expense for the certainty of a small one. They can plan to meet it because they know in advance what it will be and when it will be due—just like the installments on the new refrigerator.

It happens that the Adams family has had two major operations, on which they figure they've saved \$500—"half the price of this new tractor I'm riding on," as Adams expressed it. But over a period of years the San Juan County farmers don't expect to save money. Annual payments may add up to as much as occasional medical bills would be. What these farmers will do is (1) get more medical care for this money, (2) *smooth out* the costs of sickness over the whole period, and (3) assure their doctor and hospital of a more certain income, thus helping to keep medical care available at all.

Whether farmers generally are going to change over to this insurance method

of paying for medical care (as well as helping to keep it near) no one knows. But they're going to have a chance to decide, right soon.

It's no wonder that something is being tried, for too many people are going without needed medical care. The Farm Security Administration found in a survey of 43,000 farm families in Texas and Oklahoma that *one in every three* births was not attended by a doctor. Of some 16,000 cases of serious illness no physician was called in more than 50 per cent of them. And many families who were failing to pay Farm Security loans were defaulting because of poor health. Men who were generally considered "good for nothing" oftentimes were sick, or were staying in from the field to take care of the children because of a sick wife.

Partly responsible is the increasing cost of medical care. The U. S. Department of Agriculture finds that the cost has gone up 16 per cent since 1910-1914, and that the average charge for a doctor's visit to a farm home is now \$7 by day and \$8 at night.

Much has been said about lack of doctors and hospitals in rural communities. *But an even bigger problem is to make it possible for farmers to use the doctors and hospitals they have.* There are 200,000 empty hospital beds on any given day, and a lot of them are in rural hospitals. Meanwhile doctors, whose services are so badly needed, often aren't called at all or aren't paid if they are called.

The medical profession's frequent statement that "nobody need go without care—we'll take care of the needy whether paid or not" doesn't answer the problem, for most folks *want* to pay and consider it a personal defeat to accept charity. They won't ask for free care. They simply go without.

The situation became an emergency for the Farm Security Administration in the depression years. It had to do something to protect its loans—by making it possible for farmers to keep earning. So it launched a plan that amounts to voluntary health insurance.

That was in 1937. Now, just four years later, 90,000 farm families, or 475,000 individuals, are enrolled. Local plans cover 754 counties of 33 states, including all of Vermont, stronghold of individualism.

Any FSA families can join, paying a flat amount per year for medical care. What they pay and what they get differ widely, by states. However, in an "average" instance the family gets ordinary medical care, "emergency" surgery (necessary to save life or limb), "emergency" hospital care in a ward, care of a mother before, when, and after a baby is born, drugs prescribed by a doctor, and enough dentistry to relieve pain. It's not a complete program of health care, but it's more than most of these families were getting before. Remember that these families are a low-income group.

In northern states FSA families pay \$25 to \$35 a year for this care, in southern states \$15 to \$20, and in western states around \$30. The money comes from the FSA which adds it to the loan the family already has for machinery, livestock, etc. So far about 76 per cent of these loans are being repaid. For those families too poor even to borrow the money the FSA makes outright grants of money for medical care.

In each local plan the money is turned over to a bonded trustee. When a family is sick it chooses from among the doctors and hospitals who have agreed to co-operate (and that's usually most of them). The doctor then bills the trustee—not the patient. Sometimes the trustee has enough money to pay the bills in full—more often he does not. So he pays so far as possible, and the doctors forget the rest. The average payment has been about 60 per cent of the bill.

"This way we can pay the doctor—we aren't ashamed to call him" . . . "It's the only way a man like me can really get enough medical care for his family" . . . "It was the first time I was able to go to the hospital when I had a baby," farm folks have told me. And so far as the doctors are concerned, Dr. George F. Johnson of Alliance, Nebraska, pointed out that "We were collecting mighty little from these people before; 'most anything is an improvement." Besides, the doctors don't have to do the collecting.

But it isn't as simple, nor as uniformly lovely, as it sounds. "More problems arise than you'd think possible," one FSA county official in Arkansas confided. Usually they boil down to just three:

1. There's not enough money in the pot. The FSA families can't pay more, but some doctors, being human, find it harder to give them as good care as they do better-paying patients. In fact a few of the best doctors won't have anything to do with the plan. They don't have to.

Probably this would not be true in a higher-income group where families could pay more. Several authorities agree that a group of medium-income farmers, say in the cornbelt, could probably buy really adequate medical, hospital and dental care for their families for \$60 to \$70 a year.

2. A few doctors and patients try to beat the game. Some doctors have charged for calls never made, some have made unnecessary calls or done unnecessary operations, some have rung in unpaid bills from years past. To regulate this, county medical societies have set up reviewing committees of doctors who must O.K. every bill before it is paid. This does away with flagrant abuses; it will never cure petty dishonesty.

A few families, on the other hand, practically run the doctor to death, simply because "We've paid for it." Some health associations have regulated this by dropping families who won't mend their ways. Others have allowed the doctor to charge the patient for the first call in any illness.

No amount of regulation will make a plan work unless the doctor is capable and conscientious and unless the people will play fair.

3. The first year or so, an accumulation of ailments, neglected for years, practically swamps the doctor. Smart doctors, once they have this situation in hand, go on to do preventive work to cut down their labors in the future.

Despite the troubles, it is significant that 95 per cent of the FSA plans are renewed each year.

A second nation-wide development in voluntary health insurance, now beginning to affect farmers, is in hospital care. For \$1 to \$2 a month a family is assured three weeks or so of ordinary hospital care in a ward, if recommended by a physi-

cian. Back in 1933 there were only 5,000 people in hospital-care plans. Today there are more than *six million*. But only 10,000 of them are farmers!

Why not more farmers? Well, groups of workers in factories and offices are easier to "sell," and collect from, than scattered farmers are. Naturally those selling hospital insurance have concentrated on the easiest market. In fact it appears that if farmers want hospital insurance they will have to take some initiative themselves in getting it.

Another reason why these plans have not reached farm people is that *a great many rural hospitals are so bad that no self-respecting plan will have anything to do with them!* That was the experience in Missouri, for example, where the State Farm Bureau has been putting on a hospital-insurance drive.

The American College of Surgeons, Chicago, will inspect any hospital of 25 beds or more, free of charge. All a community need do is apply. Why not have this agency inspect *your* hospital? You might be surprised, if it did.

No less than 10 million people in industry are already involved in some kind of voluntary health insurance. Employees of the Northern Pacific railroad have had their own co-operative for 59 years! Today they own four large hospitals and have 400 doctors on full-time salary.

The Michigan and California State Medical Societies are now offering state-wide medical-insurance plans. In Michigan Dr. Dora Stockman, a leader in the State and National Grange, pushed the necessary bill through the legislature. In many other states farmers will soon have opportunity to buy cooperative health insurance—if they want it.

The plans described here are not "State Medicine" (except that the government has had to donate to a certain extent to the Farm Security plans). They aren't the *compulsory* health insurance plans of Europe, with all of their defects. The medical care itself is not even "socialized"; there is group cooperation in paying for it. Such plans are exactly as "socialized" as a farmer's mutual fire insurance company, or a co-operative creamery.

Voluntary health insurance won't meet the needs of people too poor to pay the annual or monthly payments. It won't interest a lot of the people who could pay. But it is a device for those who are interested in trying to pay for medical care in some easier way.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Find three feature stories particularly marked by the characteristic of originality; three marked by imagination; three by personality.
2. Clip five feature articles whose style, in your estimation, is particularly appropriate and effective.

## CHAPTER 28

### PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION

**P**HOTOGRAPHIC illustration—pictures or “pics”—have become increasingly important in journalism, as they have in most other fields.

One has only to examine any daily newspaper, large or small, or magazines in any field to see how large a place photographs have in reporting news and in the presentation of feature and information material. Every larger daily newspaper has its own staff of news photographers and dark room technicians and usually its own engraving plant. Smaller dailies maintain smaller departments, while weekly newspapers are not far behind. Some member of a county weekly staff operates a news camera along with his other work, and he may also run the one-man engraving plant.

The farm, trade, or engineering magazine which does not use photographs freely is the exception. Some of the stories in these publications could not be told very satisfactorily without illustration. Women's magazines, garden and home journals, and similar publications long ago joined the procession, and picture magazines like *Life* have become notable successes.

One of the authors of this text, with the aid of a class in technical journalism at Ohio State University, made a study of the use of photographs for illustrations in a single issue of each of a wide variety of magazines found on news stands. The results were originally presented at a meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Journalism.

Every one of the thirty-five magazines examined carried photographic illustration, both in editorial matter and in advertising.

The number of such illustrations used in connection with editorial matter in the one issue ranged from 14 in *Collier's Weekly* to 313 in *Popular Science*. The issue of *Life* contained 250; *Ladies Home Journal*, 48; *Better Homes and Gardens*, 133; *Womans' Home Companion*,

33; *Farm Journal*, 55; *Country Gentleman*, 34. The average number for the thirty-five publications was 98.

In the advertisements the number of photographic illustrations averaged 117 per magazine. The number ranged from 21 in *Liberty Magazine* to 269 in *House Beautiful*. Advertisements in *Vogue* carried 225; *Good Housekeeping*, 210; *Saturday Evening Post*, 107; *Esquire*, 132; *Woman's Home Companion*, 164; *Cosmopolitan*, 138; *Life*, 55; *Time*, 167.

About a third of the publications studied use author-made photographs if they have quality, but most of them seem to prefer photographs taken by staff photographers. The photographs used in advertisements are almost wholly made by commercial photographers.

A similar study was made of forty periodicals in December, 1941, nearly all technical and trade journals. Mainly November numbers were chosen. A check was also made of the total number of pages in each issue examined. The trade or technical publications studied are sold by subscription and can be found only in public libraries or on the desks of people directly interested in them. They were selected from a rather wide field that includes different branches of agriculture, home and garden, professional home economics, engineering, and industry.

The results of this second study are as follows:

#### USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS IN TECHNICAL AND TRADE JOURNALS

| Magazine  | Photos in Editorial | Photos in Ads | No. Pages in Issue |
|---|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| American Builder . . . . .                        | 83                  | 97            | 116                |
| American Chemical Society, News Edition . . . . . | 79                  | 123           | 154                |
| American Dyestuff Reporter . . . . .              | 51                  | 11            | 52                 |
| American Exporter . . . . .                       | 44                  | 91            | 92                 |
| American Lumberman . . . . .                      | 53                  | 64            | 90                 |
| American Miller . . . . .                         | 31                  | 54            | 100                |
| Architectural Record . . . . .                    | 99                  | 138           | 144                |
| Automotive Industries . . . . .                   | 48                  | 57            | 96                 |
| Better Fruits . . . . .                           | 10                  | 6             | 16                 |
| Better Homes and Gardens . . . . .                | 157                 | 110           | 140                |
| Brick and Clay Record . . . . .                   | 63                  | 52            | 58                 |
| Chester White Journal . . . . .                   | 24                  | 6             | 28                 |
| Coast Artillery Journal . . . . .                 | 30                  | ...           | 110                |
| Compressed Air Magazine . . . . .                 | 46                  | 46            | 72                 |

| Magazine   | Photos in Editorial | Photos in Ads | No. Pages in Issue |
|--|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Coal Age.....  | 71                  | 89            | 128                |
| Concrete Highways (Portland Cement Association)              | 39                  | ...           | 16                 |
| Country Gentleman.....                                       | 65                  | 56            | 84                 |
| Electrical Merchandising.....                                | 114                 | 34            | 84                 |
| Engineering News-Record.....                                 | 40                  | 150           | 168                |
| Farm Implement News.....                                     | 31                  | 43            | 64                 |
| Field and Stream.....  | 78                  | 47            | 96                 |
| Florists' Review.....  | 10                  | 46            | 96                 |
| Flower Grower.....   | 52                  | 39            | 48                 |
| Forecast for Home Economics.....                             | 32                  | 30            | 72                 |
| Hoard's Dairyman.....  | 16                  | 15            | 24                 |
| Holstein-Friesian World.....                                 | 133                 | 100           | 74                 |
| Hygiea.....  | 24                  | 28            | 80                 |
| Ice Cream Journal.....                                       | 182                 | 38            | 68                 |
| Industrial & Engineering Chemistry (Industrial Edition)..... | 68                  | 92            | 210                |
| Iron Age.....  | 42                  | 124           | 190                |
| Men's Wear.....  | 88                  | 33            | 120                |
| National Provisioner.....                                    | 13                  | 25            | 42                 |
| Practical Home Economics.....                                | 29                  | 47            | 48                 |
| Progressive Farmer (Texas Edition).....                      | 61                  | 53            | 66                 |
| Railway Age.....   | 9                   | 43            | 84                 |
| Seed World.....  | 28                  | 47            | 48                 |
| Successful Farming.....                                      | 57                  | 78            | 88                 |
| Sugar.....   | 9                   | 23            | 48                 |
| The Timberman.....   | 86                  | 64            | 112                |
| What's New in Home Economics.....                            | 27                  | 82            | 158                |
| Total.....   | 2,195               | 2,303         |                    |
| Average.....   | 55                  | 58            |                    |

The importance of the fact that these periodicals use an average of 55 pictures in an issue to illustrate their news, information, and article material and that advertisers make use of an average of 58 pictures an issue, is plain. A number of them are the types of magazines to which technical journalism students may make application for jobs after they are graduated. Many of them are the magazines to which they may contribute as students and particularly later when they are in some work in which they have an opportunity to write.

