

# J-SCHOOL'S 75<sup>th</sup>

**THIS YEAR MARKS** the 75th anniversary of UMC's School of Journalism, the first school of its kind in the world.

The celebration began during the spring 1983 journalism week, which featured ABC's Ted Koppel and his late-night show "Viewpoint" broadcast live from Jesse Hall. It has continued throughout the school year with the Distinguished Alumni Lecture Series and will culminate with this year's journalism week April 13-19.

The Journalism School was started

in 1908 by newspaperman Walter Williams, who was dean of the school until 1935. Williams was devoted to high quality journalism and had rigorous standards for the students he guided. He wrote much of what he believed into his Journalist's Creed.

"I believe in the profession of Journalism," the creed begins. "I believe that the public journal is a public trust . . . I believe that clear thinking and clear statement, accuracy, and fairness, are fundamental to good journalism. I believe that a journalist should write only what he holds in his heart to be true . . ."

"Those of us who were fortunate enough to learn the ethics of journalism from the founding dean went forth like knights in shining armor in search of the Holy Grail—the journalist's unending search for the truth. With the Journalist's Creed in one hand and a flaming sword in the other, we marched out to save the world from evil," says Dorothy Roe Lewis, a 1924 graduate.

Williams' creed "symbolizes some of the applied idealism basic to a Missouri journalism education," says Christy C. Bulkeley, 1964 graduate and publisher of the Danville, Ill. *Commercial News*. "The creed recognizes—and describes tough standards for—the newspaper in its many roles. It seldom provides the exact answer. What set of principles can?"

**WILLIAMS' CREED** has influenced more than 13,000 Missouri journalism graduates over the past 75 years. Today, the school can claim as former students innumerable famous journalists working in every area of the profession.

The school's new dean, James D. Atwater, wants to continue the tradition of the creed by offering a specific course in ethics that would guide students throughout their journalism careers. "It's not enough to have a good sense of personal ethics. The devil comes in many guises 20 minutes before deadline," he says.—*Julie Barbeau*



**ELMER  
LOWER**

The former head of ABC News served as dean during the 1982-83 year.

**IT WAS A DIFFERENT WORLD** when those of us in the 25th anniversary graduation class of the School of Journalism sweated our way through commencement ceremonies in the torpid heat of Brewer Field House.

The date was June 9, 1933 at the depth of the Great Depression. Franklin D. Roosevelt had been president for three months. Congress had passed a score of new laws written by FDR's New Dealers, but the main effect the new administration had had on college students up to that point was financial. When Roosevelt closed the banks two days after his inauguration, he froze what little cash we had. And we couldn't get it to for at least a week. Some banks never reopened.

I recall that I had 75 cents in my pocket, a \$15 allowance check from my sister and \$35 in the Boone County National Bank. No one would cash the check, and the bank's doors were unyielding.

But there was an occasional Good Samaritan. For J-School students of the Depression it was Mom and Pop Givens and their son, Mike, who operated a German-style delicatessen, conveniently close, at the corner of Ninth and Elm streets. Without their friendly credit, many of us would have been on short rations indeed.

Marijuana was something that a few far-out musicians smoked. We were more interested in making home brew



**WALTER  
WILLIAMS**

Much of what he believed became part of his famous Journalist Creed.



in a secret fraternity house attic, or occasionally a vat of bathtub gin. We concocted the gin from alcohol, which we "imported" from north Missouri, juniper juice and carefully filtered water. It worked, especially well when we mixed it with grape juice, resulting in a beverage called "Purple Passion."

The home brew had its effect, too. Sam Brightman, who later served the Democratic National Committee for a score of years, and I produced a vintage batch (at least seven days old) for the annual J-School softball game, faculty vs. students, lasting as many innings as we were sober. The diamond was out by "The Hink," where the reactor now stands. Any hitter reaching third base won a quart of cold brew.

**COLUMBIA** was a sleepy, southern-style town of 20,000; the University had an enrollment of 3,300 (fewer as the Depression deepened); the J-School counted about 250. Neff Hall was our only building, housing the rotary press that produced the afternoon *Missourian* six days a week.

