

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.

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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.

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I couldn't be so un gallant 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*.