The second study, made four years later than the first at about the same time of year, indicates that there has been no essential change in the period, except that perhaps still more pictures were being used.

It would be valuable if students in each succeeding class in journalism were to make similar studies of current issues of both newspapers and magazines. It would enable them to determine whether pictures are to be more widely used or less, as time goes on.

It must be clear that good photographs for the illustration of a feature article are quite essential if it is to be sold readily and to best advantage. No matter how important a story may be, nor how excellently it may be written, it is seriously lacking in sales value at least if pictures that are pat do not accompany it. An editor or an art director may sometimes take time and trouble to secure the desired photographs himself if an author does not submit them, but usually he will not do so. Too much difficulty and delay are involved in getting suitable photographs made in distant places by photographers who are likely to be mediocre or worse. Therefore the manuscript without photographs is quite likely to be rejected and some other article with photographs accepted.

Of course, there are articles both short and of feature length, whose subject matter is more satisfactorily illustrated with drawings. That is true of articles that deal with plans of buildings and of construction work, designs of mechanical equipment, illustrations on how to do this or that, and the like; or articles which call for the work of an artist, who with pencil, pen or brush will provide the kind of imaginative illustration that is demanded. The author may be in the best situation to provide either rough sketches or finished drawings for the first-named class of manuscripts; the editor will rely upon artists of his own selection for the latter.

**Sources of photographs:** Newspapers depend mainly upon their own resources in getting pictures of news events and news features in their immediate territory. Staff news photographers, with the help at times of reporters who use a camera, cover sports events, fires, accidents, crime, more important conventions and meetings, noted visitors, and other spot news events. These staff photographers constantly make other pictures wanted for illustration of features.

On some dailies, reporters who handle specialized departments or who travel on distant assignments carry a camera and take their own pictures. Thus often the farm editor on a field trip will do his own photography to illustrate his stories.

Both smaller and larger dailies are likely to subscribe to one or more of the news picture syndicate services, which secure pictures from all over the world. Pictures are also supplied to newspapers by mat and engraving services.

Newspapers get a constant flow of pictures from publicity services of many kinds. These include governmental agencies, colleges and universities, industrial and commercial establishments, and advertising agencies. Out-of-town correspondents, free-lance photographers, and private individuals offer many pictures to newspapers.

Some magazines have practically all their photographs made for them by commercial photographers. This is especially true of fashion magazines. Illustrations for articles in other publications which deal with clothes, household equipment, table settings and decorations, architectural subjects, furniture, and interior decoration are also supplied mainly by commercial photographers. Engineering and technical journals may arrange to have commercial photographers make pictures of construction, plant interiors, and equipment.

There are commercial photographers, mainly in larger cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles who maintain large studios, with expensive equipment of all kinds and who have models who can pose for almost any kind of picture under the sun. Some of these specialize in certain types of work, as fashions, advertising, color work, and the like.

Art editors sometimes arrange for their pictures a year in advance, where timely outdoor settings or certain flowers in bloom, are necessary. Indoor pictures are often taken from four to six months in advance.

In some editorial offices the members of the departmental staff and the art editor prepare the "set-up" they want photographed. This may be a Thanksgiving dinner table, a decorated Christmas tree, a furnished room, or a June bride's breakfast. The set-up is criticized and changed until everybody is satisfied. A photog-

rapher may be called in to make the picture, or the set-up may be taken down and moved to a photographer's studio. Pictures for national advertising layouts are often planned and posed in about the same way.

At times a magazine may send a commercial photographer on a long trip to get special pictures at some location. In other instances, where pictures must be taken some distance away, a local commercial photographer may be employed, but there is always the chance that he may not have the important "news sense" in photography. Some commercial photographers specialize in certain types of work, such as farm photography, and they are much more likely to supply what an editor needs.

Members of editorial staffs often carry cameras on their assignments and take their own pictures. This is true of the staffs of most farm papers and of a good many trade and class magazines which feature spot news and news features. A good many editors now require that a new man added to the staff be able to take pictures. Not so many women on editorial staffs take pictures.

Aside from these sources, magazines sometimes get pictures from contributors, offered with articles.

**How the free-lance writer gets pictures:** If the free-lance or occasional writer has a camera and knows how to use it, his problem of furnishing photographs to illustrate his articles is pretty well taken care of. However, he is not always that fortunate, and then he must turn to other sources.

First, he may often secure good photographs from the men and women from whom he gets the story. More and more those who, through research and experimentation and as active participants in important projects, help to make the news, also make photographs of what they have done. College scientists, men and women in extension work, county agents, vocational teachers, women in field work of all kinds, engineering fieldmen and foremen, construction engineers—to mention a few—find that photography is important to them, and they equip themselves to make photographs. The writer may usually get their cooperation and draw upon their file of prints or negatives.

Many commercial and industrial firms have files of photographs

which are available. Manufacturers of all sorts of machinery and equipment, wholesale seed growers, nurseries, purebred livestock men, railroad agricultural and development departments, chambers of commerce, branch implement houses, large farm organizations, and fairs and expositions are typical sources of pictures. Many business and industrial firms, organizations, and associations have publicity departments which furnish photographs as well as information. For instance, the Portland Cement Association can supply pictures illustrating uses of cement on the farm, and in home and engineering construction.

Another fertile source of photographs is the United States Government. Its various branches have many thousands of pictures of all kinds of subjects. For many writers, the best source is the United States Department of Agriculture, which must have hundreds of thousands of negatives on file, dealing with every important activity of this organization. Most of these photographs are in Washington, but others can be secured from regional and field offices, though often permission to use them must be secured from a bureau chief in Washington. The Soil Conservation Service has had photographers attached to regional offices, with equipment and laboratories, and they have thousands of pictures on file for use of the press. Some of the best photography in America in recent years has been done by the Farm Security Administration.

Somewhere, somebody in the Government has pictures of almost everything under the sun.

Colleges and universities usually have photographers who keep files of pictures that are available to writers. This is especially true in agriculture, home economics, and engineering. One of the best collections of available farm and home photographs in America can be found at Purdue University. There is also a large and valuable file at Iowa State College. Some striking pictures in the modern manner can be obtained from Montana State College and Oregon State College.

Many commercial photographers maintain extensive files of pictures, dealing with every conceivable subject and taken in every land under the sun. One such concern advertises that it has on hand more than 100,000 negatives. Their prices are reasonable

if you do not ask for exclusive rights to the use of pictures which you choose. Exclusive rights, however, are not unreasonable.

**If you take your own pictures:** It is impossible here to discuss in great detail how to take pictures to illustrate news, informational, and feature articles. To the student of photography many manuals are available. A number of colleges and universities now offer instruction in photography, and a student in technical journalism should register for such a course if at all possible.

If you are planning to take your own pictures, keep in mind that photography requires knowledge of three kinds:

You need a working knowledge of some of the laws of physics, for lenses, exposure, shutters, focusing, and so on are based on those laws.

You need a practical understanding of chemistry, for papers, films, emulsion, developing, and printing have to do with chemistry.

Finally, photography is in itself an art. Knowing what to take, what to include, composition, distances, angles, points of view and the like involve principles of art. Putting in the film and pressing the button are only minor details.

**Cameras\*:** Whether the student or writer buys a new camera or a used camera, the best place to buy is from a reliable photo equipment and supply dealer who is prepared to give expert advice and repair service. If you buy through your local dealer you can come to a better understanding with him, and responsibility for the item purchased is more satisfactorily fixed. You will feel more free to call for help from the man who sold you your equipment, and he will be more willing to give it.

The one best camera for all-round press use is the "Speed Graphic." It is used in making probably 90 per cent of all present-day newspaper pictures and a large share of pictures in farm and trade magazines of news and news-feature type. This camera is equipped with two shutters, one of the between-the-lens type and the other a focal plane shutter. It has a long bellows extension which will enable the taking of close-up pictures. It is especially

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\*When priorities rule in industry and trade, equipment is not readily purchased, and that is the condition at the time this is *written*.

suited for action and motion shots, with a focal plane shutter which will work as fast as one-thousandth of a second.

When a Speed Graphic is equipped with flashlight attachment, it will take many kinds of indoor and dim light shots. Most photographers now have their Graphics also equipped with a coupled range finder, which makes focusing more rapid and more accurate.

For farm, garden, trade, and engineering photography outdoors, a Graflex camera is preferred by some photographers. This differs from the Graphic in that it has reflex focusing. Mirrors reflect the image you want to photograph onto a ground glass which you see as you look down into a hood on top of the camera, as you hold it in your hands. Thus whatever you see on the ground glass as you make the exposure as to composition and focusing is exactly what you will have on the film when developed. It has the same focal plane shutter as the Graphic.

A Graflex lends itself to making pictures with good composition. Because the object to be photographed can be followed on the ground glass and focusing changed as needed, it is ideal for informal pictures of livestock, pets, children and people generally. When equipped with a lens of sufficient focal length and bellows extension, it is a good camera with which to make closeup pictures which will show details. For example it lends itself to making a good negative of insect damage to a plant, a new vegetable, a part of a machine, a construction detail, a bird on a nest, a method of doing something such as sowing flower seeds, on any closeup needed. A Graflex can be equipped with a flashlight synchronizer.

The Graflex is made in a number of types and sizes. For general press illustration work, the Series D is best. For photographs of small objects and close-up pictures of such details as may be wanted in technical and scientific work, the Auto Graflex is ideal. Both of these have revolving backs. Lenses of various focal lengths and types can be used.

Some experienced magazine reporters carry both a Speed Graphic and a Graflex, especially if they are to make a long trip on which a wide variety of pictures must be taken. The most widely used size at present for both Graphic and Graflex is the  $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ , though with the Graphic the smaller  $2\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$  size has

become popular in recent years. If both of these types of cameras are used, they should be the same size so that the same films and film carriers can be used for either one. Different focal length lenses should be selected for each, with the shorter length for the Graphic and the longer length for the Graflex.

Newspaper photographers usually have their films in film holders, each of which carries two films. For a writer who goes on an extended trip, a cut film magazine, preferably one which holds a dozen films, is much better. Several magazines can be carried along, to provide plenty of films for each day's work.

For photography in various technical fields and where views, architectural pictures, interiors, and elaborate machinery or equipment are to be photographed, a view camera is usually preferred and at times is necessary. A good view camera has a rising, falling, and side movement front, and a back which can be racked back and forth. These features make it possible to take pictures under many difficult situations and conditions. A tripod is necessary and focusing is done on a ground glass under a black cloth. Several lenses are needed for various uses, such as a wide angle lens for certain architectural and interior work. The most commonly used sizes are 5 x 7 and 8 x 10, though some experienced photographers work with a  $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$  or 4 x 5.

From the standpoint of the student or the beginning writer who does not wish to make too large an investment, there is a small view or folding box camera that can be recommended. Various makes of these numbers have been on the market, practically identical in essential features. The Recomar of the Eastman Kodak Company is illustrative of this type. It is usually fitted with a fairly fast, good lens, generally an f. 4.5, with double extension bellows to permit close-up work and a ground glass for tripod use. They can be fitted with a flashlight synchronizer and a coupled range finder. These were manufactured abroad and at present may be hard to obtain.

The folding pocket camera, widely used by amateurs, if of the "super type," with sufficiently fast lens and fast shutter, has its uses. One that can be carried in a brief case or coat pocket or

which a woman reporter might carry in her pocketbook, comes handy for field work or emergencies.

