

Typography and Position

MOST NEWSPAPER COLUMNS are easy to read, and their appeal is broader than that of most other journalistic offerings. Readers approach them in a spirit of relaxation, often before they have seen any other part of a paper. Yet these readers are alert for novel ideas, chuckles, arguments, and barbed comment.

The columnist's style and his message should not be impeded by the typography of the material. Readers should "hear" his characteristic tones and get his ideas without being aware of type faces as such. They should be aware of his emphatic phrases without noting his indentions, bold-face type, and other mechanical factors. There should be no squinting at type which is too small, too dim, or over-inked. And typographical errors put a proud columnist in an undignified position.

Typography is not of first importance in column conducting, but it is worth some study. Readability is a timely subject in this age of radio, television, facsimile, colorful magazines, and other rivals for readers' attention. Recent studies have shown that

TYPE

Old-style Roman type is still preferred for straight matter in columns. It is a part of the heritage of everyone who attended the public schools. It carries the columnist's message without ostentation and with maximum readability. Type for column headings must be selected for character count and size, or it can be hand-drawn and sized by the engraver's camera. Such type, however, can be chosen from contemporary families which suggest the personal message of handwriting—from delicately feminine to rugged masculine. However, column names sometimes demand typography which illustrates a clever idea. Again, it is best to call in a competent artist.



Roamin'
the
Range

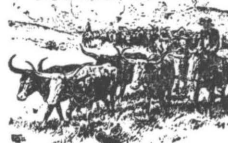
Farmer Peck's Wife

Down on the Farm of
Mrs. Ray W. Peck

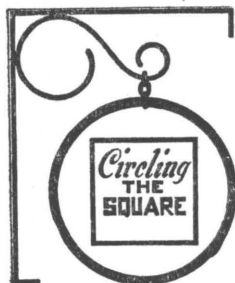


TRAIL DUST

By
DOUGLAS MEADOR



Sketchbook...



Looking 'Em Over
FROM WEEK TO WEEK
WITH W. H. C.



"CLIMBIN'
FENCES"

By
BOB
GREGG



Typical column headings

readers use almost any excuse — even a subhead or a bold-face paragraph — to leave a story in which their interest lags. But, on the other hand, gray body type is a monotone not very well suited to a column's change of pace.

Column typography involves the headings, body type, illustrations, spacing and width, dashes, by-lines and signatures, position, and various other factors. Usually it is letterpress printing which is involved. Columnists of offset papers could, however, achieve unusual effects — sketches, marginal notes, etc. — at little added cost.

Columns are not likely to be better printed than other parts of a paper, although at their inception special art work may have been bought for the headings. These standing heads are too often neglected. Zincs may be damaged and casts may be worn and not replaced. Engraved lines may be so fine that they quickly become clogged with lint, dirt, and ink. Yet there are many well maintained headings which are bright and clean year after year. Some state press associations have instituted campaigns to clean up nameplates, mastheads, ears, signature cuts, and standing heads.

Enthusiasm for a column heading is usually high in the beginning. However, some clever headings, like some gaudy store fronts, do not retain their appeal. Like a catchy song, a heading may offend by too much attention to its devices. A less original heading may prove easier to live with.

Long headings may be workable in two columns, but not in twelve picas. Very short ones may be difficult to set in foundry type, although they are quite useable in art work. Of several hundred column headings within the view of this writer at the moment, fewer than half are constructed of machine set slugs or foundry type. The type headings usually

A Kentucky school superintendent fired five times at a burglar, but missed him every time. The professor needs to do some reviewing on trigger-nometry. — Thomaston (Ga.) Times.

Applause is about the best interruption we know. — Napoleon (Ohio) Signal.

Think twice before you speak — especially if you intend to say what you think. — Rothsay (Minn.) Argus.

SEEN and HEARD ON MAIN STREET



The Editor's



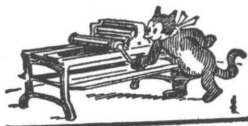
Uneasy Chair



The SPECTATOR

SCOUTS PLAN TRIP
STARTS NEW FEATURE
SCHEDULE GIVEN
ROTARY OBSERVES XMAS

the office cat



SUN Beams



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ G.I. Round-Up



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

'awkins Talkin'

"I know not what the truth may be,
I only tell it as it's told to me." Anon

Most columns are twelve picas wide.

have full or partial rule borders. The tendency is away from full borders.