But the "Missouri idea" was there. It had been growing for 25 years since Walter Williams "invented" the world's first School of Journalism in 1908. Even in 1933 the "Missouri idea" was something that just couldn't happen. Some people still can't believe it today, but here we are with 75 classes of successful graduates to prove it, 13,151 in all.

On the surface the "Missouri idea" was unlikely in 1908. Who in the world would think of setting up a big-time school of journalism in a small Midwestern town like Columbia as part of a not-too-well financed public university of 3,300 students? Maybe in New York, as Joseph Pulitzer Sr., of the *New York World* believed, or in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, which Joseph Medill of the *Chicago Tribune* supported.

**WHO IN THE WORLD** except Walter Williams, a country publisher who was born in Boonville. Many times since I picked up my diploma in 1933 I have thought about the vision that Walter Williams must have had. And he made it work, too.

After convincing the curators to establish the school, Dean Williams' second big idea was launching the *University Missourian*, later named the

*Columbia Missourian*, as a town newspaper, staffed by students under the supervision of experienced newspapermen. He reached out and recruited Charlie Ross from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and Frank L. Martin from the *Kansas City Star*. The resulting product was a professional paper as it remains today. It is still the heart of the J-School.

Those men, plus Tom Morelock, Gene Sharp and others, began to build a reputation for the "Missouri idea."

Their horizons were broad. Soon Dean Williams was spreading the school's reputation in Europe, China and Japan in days when you traveled across the Atlantic and the Pacific by ship. He sent his graduates abroad and invited aspiring overseas students to enroll at Missouri. The first Chinese person I ever met was Mai Dai Lo, a student from Shanghai, in 1932.

As a high school boy in Kansas City, I heard about the J-School from one of Frank Martin's old *Kansas City Star* colleagues, city editor George B. Sykes. "Our state university has the best School of Journalism in the world," he told my mother.

**MR. SYKES' WORD** carried weight with my family. Then, too, the price was right. Had the tuition been greater than \$40 per semester, we couldn't have afforded it.

The 1933 graduates faced a dismal job market. The only J-School seniors with any prospects were those whose families owned daily and weekly newspapers or had a foothold on an advertising agency. Although I had served the United Press as its Columbia correspondent during my senior year, I had absolutely no job in sight as I shed my cap and gown and headed home for Kansas City.

But before too long the J-School—long before it ever had a formal placement office—came up with two jobs, one temporary and one permanent. The *Trenton* (Mo.) *Republican-Times* needed an editor for two weeks. So I hitchhiked up to Trenton and put out the paper, earning \$20 per week, plus the free use of an apartment.

Then came an important telegram (people didn't use long distance as much then). Haden Moise, a Missouri alumnus from the previous year, lined

up a job for me as court reporter on the down-at-the-heel *Louisville* (Ky.) *Herald-Post*. The salary was \$10 per week, but it was a foot in the door. I thought I was the luckiest kid in town. And I was. Grown men with families to support were making leaves for the Works Progress Administration, one of FDR's New Deal relief agencies, for 25 cents an hour.

**THAT WAS THE START.** For more than half a century the J-School has been an important part of my life (the details are too long to recount). So has it been for hundreds of other students lucky enough to get their training under the "Missouri idea."

It is ironic that I spent 25 of my 45 years in journalism working in radio and television news. During my years in college (1929-33) there wasn't a single course in the Missouri curriculum dealing with broadcasting. The reason was simple: There was no broadcast journalism. It took World War II to launch radio as a competitive medium.

But later Missouri would be among the first to recognize the importance of television and radio. By launching KOMU-TV and KBIA-FM, the curators made it possible for broadcast journalism students to get the finest training in the world.

**THERE IS NO** single way to prepare for a journalism career. A student can concentrate on four years of liberal arts and hope that he or she will find a prospective employer willing to hire a beginner without experience. Or, an aspiring journalist can go the bachelor of journalism route open to Missouri undergraduates. Liberal arts courses comprise 75 percent of the graduation requirements, and students will get the practical experience of working on the *Columbia Missourian*, KOMU-TV or KBIA-FM.

A third route, popular with those who can afford five or six years of higher education, is to complete a strong liberal arts degree and then get the practical education at Missouri as a graduate student.