In recent years, the so-called miniature camera, using 35 millimeter film, has been quite popular. While it has its uses for the writer, it is not the best type to buy for regular work. A miniature camera can be bought in models ranging in cost anywhere from around \$10 up to several hundred dollars. Any of these can be used for black and white pictures and do equally well for natural color Kodachrome film.

Either the small folding camera or a 35 mm. one would be valuable as extra equipment for taking pictures in the field or on a job where it would be hard or impossible to get pictures with a larger sized camera. The small negatives can be enlarged—"blown up" is the photographer's term—to make a larger sized print. Such enlargements can often be used to illustrate news and trade articles though they are for the most part not so good as prints made from a larger film. You will find, too, that some magazines will not accept such enlargements from small films for any purpose. Larger black and white prints can also be made from Kodachromes.

To sum up, get the best camera you can afford for the work you have to do. Many times excellent work can be done with an inexpensive camera—even with an amateur box or folding one costing only a few dollars—if you understand it, know its limitations, and do not try to do something with it beyond its limitations.

**Equipment to help avoid errors:** Good photography demands the use of various kinds of supplementary equipment in addition to the camera itself. The beginner sometimes finds it hard to understand what all of these so-called gadgets are for. What this equipment consists of can best be explained in terms of some of the common errors and faults of picture making and of some of the handicaps. This supplementary equipment has been designed to help the photographer overcome both faults and handicaps and also to increase the range of usefulness of any given camera.

1. One common fault in photography is that *pictures are not in focus* and consequently not sharp and clear, when they have not

been made with a camera which permits focusing upon a ground glass. Most cameras are provided with a scale which tells you where to set the lens to give correct focus for different distances. This may not be accurate with cheaper cameras. If you want to be sure, you must measure the distance from the object to the camera. This is especially true when working at short distances, or with the lens aperture wide open when even a slight error means a blurred focus.

This error, or the extra trouble taken to avoid it, can be eliminated by buying a camera equipped with a coupled range finder which enables you to do your focusing automatically. Most of the better cameras can be equipped with such a coupled range finder, of which there are various types. One type, which illustrates the idea, shows two images as you look through the finder. You adjust until the two images have merged to coincide as one. When you have done this, the lens has been set automatically to the right focus. Such a focus is even more accurate than with a ground glass.

2. A second common fault is *wrong exposure*—either too much or too little. If the negative is over-exposed, too much light was admitted; and if under-exposed, too little light was admitted. Exposure depends upon three factors—the speed of the film, the aperture opening which admits light, and the speed at which the shutter operates.

The speed of the film is expressed by an arbitrary figure which is used to state the rate at which a given amount of light will act upon the film to form the latent image. So this particular angle can be governed by the film being used. If you are to make pictures outdoors in good sunlight, a slower film may be more suitable. But if pictures are to be made under dim light or to be indoor flashlights of action, you will want the fastest film you can obtain. In recent years, much faster films have been developed for use of press photography. For most news and magazine news feature work, the two most valuable films are Super Ortho Press and Super Panchro Press. These are Eastman trade names. Other firms have equivalent films under other names.

Apart from use of wrong film, wrong exposure is due either to

improper setting of the shutter or wrong aperture opening and often to wrong setting for both. If you do not understand the principles governing these two matters, information may be found in the sources which will be listed later in this chapter.

The two settings which must be made in order to admit the amount of light needed to make a correct exposure depend upon a number of conditions. These are the brightness of the sun, the kind of clouds, state of atmosphere, time of day, season of year, location or altitude—as mountain top or seashore—glare from nearby mass and the background. It varies, too, as between a close-up and a distant panorama.

If pictures are to be taken of moving objects such as machinery in motion or of flowers or shrubbery when a stiff wind is blowing, the shutter must be set to operate at a fast speed to avoid blur. Sometimes it is necessary to stop down the aperture to a small opening in order that depth of focus is increased—that is, that parts of the picture near the camera and other parts farther away are both sharply in focus. This in turn requires that the shutter which controls admission of light be operated more slowly in order to admit sufficient light through the small aperture.

To put it in a way that anyone can understand, correct exposure for any one photograph is a complicated matter. Most black and white films have a wide latitude or range, so even if the exposure is not correct a satisfactory picture will still be obtained.

*The modern way to overcome these various difficulties is to take the guess-work out of it by careful use of a light meter.* This measures the amount of light available for making the exposure and enables you to make a quick determination of setting for shutter and lens aperture.

There are various kinds of exposure meters. The best of these is one which utilizes a photoelectric cell to measure the light conditions. The Weston, available in several types, is the most widely used, although the General Electric is also standard and of excellent efficiency. There are other makes selling for less which are serviceable. If you possess a photoelectric exposure meter, and learn to understand it and then use it correctly, much of your exposure difficulties will be overcome. There are other kinds of meters and exposure guides, any of which will be of help.

3. Sometimes your *pictures are blurred*. This may be due to taking an object in motion that is moving faster than your lens shutter can "stop" it; that is, make the exposure in sufficiently short a time that the object seems to be still. This can often be corrected by using a faster shutter speed or by taking the picture from an angle. A moving object coming toward or away from the camera can often be photographed sharply, when if taken as it moves directly across the front of the camera, the image will be blurred.

Just as likely though, the picture is blurred because the photographer did not hold the camera steady as the exposure was made. One safe way to avoid this is to use the camera on a tripod. So an experienced photographer carries a tripod suitable to his camera as part of the equipment. If, however, the picture must be taken while the camera is held in the hand, it should be held just as steadily as possible.

To take a picture, stand firmly with one foot ahead of the other. If using a camera at body level, as a Graflex, hold it firmly with both hands and with your elbows against your body. If using a camera at eye level, use your arms and elbows as braces against the body. If you are using a small folding camera or miniature camera, the straps of the carrying case may help to hold it firm. Whatever the camera, do not breathe at the instant the exposure is made.

4. A fourth error is *under-exposure* which is due to taking a picture where there is insufficient light, even when the camera is used at its maximum limits. This handicap can be overcome by use of a flashlight or photoflash bulb to provide the necessary illumination. Practically all present-day press photographers utilize flashlights and in most cases with equipment which permits the flash to synchronize with the exposure; making the exposure also sets off the flashlight.

Flashlights are used for night photography, for indoor photography at any time, and for outdoors when light is dim. Sometimes, too, in bright sunlight outdoors, where part of the object to be photographed is in shadow, an even lighting over the whole can be obtained by a flashlight. With flashlights, you can get pictures at a meeting indoors or at night; you can take pictures inside

a barn, a mine, or a tunnel. One technical journalism student specializing in wildlife conservation, recently took a flashlight picture of a vulture on its nest in a cave, which he used to illustrate an article that was printed in an outdoor magazine.

5. A fifth reason for failing to get the kind of picture you want is that your *lens is not sufficiently versatile* to meet all conditions. There are three types of supplementary equipment for the lens which will widen its versatility and make possible better negatives. First is a lens hood or shade which cuts off extra, unnecessary light. Second is a color filter which aids in cutting through haze and, by filtering the light rays to admit the light elements you need, permits better recording of objects with color in them. The third is a portrait lens which fits over your camera lens. This makes possible the photographing of objects closer than otherwise possible.

6. A sixth cause of poor pictures is due to *dirt or dust on the lens or film*. This often causes little spots on your finished print. Lens paper of the type which is sold by photo supply stores should be used for cleaning the lens; it will not scratch.

Again, your negative may be streaked or clouded because light is getting in through a hole. This demands repair at once. It is advisable to have a good carrying case to protect the camera from dust and hard knocks. If anything goes wrong with your camera, take it to your dealer for repair or for returning to the factory for repair and adjustment.

7. A seventh kind of trouble is double-barreled—*negatives often become scratched or damaged*, and you cannot always find them readily when you want them. Both these matters can be avoided by having a proper system for filing negatives.

Negatives should be put in regular envelopes made for the purpose. They can be bought from a camera store or paper supply house. Work out a system of classifying negatives. Some system similar to a library book classification will be excellent. Data required should be put on the outside of the envelope. It is a good idea to have a serial number for each negative. Negatives should be filed away in filing cabinets of correct size. Such a file of negatives becomes increasingly valuable as it grows.

**Helpful hints to beginners:** Except for small cameras, cut film is cheaper and preferable to rolls or filmpacks. Do not allow your loaded camera or your film supply to lie in direct sunlight or where there is excessive heat. The shelf just inside the rear window of your car, where the sun can shine through, is absolutely the wrong place. Never leave a camera alone for a minute in any spot where it can be picked up by a thief. If you leave it in your locked car, the back trunk is best. If it is left inside the locked car, throw something, such as a raincoat or blanket, over it casually so that a thief will not know anything of value is there.

In taking pictures, always make a record of the exposure at the time it is made. A little end-opening notebook of  $2\frac{1}{4}$  x  $4\frac{1}{4}$  size is handy for this, for it will go into a vest pocket, outside coat pocket or summer shirt pocket. Be sure to get the correct names of persons in a picture who will have to be identified later.

You will find that it is both economical and advantageous to do your own developing and printing, if possible. Most newspaper photographers, and many others as well, do their own work. This, of course, requires suitable equipment and a darkroom. It also takes knowledge and skill that come only from study and long experience.

**Information and literature:** Before you can make much headway with your photography, thorough study is necessary. If you are a beginner, the first thing to read and master is the manual which comes with your camera. The hand book which comes with a Graflex or Speed Graphic is valuable, and so is the booklet which accompanies your Weston exposure meter. A handy textbook for the beginner is "How to Make Good Pictures," published by the Eastman Kodak Company and sold at photo supply stores for around 50 cents. New editions are issued frequently. This is sold especially for the amateur.

The Eastman Kodak Company has many bulletins and manuals dealing with special subjects in connection with photography. These are usually found on sale at camera supply stores. Some of the most important of these are now published together in a loose-leaf book entitled "Kodak Reference Handbook." It deals with lenses, films, filters, Kodachrome, print papers, darkrooms, develop-

ment, formulas, copying, slides, and transparencies. It sells for \$2.75. This is the most valuable single volume that a serious photographer could buy.

An Eastman leaflet on farm photography issued for use of 4-H clubs and vocational agriculture students may still be available. There are other Eastman booklets available for special types of scientific and other photography. One entitled "Photography and Law Enforcement" contains information on photographing bullet marks, fingerprints and traffic accidents that has helpful hints for similar detail work in other fields.

A textbook of long standing which is one of the best available is the U.S. Army Air Corps manual of basic photography. This was issued in a new and revised edition in 1941, and is a book of 342 pages. It covers almost the entire range of subjects dealing with photography, including chemistry, physics, negative developing, print making, enlarging, copying, color photography, slide making, and other angles. This is recommended by the visual education specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for extension workers who take pictures. The correct title is "Basic Photography": War Department, Technical Manual TM 1-219. It can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., for 35 cents a copy.

If you have a Graflex or Graphic, then "Graphic-Graflex photography" by Morgan and Lester offers the best information for you. There are a number of general comprehensive texts.

Of the magazines, *American Photography* and *Camera* are best. *News Pictures* is published by the News Photographers' Association.

**What pictures to get:** It is a waste of effort for the average writer of articles to attempt to make pictures of the type made by a commercial photographer in a large studio. These involve the use of special and expensive equipment, background, costumes, accessories, models, lighting effects, and other items far beyond the reach of the author. This also applies to interior pictures of furniture, decoration, table setting, and architectural details which, while photographed on the spot, must be done with perfect artistry and technical skill.

It is not good policy to employ a local commercial photographer

and have him make special pictures for your article at considerable expense unless you have already queried the editor and know that he wants them. In such a case, it is good judgment to submit the article first, along with any available pictures, and tell him that you can arrange to have more suitable pictures made. If the editor wants the article and the pictures, he can give you instructions.

Some writers, however, will often take their own pictures as a matter of record and submit these with an article to help make clear to the editor what can be obtained by a commercial or staff photographer in case they should be wanted. A writer might thus submit pictures of a house, a garden, an interior decoration scheme, a table setting, or a construction job. Such pictures would guide the editor.

The household editor of a national farm magazine sometimes asks writers to send her objects described in an article. This would apply to a child's garment, a hooked rug with a unique pattern, a handicraft article, a pillow cover or party costume, and similar objects. She has the object photographed, then returns it to the writer.

If, however, the picture to take is one of a spot news event, which is happening while you are on the ground and cannot be obtained later, take it regardless of what it is. Or it may be that you come across the picture situation on a trip and it would not be possible for anyone to obtain it later: then take it. Do the best you can. It may be that the editor will have to depend upon what you secure, or do without.