Most columns are twelve picas wide. Not many words can be used in this width. Yet the column frequently must, in make-up patterns, have the strength of a top-of-column headline. Heading combinations in type include:

1. A single word, centered. If a long word, it usually is in caps and lower case; if short, it likely will be in all-caps. For contrast, this type should differ from the faces of the headline schedule if the units are to be positioned together.

2. Two lines, centered or flush left. One of these may carry only the word *the*. The second may be in all-caps to even it with the two sides or the top line if full.

3. Odd effects, such as setting the first and last letter of a word in caps larger than the rest of the word. The appearance usually is artificial.

4. A similar effect, with one large capital standing as the first letter of two words.

5. Ordinary type, but jumbled or otherwise twisted into irregular shapes.

6. Cursive type, to suggest the personal touch of hand-written words.

7. Combinations with halftones or art work. In some of these the type is foundry or machine; in others it is in hand-drawn imitation of foundry type. Reversed cuts give a harsh look, but reversed type in halftone shades is currently popular.

Caricatures of columnists, done in line cuts, are fairly common. They print well, and last longer than small halftones. Some have large heads and small bodies.

Artist-made headings are flexible and may better suggest the tone of a column. However, in too many cases some free-lance letterer has only the words of

VARIATIONS

Column headings need not always look the same. If the columnist's picture is in the heading, or his caricature, the people will not expect a change of face. Why not surprise them by running a smiling face when news is good — very good — and a wry face when news is bad; a brow-mopping face when it is hot, a steam-blowing face when it is cold. . . . A few papers have lately introduced changes in nameplates, reflecting the weather, and some have run raindrops across Page One after a long awaited downpour.

Educated is that which if a school teacher isn't he is sure gonna be when the students get done learnin' him. — St. John (Kans.) News.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Type masses in columns can be broken up by pictures, but halftones seldom are effective in small size. Full-width cuts interrupt reading of the type, while sliver cuts reduce detail too much, with the single exception of a large head. Of all illustrations, the line cut prints best in most newspapers. But even here the lines must not be reduced too much.

The shortest perceptible unit of time is that between the traffic light's change and the honk from the driver behind you.—
Niagara Falls (N. Y.) Review.

the column before him and no appreciation of the make-up of the paper as a whole. In his inexperience he may make the lines too thin, or too black, and the sketch too deep. A heading designed for two columns in width may not be appropriate in one-column reduction. The artist should know all the facts. These include a knowledge of the headline schedule and of the position in which the column will be run.

Columns run on Page 1, or alone elsewhere, can stand out sharply and still be in good taste. But on an editorial page it may be desirable to achieve a common motif in the standing heads. Cuts drawn from stock and from advertising services may be lacking in harmony with a paper's basic typography. Small line cuts surrounded by white space appear amateurish. Boxing them may be necessary.

In many line drawings one finds a chamber of commerce influence. In one are palm trees, citrus fruits, cotton, oil wells, and three types of transportation. That columnist is proud of his valley. In another a line cut of a cowboy and horse has an up-thrown lariat which ropes the type of the word "Round-up."

Column headings of type and rule can be made up in small print shops, but typography of distinction or unusual effects can be done better in specialized composition shops. The added cost of a heading done by people who serve advertisers and advertising agencies is an investment in appearance, satisfaction, and sustained readership.

Printers who fashion heads in small shops should bow to the requirements for harmony or harmonious contrast. Both in type and in rules, weight harmony and design harmony are important. One sees too many black rules combined with delicate scripts and too many thin rules with heavy type. Similarly, straight borders which may harmonize with the sans

serif and square serif types may appear stiff and out of place when used with scripts and cursives. Although headings are not bound to the close harmonies of a headline schedule, they do not have the freedom of advertising blocks, which may be isolated in white space.

Rhythm is a desirable quality in standing heads running on the same page. This may be carried out through repetition of a type, a wavy rule, a black dot, a thumbnail cut, or other typographical device.

Perhaps it should be added here that column headings are subject to the laws and rules of English and headline structure. Split phrases, dangling modifiers and prepositional endings usually are avoided. Nevertheless, contractions and coined words are sometimes used.

Newspapers having more than one edition sometimes use column headings in more than one width. If it appears on Page 1 daily or at mid-week in twelve picas, it may change to two-column width on Sundays. Sometimes the change is accompanied by variations in content. Features are favored in the wider width, although sometimes the type is raised to ten-point and set two columns wide. A rather rare innovation is the reduction of a column heading to about six picas so that it may be used as an inset by-line on special features by the same author. A highly popular columnist no doubt could pull much of his following with any printing of his headings, but some discretion is advisable. Reprinting of column headings and some body type in advertising is noted, especially when a columnist interviews a merchant on his trip to market.