During the 45 years that I hired beginners for wire services, magazines, radio and television, I discovered highly qualified candidates who had prepared themselves by following all of those

routes. What success for all of them requires is enthusiasm. The news business needs young people who show up early every morning and can't wait to get going on their first story of the day.

Missouri students leave the J-

School with that enthusiasm ingrained in them. It's one mark that the "Missouri idea" leaves on them. As long as that continues, the J-School will keep sending its men and women all over the world. □

*This essay by Elmer Lower was first published in the Columbia Missourian as part of a continuing series of articles by alumni on the occasion of the School of Journalism's 75th anniversary.*



## HENRY WATERS III

The '51 Mizzou grad in poly sci is publisher of the *Daily Tribune*.

**I CAN WRITE** about the School of Journalism from a unique perspective. For 75 years, my ancestors and I have served as official competitors for its teaching laboratory.

Without us, deans and University presidents would not have been able to tout theirs as the only J-School operating a regular, honest-to-goodness, real-life competing daily newspaper. They had to have their fodder, and we are it.

Actually, having the world's largest journalism school right here in town has been good for the community, the University and, yes, even for us. The competition has made the *Tribune* a better newspaper, albeit a somewhat less prosperous one.

When the redoubtable Walter Williams first announced plans to start a local, daily newspaper as a teaching laboratory for students at his fledgling school, my also redoubtable great uncle thought it was a spiffy idea. Uncle Ed Watson bought Williams' beliefs about the instructional merits of the scheme, but the *Tribune* boss didn't grasp the full implications of the competition it

would bring. He was one of those marvelous old-time publishers who could afford the luxury of remaining somewhat detached from the harsh economics of the business—a luxury that allowed some of them to become charming curmudgeons and still make a living. (Newspaper publishers and editors can't afford to become curmudgeons any more. They have to spend too much time being responsible.)

**SOON MY UNCLE ED** came face-to-face with the new challenge of having another paper in town. Since 1908, we over here at the *Tribune* have had to scratch to meet that challenge, one that is just as unique as the laboratory newspaper itself. I'll bet we have learned more than the students.

Paradoxically, the journalism school has helped us meet the very problems it has posed. It provides a never-ending supply of prospective reporters and editors for us. Since we can get to know something about the students, we are occasionally able to do a bit of cherry-picking. As the *Tribune* has earned an improving reputation through the years, more than one journalism dean has taken credit.

As a newspaper publisher, I am particularly interested in the well-being of my community. In a college town, an intangible quality of life is as important as the amount of money the institution generates. Indeed, the fact that college towns usually bustle economically is largely due to the extras the colleges provide beyond payrolls and purchasing budgets.

**INA COLLEGE TOWN** that also is the site of the UMC School of Journalism, these extras are compounded. Famous and interesting professionals in the field show up to attend J-School-related activities. These days, media celebrities evoke the kind of interest that used to be reserved for movie stars. Often these media stars are alumni.

It works both ways. Journalism

graduates fan out everywhere, advertising Columbia and the University far and wide. We get interesting visitors because of the school, and we get an army of evangelists as well.

J-School media activities have expanded through the years. Back in 1908, establishing the primitive newspaper competition of the day was enough to make Missouri's Journalism School unique. Now there is much more to the school's curriculum than the teaching of print reporting, and our role as official competitor has expanded apace. Now, students also are learning to ply the broadcast trades in University-owned radio and television stations by scuffling in the local community for news and revenue. And, you guessed it, we own one of the local radio stations.

It's been said without contradiction that there are more reporters per capita on regular duty in Columbia than in any city in the world. For the town's official competitor, and for local news makers who get world-class attention, this makes life interesting.

**THE PAST DECADE** has not been an easy one for the Journalism School. Its program has become increasingly hard to afford. As in the private sector, the school finds it harder to make money in its newspaper business. Tighter university budgets have restricted funds for journalism education, which remains one of the most expensive on Campus.

Nobody knows what the next 75 years will hold for journalism and journalism education in Columbia. During the past 75 in this small city, these enterprises have flourished far out of proportion to its narrow bounds. The *Tribune* celebrated its 75th birthday only three years ago. Now it's the journalism school's turn.

Happy birthday to us both, and may we both live happily ever after. □