Of the pictures you can get, one of the most useful is of people who are in the news or who are a part of the informational material of which you are to write. Most magazines, as well as newspapers, want pictures of people. You can get pictures of new officers elected at a convention or meeting, of livestock men on a tour, of women attending an extension school, of the engineer in charge of building a super-highway, of a scientist who has just completed some important research work, or of the 4-H club youngster who has just won some honor. Never forget that there are people who

are connected with practically every story you have to write, in one way or another.

There are times and situations when the editor can use only a formal, posed portrait. Often this type of picture is already available from a studio. But in other instances, editors frown on such a picture. So frequently when you take pictures of people, you will want to avoid getting what is known as a "mug" shot. For example, if you are to photograph a farmer, you do not want him in his Sunday clothes, standing stiffly in front of the house. Nor is a picture of the whole family, all dressed up, and lined up in a row, usually the best picture to get.

The picture that is generally the most usable is informal, seemingly unposed, and with action or human interest appeal. Photograph a farmer on his tractor, with a tool in his hand, or in any typical setting. Get his picture as he feeds the stock, as he stands in the barnyard or corral, as he feeds the silage cutter, or as he is mounting his saddle horse.

If your story is about some farm crop, the picture might well show action as well as the crop. The farmer may be shocking his certified oats, digging sweet potatoes, or setting out cabbage plants. He might be cultivating, dusting, or spraying. A picture of any of these types which includes a farmer in his work clothes and in action is worth a dozen stilted, formal portrayals.

If the picture of a farm woman or girl is to be made, follow the same idea. Photograph the housewife as she works at her kitchen table or gathers vegetables in the garden. A picture of a 4-H club girl who is feeding her calf or currying it is better than a stilted one of her standing by its head and doing nothing but looking pretty. If the picture is of a girl picking strawberries, she should be down on her knees with a basket of berries but looking up and smiling. To get a good picture of the wife of a migrant farm laborer who lives in a tent, have her peeling potatoes in the tent doorway or hanging up the washing outside.

There are some types of formal engineering and architectural and scientific pictures of a technical nature which should not be made with people in them. But many other pictures of news or

news feature character in the trade and engineering field can and should be made with people, just as farm pictures are. Action pictures of men at work on a job give human interest. If your picture is of the head engineer in charge, get him as he stands beside a wall or piece of equipment with a blueprint in his hand.

An informal picture is best when the person being photographed is in his or her work clothes and in usual surroundings. If the atmosphere or setting is one of cheerful circumstances, a picture with a grin or a smile will help. But if it is one of anxiety, discouragement, or despair, try to mirror that, or whatever might be the mood, in the faces of your subjects.

Next to people, the pictures that the average writer can get is one of buildings, structures, machinery, and equipment of average size. It is fairly easy to get usable shots of farm homes, barns, and other farm structures, and also of city residences. This also applies to pictures of smaller dams, bridges, highways, factories, shops, and store interiors. Farm field and crop scenes and engineering construction in progress are other types. You can easily get pictures of smaller things such as a bird house, a shelter for poultry, a farm implement, the seed frame of an amateur gardener, a bit of equipment, or in fact any simple device or appliance that would illustrate a story.

**Advice to beginners:** In taking informal pictures of people, it is often best to talk freely with your subject as you prepare to make the exposure. Some arrangement and posing are usually necessary. If you can explain what you are doing as this proceeds, so that the subject is at ease and forgets that a picture is to be taken, it may avoid a stilted effect. With children, let them look through your camera and explain how it works before you begin. Have them tell you what they are doing. If the picture can be snapped at an instant when the subject doesn't realize what is happening, a better effect is often secured.

Livestock photography is one that presents difficulty. The breed papers and some livestock journals have for years used a set, formal sort of picture, often taken with the animal in a stiff pose and standing with straw spread about its feet. Sales catalogs and livestock advertising often use this same type of photograph. If you

do need this sort, better get it from a commercial livestock photographer if you can. A special skill is needed for this type of picture and it is hard for an inexperienced photographer to get the right result.

Farm papers, however, have been getting away from this sort of picture. The national papers, especially, no longer make use of them. The editor of one important publication refuses to use the photograph of any farm animal which has its feet covered with straw. Editors want pictures of animals that have some life and interest in them.

A good livestock picture shows an animal in a pasture, feed lot, or corral, in a natural pose. It may be led or held with a halter, providing this is being done naturally and does not give the effect of awkward posing. Often a suitable background will add quality to the picture. This may be a corral fence, some trees, a hillside, a distant mountain or even the side of a building.

If it is a scene of animals feeding, it may take quite a while before they can be maneuvered into a suitable location or post. This must be done quietly, so as not to alarm them and is best done by their usual attendant. In photographing cattle or sheep on the range, or that recently came from the range, and not accustomed to strangers, it may be necessary to approach them on horseback or in a flivver, whichever has been used for range herding. It takes long practice and much patience to get acceptable pictures of this sort and of any livestock in fact.

In photographing buildings, landscape and garden features, dams, bridges, and highways, often the only way to get in all that you want and yet not be too far away, is to photograph your object from an angle. Avoid getting distortion in your picture, however. Also set your lens aperture to get correct depth of focus, so that portions nearest the camera as well as those farthest away will both be sufficiently sharp. A view camera on a tripod or a Graflex camera will prove best here.

At other times, it will make a better picture if the photographer can get on a different plane from the object being photographed. In some cases, this may mean getting down on one's knees and aiming the camera upward. In other instances, it means getting

higher up, standing on a gate or fence. It may mean getting on top of a barn, haystack, watertower, scaffolding, or other nearby structure or perhaps climbing a tree. Often the top of an auto, truck, or piece of equipment will suffice. Some photographers carry a stepladder along as standard equipment.

Inexperienced photographers often attempt to include too much in their pictures. The officers or main speakers, rather than the whole convention or banquet, may be much better. If the picture is of a field crop, a view of the whole field may be all right. But many times, a closeup of just one or a few shocks or stalks, with the rest of the field simply as background, will much better illustrate the point. If the story is of a farm gate, just get the gate and not all the rest of the fence. If the story is of the latch on the gate, get a close-up of the latch, not the whole gate.

The experienced photographer is always looking for close-up shots. This may be of an appliance, of the hands of a man or woman doing the work, of a plow digging into the sod, of one insect on a damaged twig, of a few bricks in a wall, of the end of a beam—or whatever the detail is, that will best illustrate the idea to be conveyed.

If there is any question as to the best picture to take, it is better to make several exposures and have too many pictures, rather than to find after it is too late that you do not have enough, or that you made the wrong one. If the picture is important, take both closeups and distant view shots. Get it from various angles and both with and without people in it, if possible. A good motto is to keep shooting as long as the parade is going by. A collection of varied pictures will give the editor a chance to select the one that he deems best suited to his needs.

A veteran magazine writer with years of experience in taking pictures says that sometimes he knows that the one picture he has taken is exactly the right one and has been taken exactly right. That is the time, if it is important, that he makes another duplicate exposure of the same thing. There is always the chance that the perfect negative may be injured in developing, so the duplicate is insurance against such.

Often a picture can be improved by a little attention to details.

A weed in the foreground can first be pulled. If there are boards lying in a barnyard, an implement standing where it hides something, or empty cement sacks or tar barrels beside the new highway, these can be removed. A mow door can be closed. If it is an indoor picture, furniture can be rearranged a bit, pictures on the wall changed, or other details shifted to make a better effect.

A feed bunk may be filled so the cattle or sheep will come up and be eating. You can wait until the truck is about loaded or until the moving bucket on the cable reaches a good spot. You can wait until the combine gets around to the other side of the field where you can take best advantage of light condition. If the picture is of a new highway, wait until the old flivver gets around the bend.

Background is one of the most important factors in getting good pictures. In most cases you have to make best use of whatever is available. This may be a hillside, woods, shrub hedge, or side of a building. One farm paper not long ago wished to take a farmyard scene in color for use as a cover page. The paper went to the expense of paying for the re-painting of the barn in a color that would lend itself to the color photography and provide the background for the central object in the picture.

The essence of good photography is composition. This is a matter which cannot be discussed here. But the little care in looking after what is included or left out may be important. In photographing a well-landscaped home, a shift of a few feet may hide a telephone pole behind a tree. In farm photography, a different angle or selecting the right spot, may hide some unsightly object as a manure pile, a poultry house, or outdoor toilet.

**Best advice of all:** Absolutely the best advice that can be given to any beginning news and magazine photographer is to study the pictures being used in the current issues of the publication to which you expect to submit pictures. This is the best way you can find out for yourself the pictures the editor wants and the kind you must take if you win his approval.

**Copyright and publication rights:** If you use photographs or other illustrations, make certain that you understand whether or not the pictures are copyrighted and that you have from the owner

full consent for their use and an understanding as to what acknowledgments are to be printed with them, if any. Your information as to copyright and as to acknowledgment should be passed on to the editor; commercial photographers usually take care of this point by stamping copyright and acknowledgment notices on the back of each print. The writer who buys and submits such photographs should not cut off or obliterate such notices.

If you take a photograph where there is any question about its use, play safe and secure a written permission to use the picture. This isn't often necessary in farm, home, and engineering pictures. But it is absolutely essential if there is any possible chance of the picture being used for advertising purposes.

**What constitutes a good photograph for illustration?** A photograph must meet these requirements to be suitable for illustrative purposes: it must as a picture fit the article; it must as a picture also have good composition; and it must as a photographic print have certain physical qualities that make it suitable for satisfactory reproduction as a halftone.

A close relationship between illustration and article is of course fundamental. The photograph must have bearing on the subject matter. However, there are times when the nature of the article does not permit of direct illustration of the central idea; for example, the article may be a forecast of the status of agriculture 25 years from now, and in that event the illustration may have to be rather general in character, but still relating to the subject matter insofar as possible. The illustration then gives the article atmosphere and decoration.

While atmosphere and decoration are desirable in magazine layout of an article, as well as the attention getting value that is inherent in illustration, yet after all, the chief reason for illustration is to amplify the text and make it clearer to the reader.

Good photographic illustration has what the artist calls good composition. The picture must be a harmonious whole. Its subordinate parts must not detract from interest in its central feature. It must include only what belongs in it to do the particular job of illustrating that it is expected to do. Its simplicity will add to its attractiveness.

Finally, a photographic print that is clear and sharp and made with a glossy finish is likely to reproduce best. Foggy, muddy looking prints, with an area here and there that is out of focus, will not give satisfactory results. Do not offer them to an editor; they will merely exasperate him. However, it is often good practice to send negatives along with prints because there are times when the negative may be manipulated to advantage by the engraver in making new prints or enlargements.

Do not undertake to trim up prints; better leave all manipulation to the editor's layout man. Do not write in pencil on the back of the prints because the pencil point is likely to leave embossed lines that may show in the halftone. If legends are to be attached, type them and gum them lightly to the bottom of the back side of the print, using rubber cement. Do not attach the prints to manuscripts or legends by means of clips; they also mar the surface.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Make a count of photographs used in editorial copy in a current issue of three farm, home, trade, or engineering periodicals.
2. Clip and turn in five examples of good pictures from magazines which illustrate a technical news or information article which were probably taken by the reporter-writer of the article.
3. Clip and turn in five good newspaper pictures used to illustrate informative material rather than spot news.
4. Pictures should be secured if possible for all articles submitted to publications by students in this course.
5. Go out with a camera and take a series of pictures as practice work. Some suggestions are:
  - a. Cover a local spot news event, a football game.
  - b. Get one or more pictures of important or unusual campus personalities.
  - c. Visit a market, a fair, a flower show, a convention, a farmers' week, a construction project, or something equivalent and get a series of pictures.
  - d. Photograph some device, appliance, garment, dish, or object about which there is a good story to write.
  - e. Photograph a farm animal, a flower, a table setting, a piece of furniture, a construction detail, a laboratory apparatus, or a small quantity of mineral or chemical material.

- f. Photograph a residence, barn, tool shed, gate, fence, dam, bridge, stretch of highway, railway roadbed, or power plant.
- g. Photograph a woods, hillside, mountain peak or range, large orchard, or field crop.

(*Note:* In war time, plants engaged in defense work, large bridges, large dams, and anything else of military importance cannot be photographed.)

## CHAPTER 29

### PRINTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The particular thing to which one must surrender is fact.—Woodrow Wilson.

**A**NYONE who is ambitious to write more than an occasional short experience or interview article will find it of great value to collect and file newspaper and magazine clippings, pamphlets and bulletins, and references to publications that should not be mutilated by clipping.