FEW DEVICES NEEDED IN BODY TYPE

An ordinary conversational tone is represented by body type. It is good enough for the folksy style of most columnists, providing paragraphs are short. A

Trying to talk to farmers nowadays is like trying to rope a yearling in a five-section pasture on foot. They are as busy as a bobtail mule in fly time, trying to get in their wheat between thunder showers. — Amarillo (Tex.) Globe.

Another thing about being poor is that your kids in your old age don't break your heart by asking a court to declare you incompetent. — Lawrenceburg (Tenn.) Democrat-Union.

minimum of odd effects makes reading easier. Tricks are poor substitutes for clever words. However, printing of an animated conversation, talk, or argument requires some evidence of spirit. Type is flexibly suited to these distinctions of tone. Some standard devices of the typographer include:

Yes, Mrs. Gildersleeve, our girdles come in five sizes . . . small, medium, large, WOW, and YE GODS! — Craig (Colo.) Empire-Courier.

1. *Indentions.* Indenting an occasional paragraph provides a break in the regularity of typography, but readers will attach more importance to indentions if the subject matter is varied. To give unusual treatment to an ordinary statement is another version of crying "Wolf!"

2. *Bold-face.* **Emphatic statements, key paragraphs, and certain types of recurring material are more effective in bold-face type, usually indented. But blackened type is lower in readability and should not be used lavishly. Variations are use of bold-face in single words, names, top lines, and phrases the columnist wishes to emphasize.**

3. *Italics.* *Italic type is unavailable in body type size in many small shops. Effective for emphasis on single words or phrases, it is hard to read in full paragraphs.*

4. *All-caps.* Used occasionally, these may be quite effective in either light or bold faces. **BUT ALL-CAP LINES ARE HARD TO READ AND IN GENERAL SHOULD BE AVOIDED.**

5. *Initial letters.* These take more time to set, and time is not as plentiful in small shops as many people imagine. A single initial may dress up the first paragraph of an essay-type column.

It usually is followed by two or three words in all-caps. (See the initial letters used in this book at the opening of each chapter.) Sometimes an initial letter is used whenever the



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subject changes. Use of such a letter in every paragraph destroys the effect.

6. *Leading.* Most columns are set in body type with normal leading. Seven or eight-point type leaded one point is most often found. Ten-point type, set in 18-pica or 24½-pica width, can take two points of leading. Nine-point type on a ten-point base is seen. Body type set solid gives a crowded effect.

7. *Dashes.* Some publishers have dropped all dashes; others would as soon leave off their neckties at church. Some columnists devise ornamental dashes — names, initials, slogans, etc., centered in agate type. One paper uses five “z”s centered. The connotation seems dubious. In lieu of dashes, some printers substitute ornamental dots, paragraph signs, stars, short lengths of Oxford rule, and combinations of dashes and “o”s. An effect which calls attention to itself may be good promotion, but bad typography.

8. *Numbering.* One columnist runs thirteen numbered items each week. The reason is found in his title, “Baker’s Dozen.” Similar are “Six Bits.”

The over-all typography of a column should be suggestive of its contents. If paragraphs are short and subject changes frequent, some indenting or other use of contrast may be desirable. Sparkling prose, however, needs only the eye relief of short paragraphs to be well read. A variety column offers more opportunity for innovations within the spirit of the subject matter. Use of a short poem or several one-sentence pithy paragraphs has much to recommend it. Cluttering a column with typographic oddities wins no applause from an average reader, especially after the newness wears off.

In most small papers, use of line and halftone cuts in columns and editorials is rare, although the sepa-

Dachshunds are not to be recommended as pets this time of year. They keep the door open too long, going in and out, thereby letting in flies.—
O. C. Kelley, Onawa (Iowa)
Sentinel.

A man, getting his first peek through the Palomar telescope, exclaimed, “God!” A professor turned to him and said, “Pretty good telescope, isn’t it?”—
J. O. Jewett, Fairfield (Calif.)
Republican.

To live longer and healthier and get ahead in the world, stop thinking so much, a British surgeon advises. That's something to think about.—Wellington (Tex.) *Leader*.

Just as I swore I'd quit using puns, a Texas judge sends a girdle thief up for a stretch.—Al Hinds, Paducah (Tex). *Post*.