This material forms the basis of the morgue, which every aspiring feature writer should have. Morgue, as a newspaper or magazine writer uses it, is the colloquial term for a reference library made up largely of clippings, photographs, and pamphlets, as distinct from a library proper of printed and bound volumes.

Along with clippings should be filed away pamphlets, bulletins, books of current statistics, some general books, and some standard books of reference to form the complete library of the writer. No matter how few these are at the beginning, they should be classified in some logical order. While the morgue is still small, cheap manila folders are a convenient method of filing, but as the collection grows, some sort of filing case will be necessary. Bulletins and booklets may well be kept on ordinary shelves but classified in the same order as the material in the folders.

The next step for a writer, after beginning a morgue, is to get his name on mailing lists. There are certain magazines and periodical publications to which he should subscribe. Others can be obtained for the asking, such as government publications, experiment station bulletins, and releases from publicity services of many sorts. It is handy to have a little card catalog of the places from which one regularly receives printed matter. This will be valuable in case of change of address.

In beginning a morgue and system of handling printed information, the novice must remember that such a collection cannot

be accumulated over night. It is something that must grow. As a writer investigates a new subject, he will accumulate printed information concerning it. After the article or series of articles is written, this material can be sorted over and that which has permanent or future value saved for filing.

It must also be remembered that the value of a morgue for the average writer depends as much on what he throws away as what he saves. At first he will want to save everything. But as space fills up, he will have to go through his files, sort out and throw away things which do not pertain to the writing he is doing, which have become obsolete or which are now available in better form.

At first the writer will save many clippings from newspapers and magazines. But as he discovers where such news is obtainable, he will find himself gathering the original data instead. For instance, a beginner may clip and file a newspaper story giving details of the state wheat crop. Later he will be on the mailing list of the government crop reporter in that state and will have access to the same original source as did the newspaper reporter.

**Using the morgue to get ideas:** Writing feature articles wholly out of clippings and the morgue is the lazy man's way of doing it. Its honest value lies in its aid to the writer in gathering ideas and material and not as a substitute for genuine reportorial work. Keeping up the morgue should serve first as a means of discovering ideas for articles, as has already been suggested.

It can serve also as a background and foundation for the writer when he comes to prepare an article. Before he sets to work at writing the article, he can pull out from his files all the information he has on the subject and fill himself full of its history, its side-lights, and its background. It will aid him in presenting statistics and making comparisons. It will save many a trip to the library, and bridge over failure to ask certain questions in the course of an interview.

The real story, however, should be written mainly from the information the writer has obtained at first hand from interview, investigation, or experience. The fresh data in the notebook are the real material for the story. A story will always be better, nevertheless, if back of the notebook is a well-arranged reference

morgue to fortify the writer with background material and make possible the necessary checking and verifying of the interview.

**Verification of currently published data:** Too much reliance should not be placed in the material that is clipped from current magazines and newspapers, or even from technical trade publications. If the information contained therein—the statistics, the names, the places, the incidents, and other facts—is to be used, it may save serious error and embarrassment to verify it. That can be done by consulting original sources or standard books of reference, by correspondence with original sources, or by calls.

**What a writer needs:** The printed sources which a writer in technical fields uses are of various kinds. Let us list these and then discuss each class briefly:

1. Newspapers.
2. Federal publications.
3. State publications.
4. College and experiment station publications.
5. Journals of societies.
6. Yearbooks, annuals, and trade directories.
7. Statistical volumes.
8. Abstracts and indexes.
9. Programs and catalogs.
10. A good dictionary.

**Newspapers:** It would be valuable to a student in a technical journalism class to subscribe to a leading newspaper in some city distant from the location of his college or university. A writer in any special field should subscribe to newspapers which cover territory in which he is most interested.

Thus a writer specializing in writing about matters concerning petroleum might subscribe to newspapers in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Dallas, or Shreveport. A writer interested in agriculture on a nation-wide basis might well include a number of papers which have good farm departments or give special attention to the subject, such as the *Daily Pantagraph*, of Bloomington, Illinois, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *Des Moines Register*, *Fargo Forum*, *Lincoln Journal*, *Weekly Kansas City Star*, *Dallas News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Fresno Bee*—to name a few.

**Federal publications:** Practically every branch of the Federal government publishes bulletins, circulars, reports, yearbooks, annual reports. Some of them also issue periodicals, either printed or mimeographed. The United States Department of Agriculture has a valuable library of standard information, and issues dozens of different periodicals. Other government publications in the field of commerce, mines, weather, highways, labor, children, public health, geology, standards, patents, and others are of value to writers. Reports from special commissions and published hearings of committees of Congress are frequently valuable. For instance, reports made in recent years on farm labor by a committee headed by Senator Thomas of Utah; and others on migration of citizens made by a committee of which Senator Tolan of California was chairman, are outstanding.

The easiest way to keep track of all of these is through the Catalog of Public Documents, a monthly publication of the Library of Congress.

**State publications:** Most states issue a wide variety of reports, yearbooks, and bulletins of value. These include publications on agriculture, livestock sanitation and regulation, feeds and feeding, seed inspection, mines, highways, public health, water supply, geology, taxation, legislation and laws, and other subjects. A handy way to keep track of these is through the monthly list of state publications, a periodical published by the Library of Congress in Washington.

**College and experiment station publications:** Agricultural colleges and experiment stations publish bulletins. These are often in three different series. One is of research publications, issued in small editions for use of research men only. A second is the regular bulletin series, usually based on experimental work, but written in such a manner that they can be read and used by farmers. A third is a circular series. This includes popular and nontechnical discussion of information of use to farmers or some special class and includes material from any recognized source. In addition the extension service usually publishes its own series of bulletins and circulars. Home economics is usually included along with

agriculture in any of these. Engineering colleges or divisions usually issue their own series of bulletins and other publications.

Many agricultural colleges also publish periodicals. For instance, Cornell University, the University of Illinois, Iowa State College, and the University of Minnesota—to cite examples. Each issues a monthly publication giving current news and discussions in the field of agricultural economics and farm management. A number of engineering experiment stations likewise have periodical publications. An outstanding example of this latter is *Engineering Experiment Station News*, published by Ohio State University. *The Kansas Industrialist* has long been another valuable college publication. A number of colleges publish extension magazines. Special mimeographed periodicals may be issued for garden clubs, florists, nurserymen, poultrymen, and other special classes of citizens.

Practically every land-grant college or university issues publicity and information releases and clip sheets for use of the press. In some cases, this material is sent out mainly by the extension service. At other institutions, it is sent out by the information service of the college or university. These releases go to daily and weekly papers and to farm and other publications. Often interested writers can get on the mailing lists. A writer visiting a college can usually obtain extra copies of recent releases which he may not have received.

Other particularly valuable publications are the annual reports of the experiment stations and of extension services. These are storehouses of information and invaluable to any writer. In recent years agricultural colleges have had copies of the reports of county land use planning committees. This has furnished a new type of information to writers never before gathered in any such handy form. Much of this material is as yet unused by feature writers. Tips for dozens of articles dealing with both farm and home can be found in these reports, gathered and written by farm men and women. Some of the Wisconsin county reports have been outstanding in the feature material they contained.

**Journals of societies:** Practically every special field of science engineering and technology has its own organization and its own

official journal or publication. Whatever the field—entomology, agronomy, floriculture, plant pathology, pomology, home economics, dairy science, vocational agriculture, poultry science, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, ceramics, highway engineering, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, and others—it has its own publication. Trade, industrial, and business organizations, too, have their own publications. Besides national publications of these types, many state or regional groups publish their own journals. All of these constitute a storehouse of material upon which a writer can draw. Many of these can be found in the college library, where they can be consulted. A writer may wish to subscribe to one or more in which he is especially interested.

**Yearbooks, annuals, and trade directories:** Writers must secure information in many different fields. They may want to know the officers of this or that organization. They need to know correct names of people and firms. They want to get in touch with manufacturers of products or equipment. They want names of people or firms in a certain city or locality which they are to visit. To serve these various purposes, a good many yearbooks and directories are available. Some are government publications; others are put out by organizations. Some are special editions of journals and publications, while others are annual reports. In some cases, they are published transactions of an annual meeting.

While it is not possible here to publish a complete list, the following will include some of the more widely used reference books of this type, classified somewhat roughly, which will give students an idea of the wealth of reference material available.

*Agriculture, Home Economics, and Related Fields*

*Yearbook United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)*

*Annual Reports of Bureaus and Officers of USDA*

*Workers in Subjects Pertaining to Agriculture in Land-Grant Colleges and Experiment Stations. (USDA)*

*Directory of Organization and Field Activities of the Department of Agriculture. (USDA)*

*RUS—Biographical Directory of Rural Leadership. (No recent edition)*

*Directory of Agricultural and Home Economics Leaders (Wilson)*

- Buyers' Guide* (Farm Implement News. Annual)  
*Tractor Field Book* (Farm Implement News. Annual)  
*The Red Tractor Book* (Implement and Tractor. Annual)  
*Who's Who in the Butter, Cheese, and Milk Industries* (American Butter Review. Annual)  
*American Rose Society Annual* (and other publications)  
*The Gladiolus* (New England Gladiolus Society. Annual)  
*Canners Directory* (National Canners' Association. Annual)  
*Annual Report, Vegetable Growers' Association of America, Inc.*  
*The American Fertilizer Hand Book.*  
*Proceedings of Annual Convention, American Seed Trade Association.*  
*Seed Trade Buyers' Guide and Directory.* (*Seed World.* Annual)  
*Horticultural Trade Directory* (A. T. De La Mare Co., Inc. Biennial)  
*Buyer's Guide for the Fruit Farm, American Fruit Grower.* (Annual issue)  
*Membership Directory of American Society of Agricultural Engineers.*  
*Standardized Plant Names* (1942 edition)  
*Engineering, Industry, and Business*  
*Thomas Register of Manufacturers*  
*Macrae's Blue Book*  
*Moody's Manual of Investments*  
*The Municipal Year Book*  
*Minerals Yearbook* (U. S. Mines Bureau)  
*Automotive Buyer's Guide* (Chilton)  
*Annual Review Number of American Exporter*  
*Passenger Progress Number of Railway Age*  
*Market Guide* (Editor and Publisher)  
*Yearbook of Journal of Engineering Education* (Society for Promotion of Engineering Education)  
*Directory Issues of American Society of Civil Engineers and equivalent directory issues for other engineering societies as mechanical, mining, and metallurgy, electrical, ceramics, and others*  
*Who's Who* (Now includes monthly supplement)

**Statistical volumes:** A good many of the references listed above contain statistical information. Many branches of the United

States Government issue statistics in printed and mimeographed information daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. Likewise, much state material is issued. Each writer should become familiar with such sources in his field. A few of the more important public and private statistical sources are as follows:

*Agricultural Statistics* (USDA. Annual)

*Crops and Markets* (USDA. Monthly)

*Statistical Abstract of US* (U. S. Commerce Dept. Annual)

*United States Census* (Covers wide range)

*Survey of Current Business* (U. S. Commerce Dept.)

*Annual Report of Chicago Board of Trade.*

*Drovers Journal Yearbook of Figures* (*Chicago Daily Drovers' Journal*)

*World Almanac*

**Abstracts and indexes:** Writers frequently wish to get the gist of technical publications to keep in touch and know whether they apply to their work. In the field of agriculture and home economics, the *Experiment Station Record*, published monthly by the United States Department of Agriculture, is by far the most outstanding. *The Engineering Index*, monthly and yearly, supplies brief abstracts as well as an index in the field of engineering. The greatest technical abstract service in the world is *Chemical Abstracts*, issued by the American Chemical Society. *Ceramic Abstracts* covers its own field. Most technical and scientific journals include abstracts as part of their editorial functions, and so do engineering and trade publications to a considerable extent. There are special abstracts published in some scientific fields.

Indexes to periodical and other literature are a big help in running down material. Besides indexed abstracts, there are special index services available at libraries. Some of these are:

*Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*

*The Agricultural Index*

*The Engineering Index*

*Art Index*

*Industrial Arts Index*

*Library of Congress Monthly List of State Publications*

*Catalog of United States Public Documents*

*Technical Book Review Index*

*The Bibliographic Index*

*Occupational Index*

*Current Biography* (monthly and cumulative)

*Facts On File* (weekly)

**Programs and catalogs:** Programs of meetings and conventions of many kinds of organizations often give tips for articles, contain information and names, and are valuable for filing away. In the chapter dealing with meetings, the annual program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science was mentioned as being a printed volume of several hundred pages. Often trade papers publish special issues in connection with conventions that are equivalent to yearbooks. The catalog of the International Live Stock Exposition at Chicago, of the International Flower Show at New York City, and similar documents are valuable as reference material.

The commercial catalogs of business firms and houses are a valuable part of the standard information which a technical writer uses constantly. The agricultural engineering writer may secure catalogs from implement houses, and the home economist may get similar material from manufacturers of household equipment, furniture, food supplies, and the like. The writer on garden topics can't get along without the catalogs from seed companies, nurseries, and manufacturers of garden supplies. An engineer in any field makes constant use of catalogs of equipment and materials. The scientific worker arranges for special catalogs of chemicals, biological supplies, instruments, and books.

These catalogs often contain spot news of new materials or new equipment. They contain descriptions of things in use. For instance, the seed or nursery catalog will describe a plant, give the exact color of a flower, give cultural directions. It will give the scientific name, as well as the common name, both correctly spelled. A writer may want to look up the exact term used to describe a part of a machine. The catalog may give it.

**Dictionary:** This needs no explanation. Any writer worthy of the name has one at his elbow and uses it. Writers in special fields learn that there are various scientific and special dictionaries available in those fields. The book, *Standardized Plant Names*, men-

tioned above as a reference book, is a plant dictionary as far as spelling is concerned. In *The American Fertilizer Hand Book* may be found a *Dictionary of Fertilizer Materials and Terms*. This section has been reprinted by the educational and research bureau of the U. S. Producers of By-Product Ammonia. These are examples of any number of such special dictionaries in technical lines.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Secure a list of available bulletins of your own state agricultural or engineering experiment station. Write to at least two other stations for lists of available bulletins.

2. Examine masters' and doctors' theses on file and find three ideas for possible feature articles. Members of the class may be assigned to different years. An index of each of these two classes of material can now be seen at the library.

3. Have a talk by a member of the reference staff of the college library on government documents and their use.

4. Make a list of publications in your state in one major field, preferably your own main interest—as agriculture, scientific, business or trade, engineering, women's interests.

5. Answer at least five advertisements in a magazine or journal in your major field which offer booklets free or for a nominal cost. Write for five trade catalogs that are free.

6. Make a complete list of all possible sources of printed information in your state in your own special field.

## CHAPTER 30

### GETTING THE STORY PUBLISHED

**D**R. SAMUEL JOHNSON remarked that "He is a fool who writes for anything save money," but, Dr. Johnson notwithstanding, there are other good reasons why the beginner in writing should try to get his stories into print.

It may be that the desire to earn money is the biggest force in actuating most of us to write articles for publication, but the factor of prestige which comes with successful writing should not be overlooked. The encouragement one gets from the sale of an article is the strongest stimulus to the beginner to write a second story. Beyond these personal reasons for trying to "place" one's stories, there is the larger reason that the material in the articles will never be made available and useful to other people if the articles do not get into print.

How to market one's articles after they are written is, then, as important a part of the writer's task as the construction of the story.

**Preparing copy:** The first essential in marketing a story is to have the manuscript in good form. All copy should be typewritten, double or triple spaced. Write only on one side of the paper and make a carbon copy for your own files.

In the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the manuscript place your name and address. In the upper right-hand corner, in figures, give the approximate number of words in the article. About a third of the way down the page place the title of the story, typed in capital letters, and centered, left to right. Below the title, write your name, also centered. Begin the story an inch or so below the name. Leave margins of an inch or more at each side and at the bottom of the page. It is well to place, below your address, the phrase "offered at your usual rates."

News stories are usually sent in by the writer without titles.

In a previous chapter on writing the news story, details as to news copy will be found.

At the top left-hand corner of the second and each succeeding page put one or two essential words from the title of the story as a clue to identify the page, and underneath, your name or initials. This should be flush with the left margin. Number the page at the top, in the center. Some writers repeat the entire title on each page, but that is not necessary. Indicate the end of the story in some way. Most writers do it this way: #####.

If a story is to be printed only after a certain date, a notice of this fact, in some such phrasing as "For release June 20," should be put above the title on the first page.

A story that is being syndicated, that is, offered to more than one publication at a time, should be so marked on the first page. The phrase, "Exclusive in your territory," is often used to indicate to the editor that the story is being offered to other editors but not in overlapping areas.

**Sending off the manuscript:** In mailing, send the manuscript flat, if it is a large one, or folded if it does not consist of many pages. Use a durable envelope addressed to the editor of the magazine.

With the manuscript enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope in which the article may be returned in case of rejection. If pictures or drawings accompany the article, put a piece of heavy cardboard into the envelope to prevent their being broken.

It is seldom necessary to write a letter to accompany the manuscript. When an article comes to an editor's desk, he knows without being told that it is sent to him as a contribution to his paper.

Sometimes, however, there are circumstances connected with the story which the editor should know. Such information may be put into a short letter, or it can be written in parentheses on the first page of the manuscript below the title.

**Markets for technical articles:** The best time to decide where one is going to send a story is before the story is written. In other words, stories should be very definitely planned and written for particular publications or types of publications.

Every magazine and newspaper has its own personality, its own

field of subject matter, its own circulation area, its own policies. A big part of the writer's task is to familiarize himself with as many magazines and newspapers as possible, studying them closely for the characteristics which distinguish them from other publications.

**Syndicates:** Syndicates do not constitute a particularly important market for free lance writers of technical stories because the bulk of their material is secured from regular writers and correspondents.

**Payment for articles:** What one is paid for a story depends largely upon the publication which accepts it. Payment ranges from nothing to as high as 30 cents or more a word—the latter very unusual, however. The national agricultural and women's magazines pay well. Many of them do not have a fixed rate of pay but adjust the recompense on the basis of the quality of the story, the prominence of the author, and the expense and difficulty involved in getting the story.

Most of the regional farm papers, however, have regular space rates ranging from a half cent to two or three cents a word. Others pay so much a line or a column inch.

It is the general rule among the women's magazines and national journals to pay for articles upon acceptance. Many of the state farm papers, however, do not pay for an article until it is published, and if it is never published the author receives nothing for his story.

There is no general rule which will apply to trade publications, but probably most of them pay for articles and news material sent in, after publication. Some of the leading engineering magazines pay on acceptance, but a good many others pay after publication.

An author should hear from a story which he has submitted to a magazine within three weeks. If by that time he has not received back the manuscript nor heard from the editor, he is justified in writing the editor a courteous note of inquiry about his manuscript, requesting its prompt return if it is not to be used.

**If at first you don't succeed:** There are half a hundred reasons, other than lack of merit, why editors reject manuscripts. A writer has no ground for discouragement if his story is rejected by the first editor to whom it is sent. The editor may be well stocked

with manuscripts, he may have recently bought a story similar to the one you sent in, your story may not fit in with the policy of the magazine, it may be too long or too short, it may be too local or not local enough—for any of these or many other reasons it may be unsuited to the magazine to which it is sent.

The printed slip of rejection with its “rejection does not imply lack of merit, but this has been found unsuited to our present needs,” does not necessarily mean anything else than exactly what it says. The manuscript should be put into another envelope and sent off to another editor. It is not fair, so to speak, to a story in which you have faith, to give it less than four or five chances for publication.

**Records of stories:** The writer who sends out more than an occasional story should use business methods in keeping track of his articles. First, of course, he should keep at least one carbon copy of his article. Second, in a ledger or a card file, he should keep a record of his stories. When a story is sent out an entry can be made in the ledger or a card filled out, giving the title of the story, the magazine to which it is sent, and the date. If the story is sold, the date and amount can be entered. If it comes back and is sent out again a second entry can be made.

**Some advice for beginner:** The beginning writer along technical lines will find it easiest to write, and likewise to sell, stories in his or her own special field. This will be true generally, though there is always a chance that the beginner may sell one or more stories anywhere.

The beginner will find that the stories easiest to sell are, first, those which have news value. These will be stories of a meeting, a convention, or results of an experiment recently completed. Or they may be stories of new structures built, of new construction completed, of a store or factory modernized, of successful new equipment or devices of any kind.

A second tip as to what an editor will buy is that he likes stories which have specific information along with news quality, even if there is no spot news element in the facts involved. Much of the material in this text is devoted to discussion of this very point.

A third suggestion to a beginner is that he is most likely to

succeed with short articles at first. Brief articles, often of anywhere from two to six paragraphs or from 100 up to 500 words, will sell much more readily than a longer feature article, no matter how well the feature is written. One reason is that the preference today in many magazines is for short articles. Another is that the editor usually arranges in advance for the writing of the long articles, and he prefers that they be written by someone who is an authority on the subject or by a writer upon whom he knows he can depend for adequate covering of the topic.

A fourth tip is to get and send in the story that an editor would not be likely to get in the usual course of events or one that will not be handled by the staff or a regular contributor. To illustrate, an important agricultural story in a state will be covered by one of the editorial staff of the state farm paper. But a writer can often send this story to the editor of a farm paper in an adjoining state who will be glad to get it, for he had not arranged to have it covered.

Finally, the beginner will have best success in selling to farm papers, trade papers, and magazines in special fields which run many articles of news or of news-experience type and which also use a wide variety of stories based on or accompanied by pictures. The beginner will not have much luck at first in selling to national general magazines, to women's magazines of large circulation, or to the more technical and more professional magazines and journals.

For writers who wish guidance in selling stories, the book, *The Writer's Market*, published by *The Writer's Digest*, 22 East 12th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, is the standard reference. This contains lists of 2,500 markets, with addresses, types of material wanted, and probably pay. It is revised frequently. The cost is \$3.00.

Another handy volume is *Photo-Markets*, edited by John P. Lyons. This lists and classifies about 2,000 different publications. It contains information both on photographic needs and on type of material used. Rates or prices paid for material is given for many of these. It is published by *Photo Markets*, Exchange Place, Hanover, Pennsylvania, and the current edition sells for 50 cents.

## CHAPTER 31

### PUBLICITY AND PUBLICITY RELATIONSHIPS

Let him who will preach to a congregation from a pulpit, but as for me, let me write to the multitudes through the columns of the press.—An old saying paraphrased.

God bless the man who first invented publicity.—Prayer of the hosts who seek publicity.

**E**VERYBODY with a cause or an idea, good, bad, or indifferent, or with some group or personal interest to promote, or with a bit of vanity to feed, is seeking publicity. At least, that is what the editor, looking up from his day's receipts of "free stuff," offered without stint and without price, will tell you if you ask him about publicity.

The chances are many times to one that the student of this text who gains some skill in writing for the press will sooner or later find himself prompted from within or without, to assist in promoting some movement or enterprise by writing about it for publication; it may be as a worker in a church building campaign, a Red Cross drive, a public entertainment, a farm organization, a woman's club, as a county agent or home demonstration agent, as a vocational teacher, as a worker in some public welfare activity, or in any one of scores of other connections.

But also, the field of publicity work, or public relations, has become increasingly attractive for men with skill in journalistic writing added to their other training. A good many such positions are found in the field of industry and business, and in state and national organizations and institutions of many kinds.

As far as the actual preparation of publicity stories is concerned, it should be done in the manner of the newspaper and magazine, and all of the preceding chapters of this book deal with that subject. But to do the job successfully and without arousing the sleeping lion of prejudice in the editor's sanctum is more than a matter of writing skillfully in journalistic style; it is very largely

a matter of correct understanding and of good relationships—an understanding of newspaper principles and relationships that are sincere and frank.

**A specific example:** The authors of this text have had opportunity to observe the way in which county agents and home demonstration agents in particular have handled the publicity and public relations work in connection with their jobs, over a good part of the United States in recent years. Some are doing outstanding work, while others do only routine or hack work.

One of the best examples that has come to our attention recently is that of Mary M. Leaming, home demonstration agent in Camden County, New Jersey. The stories of her work, told in sprightly and interesting manner and filled with timely information, are good models. In the October, 1941, issue of *Extension Service Review*, published by the United States Department of Agriculture, Miss Leaming tells the story of what she had been doing, in an article entitled "The Newspaper Works for Me." This article, which is a better chapter than we could write, because it is actual experience, is as follows:

#### THE NEWSPAPER WORKS FOR ME

How do you make a dent in the thinking of the people with regard to nutrition when you are only one agent in a big urban county like Camden County, N. J.? This was the question that faced me two years ago. Only one pair of hands and a population of 200,000. Meetings were well attended; local leadership was good, and support of local organizations was excellent; but current conditions made it urgent that an increasingly large number of people be reached.