Some men are known by their deeds, others by their mortgages.—Berkeley (Calif.) *Courier*.

rate editorial cartoon—usually syndicate—is not hard to find. And the readership of news photos is everywhere recognized. People who do no more than glance at the title of editorials might be persuaded to stop and read if pictures made the subject more challenging. Columnists sometimes use small line cuts from advertising services. Stock cuts are offered by engravers in great abundance. These are topical, but not timely in the usual sense.

You're writing about dogs? Why not insert a small cut of a dachshund, fox terrier, or some other pooch? And hats? Cuts are available to suggest most any shade of opinion—yours—about hats. You also will find assortments of stars, dots, flags, mistletoe, and ornamental borders. These are for the special occasions when the ads are colorful in seasonal illustrations.

Inquiring photographers have long made use of thumbnail cuts. Alone, they cost as much as a twelve-pica cut. An economy procedure is to mount a row of pictures of uniform size, order one cut, then have your tinsmith snip the cuts apart. Or you can order a mat, make a cast, and saw the cuts out in the composing room. A one-column cut may be inserted in a column, but some writers object to its bulk as compared to the heading. However, such cuts can be run alongside a column and reference made to them.

When columnists turn promoters they need the punch of graphic presentations. A map may be demanded. When a campaign lags, a "thermometer" of progress may be made of type-high rule. A resourceful columnist can think of many devices. And when it is time to extend Christmas Greetings, he may fill an entire column with a 72-point "MERRY CHRISTMAS" with the word spelled vertically. But a year

later he will have an entirely different typographical device.

The typography of by-lines reveals no standard practice. Most columnists are well-known. They may use an ordinary by-line, but popular substitutes are "Mac's Musings," "Snooter Knows," "The Old Professor," and others which cause the writer to be called, on the street, by his pseudonym. A few columns are followed by names in light caps or by cut signatures.

Although clowning is still a part of columning, the fad has weakened in recent years. It is fortunate that typographic high jinks is not very common. For type, said Beatrice Warde, noted English typographer, "should be invisible." Readers should see the message, not the letters and the design. But even this "invisible" type is capable of style, and change of pace, and minor niceties of design which attract readers.

TOP OF COLUMN POSITIONS PREFERRED

The typical small-city column starts at the top of a newspaper page and runs down beyond the half-way point. Some are shorter, however, while others fill a column, or even more. Since Brisbane, many columns have taken Column 1, Page 1. When publishers are the columnists, the Page 1 position seems appropriate; otherwise, the influential position might appear to out-weigh an inside editorial page. There are exceptions, of course. Many news editors and a few reporters are given Page 1 space. No pulpit in town is of greater potential influence.

Inside page columns also normally take top-of-column positions. But some begin under cartoons or other features. A position preferred by some writers is just inside the paper — at the top of Page 2 in the first two columns. A two-column heading is strong

A local man has a new way to moisten stamps. With several thousand liquor stamps to affix to bottles, he rubs them on an ice cube.—John E. Hoffbauer, Brainerd (Minn.) *Journal-Press*.

A man who saves for a rainy day gets a lot of bad weather reports from his relatives.—Raymond Duncan, Ellaville (Ga.) *Sun*.

The more alert jewelers are limiting the installment sales on engagement rings to get the money collected before alimony payments start. — *Langdon* (N. D.) *Republican*.

enough to hold its appeal against cuts and spread headlines on the same page.

On the editorial page, the personal column usually is complementary to double-column editorials, on the opposite side of the page — or sometimes 18-point width is used — but when used side by side one should be in sharp contrast to the other. If the editorials are set double column in width, the personal column can be twelve picas wide. Occasionally editorials are set in twelve ems and the column is widened. Short columns and groups of paragraphs are spotted on the page as make-up demands.

A column is what the name implies — a vertical stack of type lines. It is true to its name when the column is full and unbroken. Running the type out from under its head, into an adjoining column, is frowned upon. Fitting copy to a given space is not usually a problem. But some writers do have the requirement of a certain number of words. It is easy to kill out, or set aside, a few short paragraphs. A reserve of timeless bits is kept on hand. Small-city columnists have so much freedom in choice of subjects that filling a space is not the problem. Time, if it can be had, quickly converts ideas and observations into copy. Yet in the absence of a systematic way of producing a column, the floor men are likely to gaze at an empty strip in the chase until near press time.

Since a column is a continuing feature, its location in the paper should be consistent. Readers don't like to hunt for favorite features. The personal column is likely to run in the same place each week — a place on Page 1 or the editorial page where it won't be bumped by advertising.