The answer was the newspaper. Camden City has a large metropolitan paper, the *Camden Courier-Post*, the combined morning and afternoon circulation of which amounts to 90,000 daily, with the bulk of that circulation in Camden County.

With the cooperation of the extension editors at the college, a plan was evolved and presented to the newspaper management with whom most cordial relationships had previously been developed.

Acceptance of the plan meant the home demonstration agent's responsibility for seven columns of food-page material weekly—to be sent regularly, on time, and in proper form for publication. It was determined that this copy should include: (1) A "Homemakers' Question Box" composed of actual questions forwarded by readers; (2) timely informational stories relative to local New Jersey farm products and their use; (3) informational stories with regard to current

food industry developments and their relation to the homemaker; (4) a weekly 3-inch box story offering a timely publication; (5) a weekly low-cost menu; and (6) a feature story on any subject the home demonstration agent deemed wise.

Response was immediate. There was no need to worry about reader reaction. It grew. One week's copy has brought in as high as 800 fan letters.

The feature story particularly drew much comment. In it each week are two characters: Mrs. White, the bride, inexperienced and typical in reaction; and her next-door neighbor, Mrs. Jones, an intelligent, experienced homemaker, who has made a study of nutritional problems from a practical standpoint.

One woman wrote: "I am a Mrs. White. How I wish I lived next door to Mrs. Jones!" Another: "The Mrs. Jones stories are such a painless way to get such a lot of useful information." Other communications frequently say: "Send me the recipes Mrs. Jones used for potatoes" or whatever the current subject discussed involved.

When the local Philadelphia food-for-defense campaign, inaugurated by SMA last March, came along, I merely had to write the copy from the angle of using surplus commodities. The feature story explained the objectives; the box offered recipes using surplus commodities. Readers' questions naturally turned to use of suggested products; local farmers selling surplus commodities to the Government were glad to see their products pushed in the informational stories.

Time went on. Through newspaper columns, official requests of the Secretary of Agriculture were discussed and interpreted for practical use under local conditions. No special following had to be built up—readers looked for the column regularly, as was proved by their requests.

Results? The extension office has rendered service to hundreds who would not have attended meetings—who could not leave small children, who worked during the day, or who could not afford the bus fare sometimes necessary to get to meetings, as well as to hundreds who would never have known of the existence of such a service but who are now class members or cooperators.

The copy as written has obviously appealed to the low-income group. The following letters are typical of many:

"I should appreciate a menu for ten people ranging in age from one to forty-two years, lunches carried by six on a budget of \$12 to \$13 weekly."

"In reading the *Courier* this evening, I find a question I have so often thought of asking—the working out of a food budget. My allowance is \$20 a week, received every two weeks. I usually pay milk, bread, and other food bills this way. At the end of two weeks I find myself short and feel that this could be avoided if I could budget this \$40. There are six of us in the family, three adults and three husky children. I pack one lunch daily and pay 60 cents weekly insurance, a bill of \$2 weekly which will be settled soon, also telephone amounting to \$3.50 monthly. There is no garden, and there are no special diets. Any help you could give me so that I may have nourishing meals for all will be greatly appreciated."

It is obvious, too, that the news copy is followed by the young homemaker and the prospective homemaker. The following excerpt is typical:

"Please send me 'Meals for Two' and any other material you would give to a bride. I do need assistance. Have you any budget helps, such as how to plan a budget and what percentage to allot for various items?"

Through the columns people have learned of the wide scope of services attainable through the Extension Service and its supporting agencies in the United States Department of Agriculture and the college. Service rendered means support for this office—prestige, good will, and increasing appropriations.

Newspapers and food-for-defense campaigns must work together if any appreciable percentage of the total population of urban areas are to know and appreciate farm and industrial food problems in relation to nutrition, general homemaking problems, and total defense.

**Paid matter and free matter:** It is essential to understand and keep in mind that publicity material may be of a kind for which newspaper space ought to be bought, or of a kind that may properly be offered for publication without charge. Many of the prejudices and difficulties that arise in publicity enterprises are due to failure to appreciate that point.

For commercial purposes or near commercial purposes, seeking some monetary or other selfish advantage, space for publicity ought to be bought and paid for. Business men in the United States buy very great amounts of newspaper and magazine space, normally nearly a billion dollars worth of it a year, thus providing periodical publishers with an advertising income which is 65 to 75 per cent or more of their gross operating income, and making possible the circulation of wonderful publications at a low price. But unfortunately for the name of publicity, some business and other selfish interests systematically seek to get free publication of matter that is designed to benefit them commercially or otherwise, directly or indirectly. They sometimes hire skilled, high-salaried writers to dress up such matter in the guise of news or information, or to set up and "pull off" unusual "stunts" which will get them free space. Sometimes they seek to get considerable free "publicity" on the basis of their having bought more or less space for advertising. To both the editor and the publisher, and especially the former, the practices seem quite unethical and are in much disfavor. These practices are at the bottom of the very pronounced prejudice against all publicity matter, good or bad.

For the news activities and the purely informative, educational, and unselfish promotion purposes of many public or semipublic

organizations and movements which have the objective of general social, moral, or economic betterment within the community, state, or nation, newspaper and magazine space is not bought, except to a very inconsequential extent. Such organizations include farm groups, churches and other religious societies, Red Cross societies, parent-teacher associations, welfare movements, philanthropic enterprises, schools, colleges and universities, and the host of other activities which seek no selfish or commercial ends. Editors and publishers recognize that there is news in the work of these organizations and movements, and also acknowledge that insofar as the common welfare and not private profit is to be increased thereby, they are under some measure of obligation to publish information and promotion material that comes from such sources. Editors and publishers welcome the cooperation of the publicity writers who offer them such material.

While in some instances it may not be easy to distinguish between paid matter and free matter in publicity work, yet in the main it is not difficult. The real test has been suggested in the preceding discussion—does the particular item or article seek commercial or personal gain or advantage, or does it seek to promote a truly public welfare purpose? Generally the editor and publisher look upon all announcements of money-making enterprises as advertising to be paid for, even when the proceeds are to be used for public or semipublic good. They say, and with reason, that if hall or auditorium rentals, orchestras and bands, printed posters, special talent, and the like are to be paid for, then promotion announcements should likewise be paid for.

It behooves the person charged with publicity work to be thoroughly discriminating; it behooves him especially to be thoroughly frank and "square" and not to seek by one scheme or another to disguise "paid matter" as news. His real usefulness ends where such practices begin.

**Other aspects of the newspaper point of view:** It is important to understand still other aspects of the newspaper point of view. The newspaper is both a private, commercial enterprise and a semipublic institution. It must make money for its owners through its publication of news, informational and entertainment features,

and the like, and it believes it must also serve a public purpose without any expectation of immediate cash return from that service. There will, of course, be differences of opinion among newspaper publishers and editors and others as to how far either purpose should govern policies, but it is not intended to enter into that discussion here. It is sufficient to say that newspapers and magazines generally recognize the two purposes above stated, one commercial, the other quasi-public.

For the fulfillment of its purposes, the newspaper publishes first of all news, information, and entertaining material which it secures and pays for wholly on its own initiative and through its own effort, with the thought only of serving its readers and not any special interests, semipublic or private. This material it weighs and rejects or uses strictly upon the basis of its being good newspaper "stuff," of interest and value to its readers. This constitutes the great bulk of what it prints as reading matter (advertising not being under discussion here).

The newspaper also gives space, insofar as it can fairly do so, for the dissemination of news and information concerning the work and aims of general welfare enterprises of all kinds. This material is intended to promote, directly or indirectly, the special purposes of these enterprises, and it is furnished by them without any cost of initiative or money to the newspaper. It is commonly known in the editorial rooms as "free stuff" or publicity material. The editor accepts this material in a measure because he believes his publication should render public service, but again he must judge it for its interest and value to at least a considerable number of his readers. He may not hold, however, to such rigid standards in judging this material if it has important bearing on community welfare and development.

Whether one kind of material or another comes to the editor, he feels that he must deal with it more or less strictly on the basis of its news interest. That fact needs always to be borne in mind by those who seek newspaper cooperation for special purposes.

This further attitude of newspapers it is important to know: Because such a vast amount of "free stuff" is deposited upon the editor's desk every day, many times more than enough to fill all

his reading columns, and most of it written purely for the promotion of private interests, he is to some extent prejudiced against all of it. The present-day editor judges it more severely than his predecessors, because the flood of it is greater today than it has been before. The man or woman who would "get by" with material written in the interest of deserving community enterprises must make sure that there are in it vital news and information, clearly of interest and value to the editor's readers.

That is the whole meat of the cocoanut for those who in one connection or another may have occasion to contribute material to periodicals for the development of interest in the semipublic work they are doing. Some subordinate suggestions are likely to be of value, however, to those who face publicity problems.

**Recognize the newspaper's contribution:** It would be difficult, if not impossible, to promote successfully the work of any semi-public organization or movement without the generous cooperation of the press, and that fact ought to be understood. Many county farm organizations and county agents have learned that lesson, sometimes in an expensive way.

"We could not satisfactorily carry on our work if we did not have the fine, generous cooperation of the county newspapers," said one successful county agricultural agent in discussing his press and publicity relationships. "They give us a quick, convenient means of reaching all who need to be reached with our information and educational matter, which we could not do without and which we could not duplicate. Without pay, except the reward that comes to them in the long run through building up a more successful agriculture and a better rural life, they give us columns and pages of space for our news and information material and even much other matter of doubtful classification. That represents a contribution of hundreds and thousands of dollars a year as space is valued. In their respective fields the dailies and the farm journals do the same."

When county agricultural agents, home demonstration agents, and other similar workers are employed, considerable weight is given to their ability to write for the local press and to maintain good relations with it.

**Hang your stories on news pegs:** The news is always the thing

with newspapers, and the successful writer of publicity material seeks to put news value into it. In newspaper parlance, he finds a "news peg" on which to hang every story.

If a county agricultural agent wants to emphasize the benefits to be derived by individual farmers and farm communities through the local extension service or county farm organization he doesn't boldly praise the organization or service, if he is a skillful writer. Instead, he seeks out some prominent farmer who knows these values and gets from him an interview on the subject, or he will find in his records facts and statistics showing what happened to farm production and profits through the activities of the bureau. That is putting his publicity on a news basis—finding "news pegs" on which to hang his story. If a home demonstration agent wishes to arouse a community to the importance of hot lunches for the boys and girls of the consolidated school, she will dig up the facts about what hot lunches did for a neighboring school and hang her promotion story on that. The experience of a farmer with sweet clover is far better material for creating enthusiasm for the crop through the newspapers than a page of preachment. A Red Cross campaign for funds will pile up more money if built on human interest stories of its work in the local field than if it is based on general information about it. The editor will welcome such stories because they contain an element of news, but he will accept the other kind with unfriendliness, if at all. It is news, not propaganda, that he wants.

There ought to be no dearth of "news pegs" for the county agent or the home demonstration agent who is alert; they travel far and wide through their territory; they make many contacts; they establish relationships which open up news sources that would probably be closed to others. This holds true for anyone trying to do publicity work. Papers want news first, last, and always.

**Prepare professional copy:** Not only make sure that there is news value in what you offer the editor, but that it is skillfully written, according to his standards, and that the copy is clean and neat. Even if there is good news value in a story submitted to him, the editor will usually not have it rewritten if it is unskillfully done.

Over each story should be written a brief title which suggests

what is in the story. That helps the editor who handles it to estimate its value to him. Put this in the upper left hand corner of the first page.

**Provide "follow-up" as well as "advance" news:** Almost invariably those who flood the editor's desk with material in advance of a special event fail to give him a line about the affair after it is over. Of course, it may often be expected that the editor will send a staff member to cover the news, but even if he does, cooperation is much appreciated. This suggestion is especially important in dealing with publications which maintain only a small staff.

**Be an all-round cooperator:** While your chief interest in preparing material for the press may be to further the interests of the particular organization with which you are associated, you may well seek to cooperate with the editor in other ways. Especially, "tip him off" to other news than that which immediately concerns you, and if he asks you to do so, write it. That's merely a fair exchange of cooperation.

**Play fair with competing publications:** If big news breaks within the field of your work, make certain that it is fairly distributed. Or, if one good story breaks for the morning papers, see that another breaks for the afternoon papers. If you have both dailies and weeklies, remember that weeklies don't like to handle stale news or news that has already been printed by dailies. This means that sometimes some of the bigger stories should be held so that they will go in the dailies the same day that they go into the weeklies. Dailies usually hold a story until a release date if asked to do so.

**Get copy in early:** Newspapers are printed in a hurry, and when press time is near there is a big rush. An agricultural story that comes in late stands a fine chance of being crowded out by something of hot news value that comes in at the last minute. The weekly papers are always crowded for time on press day. A good time to send in news to a morning paper is shortly after noon of the day before its date of issue; and late in the afternoon is none too early to make sure of getting in material for the next

day's afternoon paper. Saturday morning is a good time for getting copy to the weekly that is printed the middle of the next week.

**Some helpful hints:** Sometimes news can be made by giving opinions on matters of moment. The views of a farm organization president on some question of the moment will be viewed as good news by an editor. Often some national or distant news has a local angle that can be turned into a local publicity news story. Plan ahead on publicity. For instance, if a meeting is to be held, get advance copies of speeches or reports and give them to the reporters in plenty of time.

Don't send out too much publicity. Know about how much papers can use. It is much better to send material only when there is something of real news value than to send it out every day or every week regardless of the quality of the news or material. Don't send out stories that are too long. Many times a news story of two or three paragraphs will get into print when a yarn padded out to a column will only find the wastebasket. Don't exaggerate, but tell facts accurately. Don't try to cover up part of a news story that may seem unpleasant. Give the newspapers all the facts, fairly told. Play up news, action, events, rather than organizations or names of officers, unless they are news.

**Interpret news:** If news is sent to farm papers, particularly, it is often advisable to send more than just the bare current news facts. Many times a short feature article, in which the background, history, or interpretation is added to the timely news element, will give an added value to publicity material. This is particularly true of news of agricultural organizations. A summary of progress of the state or county farm or other organization, an account of five years of progress in the cooperative, a story of the year's achievements in county club work or of project work in the vocational agriculture or home economics classes—these are examples.

**Make service the keynote:** Most organizations and movements asking for publicity are built on the idea of service. Publicity for these enterprises should likewise be carried out with this idea of service in mind, rather than that of securing free advertising or something for nothing. If the man who furnishes publicity ma-

terial to a newspaper or magazine keeps in mind that, in supplying news, he may render a service to that publication, he can win the respect and support of an editor much more readily. Likewise, if he keeps in mind that he owes a service both to members of his organization and to the general reading public to supply them with news of what his organization is doing, he is much more likely to send to the papers what he should. This idea of service, carried out by county agent, vocational teacher, manager of a cooperative, or publicity director of any farm, women's, trade, or technical group, will lend dignity to his work and cause his material to be received with more respect than the usual run of free material that comes to an editor's desk. Information service, rather than publicity work, would be a preferable term to apply.

**Make use of this text:** This text has been prepared with publicity work in mind as well as that of classroom teaching. If one has publicity work to do for daily and weekly papers, or for any type of periodical publication, the best instruction he can find is to peruse the chapters herein on news. If it is publicity that goes to a farm paper or magazine, the chapters on feature writing will furnish additional details as to how to go about it.

## CHAPTER 32

### ETHICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF TECHNICAL WRITING

THE workers in all fields of journalism carry the weight of responsibility of being accurate, but one is tempted to say that the writer on technical and scientific subjects must put into his work, in an especially high degree, the qualities of honesty, sincerity, and accuracy.

For such a writer, in much of what he writes, is dealing with matter which will be relied upon by his readers for guidance in the affairs of their business and homes. Further, such a writer must himself be in a measure a scientist—at least he is the mouth-piece of science—and unless he has the scrupulousness of the scientist he will many times do more harm than good, not only to his readers, but to the science about which he writes.

An ethic for a writer in this field should be first of all characterized by sincerity of purpose. The writer needs to envisage his function—that of translating, making available, to the many, the contributions of the leaders of science and technology. His is a task of such importance and influence that it is worthy of the sincerest and most painstaking effort.

This sincerity should manifest itself in a respect for one's work, a feeling that the job is an important and worthy one, and in a determination to safeguard by every precaution the accuracy of what one writes.

The last point is worthy of a word of further emphasis. It is a wise writer who recognizes the fallibility of his own memory, of the testimony of people from whom he gets information, and of many printed sources of information. With such a scepticism he will not be satisfied with what he has written unless he *knows* that it is accurate. He will cultivate the habit of checking everything in his stories about which there is any chance of error. He

will check with the person from whom he got the information, with authoritative printed sources, with other people.

**Writer's duty to editor:** The writer has a duty not only to his readers but also to the editor to whom he sends his stories or on whose staff he works. The editor, in the nature of the case, has to presume that material sent to him by a writer is accurate and reliable. The editor cannot himself be an expert on every subject nor can he check the details of particular stories sent to him. In most cases he has to be dependent on the probity of the writer.

When a writer sends a story to an editor, unless he specifies otherwise, he implies that he is offering an exclusive story, that is a story which has not at the same time been offered to any other editor. It is unethical to submit the same or a nearly identical story to two or more editors at the same time, unless this fact is so indicated on the manuscript.

**Crediting sources of material:** The ethics of authorship demands that a writer shall give credit to other authors or investigators for material of theirs which he uses. The safe plan is to secure permission to use such material, if it is more than a short quotation, and then to make reference to the original author when the material is used. This does not apply, of course, to matters of common knowledge.

It is especially true when making use of material that is copyrighted in a book or magazine. A request for permission to quote should be made of the owner of the copyright, usually the book or magazine publisher. Some well-known writers, however, copyright their own material also, and in that case it is necessary to ask permission of the author. Student writers are sometimes careless in making use of such copyrighted material. If what they write should be published, they would be liable to prosecution for violation of a Federal law, with possible penalty of fine or prison sentence if convicted.

**Selling rewritten stories:** There is frequently a question as to the ethical right of an author to rewrite a story which he has already sold and offer it for publication to another magazine or paper. It is impossible to draw a rule which can always apply in

this connection, but this thought should guide the writer: When he sells an article to a publication he has sold all ownership rights to that article—not necessarily to the ideas which the article contains, but to the particular form in which those ideas are presented. He would not then be within his rights to sell a copy or a superficial variant of the story to another publication, but he would have the right to employ some of the ideas in building another story; and he may reserve second publication rights.

**Respecting confidences:** It is a commonplace of newspapering that the best stories never get into print. The good reporter learns a great deal more than he puts into his stories. He is restrained not only by expediency and the policies of his paper but also by respect for confidences.

The reporter has in some respects the same professional relationship to the people from whom he gets news as the doctor or lawyer has to his patrons. Information that is given to him as a private individual, as a friend or with the proviso that it is not for publication, cannot be used in a story, unless before the confidence is given the reporter makes clear that what he is told is to be so used. Many times the reporter should go even further than this. Not infrequently in the course of an interview the person being interviewed will make remarks which upon second thought he would not want to appear in print. In such a case the reporter should endeavor to protect his informant and either leave out of his story material which the informant would not want to appear or get his specific approval of its use.

**Fictionizing:** May the writer of news and magazine stories invent incidents, descriptions, conversations, and so forth to illustrate points in his own story?

It is not easy to lay down a rule in answer to this question. Fictionizing is ethical under at least two conditions: When the fiction is obvious to the reader and when the fiction is used not for its own sake but to project an idea in a more effective manner than could otherwise be done.

It is with fiction that purports to be fact that difficulty arises. There is no ethical excuse for the invention of fictitious incidents for their own sake. To write a news or feature story out of whole

cloth is dishonest. Hoaxes have not been unknown to newspapering, and in years gone by the bright reporter of fertile imagination was considered a distinct asset to a paper. It is safe to say, however, in spite of much contemporary distortion of the news, that such a reporter is an undesirable on the staffs of most newspapers and magazines.

Oftentimes, however, a writer wishes to put an idea in terms of a concrete incident, and to do so he resorts to fictionizing. If such fictions are employed to give greater effectiveness to the idea rather than to misinform the reader, they may be permissible.

**Release dates:** The observance of release dates is normally a problem of the editor rather than the staff member or free lance writer. A release date is a statement, either on a manuscript or in an accompanying instruction, that the story is not to be published until a certain specified time. The recipient of the story is under an ethical obligation to respect this release.

**Subsidized stories:** Under ordinary conditions a writer should not accept pay for a story from any other source than the newspaper or magazine which buys the story or from which he draws his salary. This is especially true of members of newspaper or magazine staffs. It is not unusual for interests of one kind or another to offer a writer pay to prepare a story and get it into publication. To accept such offers is unethical except with the knowledge and consent of the editor for whom one is working.

**Plagiarism\*:** Plagiarism in writing is passing off as one's own something that has been written by another. It is both against plagiarism and the piracy of another's work that the copyright laws are invoked.

While it is recognized that a limited amount of appropriation from the work of another, if he is given credit, is permissible, the question of how extensive the appropriation may be is difficult to determine. In "The Law of the Press," by William G. Hale, a statement from the court in the case of *Story vs. Holcombe* concerning infringement of copyright is quoted:

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\*The paragraphs on plagiarism, libel and copyright are reproduced from "A Deskbook of Style" by Beckman and Converse (The Collegiate Press, Inc., Ames, Iowa).

“The infringement of a copyright does not depend so much upon the length of the extracts as upon their value. If they embody the spirit and force of the work in a few pages, they take from it that in which its chief value consists. . . .”

Legally, then, the appropriation of another's work must be so limited that the appropriation runs no danger of superseding the original or of undermining its value as a literary property. Ethically, appropriation may or may not be justified, depending on the manner and spirit in which the appropriation is made. A writer should stay on the side of safety and honesty and should always accord the courtesy of a credit to the author of the original work. If it is desired to reproduce considerable amounts of material from the work of another, consent should be secured of the author, or the holder of the copyright, if it is copyrighted.

**Libel:** In “The Law of the Press” William G. Hale defines civil libel as “defamation which appeals to the eye. It consists of written or printed matter, of a picture or effigy, which holds a person up to public hatred, contempt or ridicule, or which imputes to one shortcomings in his trade, office, calling, or profession.”

Criminal libel, it is pointed out in the same book, differs from civil libel, apart from rules as to publication, in one major particular.

“Civil libel is confined to defamation of a living person whereas criminal libel includes as well holding a deceased person up to hatred, ridicule, or contempt.”

Broadly speaking, there are three defenses against a libel action: To prove that the allegedly libelous material, for the publication of which action was brought, is true; to prove that the publication was privileged, that is, of a character permitted under the law; to prove that the publication was an innocent mistake. The latter constitutes a defense “in mitigation of damages,” and while this defense does not establish innocence of the offense it does lessen the danger of punitive damages.

One publishes material of a libelous nature at his peril. The facts that the publication was accidental, that it was not intended maliciously, that it was copied from another source, that it is qualified by such phrases as “it is alleged” or “it is rumored” do

not relieve the author of the statement of accountability under the law.

**Copyright law of the United States:** (Statement approved by C. L. Bouvé, register of copyrights, Aug. 11, 1937): The copyright law approved March 4, 1909, effective on July 1, 1909, provides that the application for registration of any work "shall specify to which of the following classes the work in which copyright is claimed belongs."

- (a) Books, including composite and cyclopædic works, directories, gazetteers and other compilations. The term book includes pamphlets, separate poems or single pages;
- (b) Periodicals, newspapers;
- (c) Lectures, sermons, addresses, prepared for oral delivery;
- (d) Dramatic or dramatico-musical compositions;
- (e) Musical compositions;
- (f) Maps;
- (g) Works of art; models or designs for works of art;
- (h) Reproductions of a work of art;
- (i) Drawings or plastic works of a scientific or technical character;
- (j) Photographs;
- (k) Prints and pictorial illustrations;
- (l) Motion picture photoplays;
- (m) Motion pictures other than photoplays.

The law expressly requires that the application for registration of any article should distinctly specify to which one of these classes the work in which copyright is claimed belongs. An article is not usually entitled to registration unless it is reasonably possible to classify under one or the other of the above designations named in the statute.

**The term of copyright:** Under the laws of the United States the original term of a copyright runs for a period of twenty-eight years. However, at the expiration of that time it may be renewed for a further term of twenty-eight years. Renewal registration can be made only during the last year of the first term of copyright, and all renewals will be for the additional term of twenty-eight years, the total possible term, including renewal, being fifty-six years.

The copyright term begins on the date of publication. In the

case of works not reproduced for sale, the copyright term begins on the date of the deposit of copies.

Further information as to steps necessary for securing copyright may be obtained from the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. He will furnish the necessary information and forms on request and without charge.



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