

Looking Ahead IN JOURNALISM

A. H. KIRCHHOFFER

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION
OF THE DEDICATION OF THE SIGMA DELTA CHI

HISTORICAL SITES PLAQUE

AT THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI,
BY THE HISTORICAL SITES COMMITTEE OF
SIGMA DELTA CHI

MAY 4, 1956

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INTRODUCTION

THE SELECTION of the School of Journalism in the University of Missouri by Sigma Delta Chi, professional journalistic fraternity, as the eleventh in its series of historic site commemorations is indeed an important honor. THE BRONZE TABLET now anchored to the archway wall between Jay H. Neff and Walter Williams Halls sets forth the brief statement that Walter Williams founded the first school of journalism in the world on this campus September 1, 1908. BUT SURELY it is not the "first" aspect alone that has moved this national organization to place this marker here. Certainly, as Mr. Kirchhofer points out in his thoughtful address, recognition is intended for the stream of significant educational activities on this campus since the time of the founding. THE RECOGNITION serves to memorialize not only the educational ideals and goals set forth by Walter Williams, but also the dedicated and enlightened leadership of Dean Martin and Dean Mott, along with their faculties and staffs. A JOURNALISM EDUCATION in the Missouri tradition is a well balanced, liberal education, and thus it follows that on an occasion like this we should also recognize the support our students have always enjoyed from the general University faculty and administration. I AM SURE the alumni of this University and teachers and practitioners of journalism everywhere join me in thanking Sigma Delta Chi for this recognition.

*Earl English, Dean of the Faculty,
School of Journalism.
1956.*

THE DEDICATION CEREMONY

Friday, May 4, 1956

Unveiling of Sigma Delta Chi plaque commemorating the founding of the first School of Journalism in the world by Walter Williams.

Presiding: ROBERT M. WHITE II
Chairman of the Sigma Delta Chi
Historical Sites Committee

Overture: University of Missouri Band
GEORGE C. WILSON, director

Invocation: REV. C. E. LEMMON
Christian Church, Columbia.

Introduction: JOE ROBERTS
President
Missouri Press Association

Remarks: MRS. WALTER WILLIAMS

Unveiling: CHARLES ARNOLD
B.S. in Journalism, '09
First graduate of
the School of Journalism

Acceptance: JAMES A. FINCH, JR.
President
Board of Curators
University of Missouri
The National Athem

Looking Ahead IN JOURNALISM

A. H. KIRCHHOFER, Editor
Buffalo (N.Y.) *Evening News*

Need I say it is a privilege for me to be here?

It is a sort of unofficial homecoming, because I have followed — rather I have learned from — the University Missouri School of Journalism from its early days. I was thirsty for journalistic knowledge beyond that which I could acquire in the first, dim surroundings in which I worked. I followed the writings of the school's revered founder, Dean Walter Williams, and his collaborator and successor, Dean Frank L. Martin. My recommendations through the years to beginners to read "The Writing of News" by Charles G. Ross must have made some impact upon the accruing royalties. I gained knowledge from that great scholar, Dr. Frank Luther Mott. Lastly, through association with Dean Earl English, while he served as executive secretary of the accrediting committee of the American Council on Education for Journalism, my insight into journalistic values and educational facilities and resources was broadened in a way that leaves me greatly in his debt.

Achievements in all fields of journalism by graduates trained on this campus indicate that a happy combination of studies in the arts and sciences, together with journalistic practice, has been found. This is the wise foundation upon which the school has been built. Of course, you need more than a program; it must be implemented with good teachers, adequate facilities. All these, blessed with inspired and devoted leadership, are the secret of your school's outstanding success.

This is a singularly appropriate time for Sigma Delta Chi to commemorate the opening in 1908 of the first school of journalism in the world. The Missouri chapter was the 13th to be installed, and the fraternity's always interesting publication, *The Quill*, was published for five years under the editorship of Prof. Frank L. Martin of the Missouri School of Journalism.

Nineteen-eight was the year the school opened, but the association of the University of Missouri with efforts to teach journalism in some fashion goes back to 1878. Indeed, in that year notices about "press scholarships" recommended by Gen. Robert E. Lee — president of Wash-

ington College — now Washington and Lee — also appeared in the catalog of that institution.

And prior to 1908 several other colleges offered one or more courses in journalism — but the University of Missouri was the first to establish a school to specialize in this field of learning, and to appoint a dean to head it.

That followed at least a dozen years of campaigning in which many participated. The Missouri Press Association in 1896 declared that it looked with favor “upon the plan to devote a chair in our state university to journalism.”

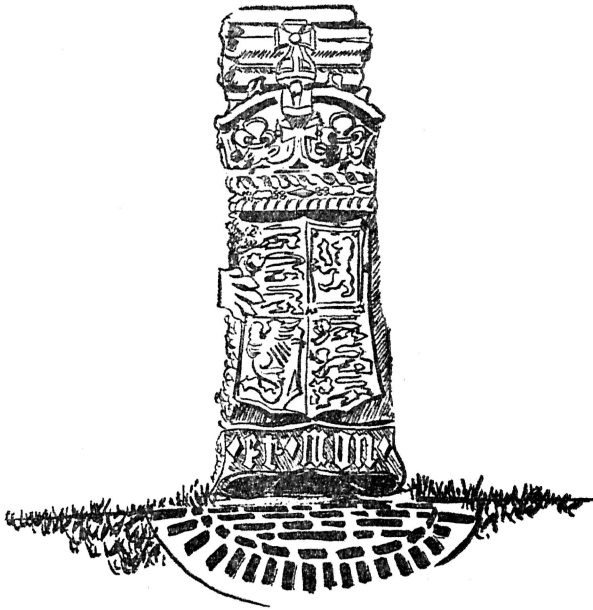
Committees to help accomplish that purpose were appointed. During 1905 and 1906 the matter is referred to in minutes of the University's executive board. On July 24, 1905, it was ordered that Walter Williams, then editor of the Columbia Herald and a member of the University's Board of Curators, and Dr. J. C. Jones, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, be appointed “to pass upon and provide for a course in journalism with full power to act.”

Later Dr. Frank P. Graves, professor of education, was added to the committee. In December, 1906, recommendations were submitted for a curriculum by Messrs. Williams and Jones, and Dr. A. Ross Hill, dean of the Teachers' College. By April 2, 1908, funds had been provided by the legislature. Mr. Williams was appointed dean, taking office July 1, 1908. It is that great forward-looking event in which newspapermen and educators collaborated which we memorialize here by unveiling the Sigma Delta Chi tablet.

That was the beginning of a new era in journalism education. Other universities, in large numbers, followed the leadership of Missouri, but not all of them planned as well as had been done here. Emphasis was placed upon a good liberal arts program backed by a good journalism program. Indeed, some have not yet taken advantage of the object lesson afforded.

Newspapers owe a great debt to the pioneers who brought about this school of journalism, and to the school itself for its work in training young people for a part in the communications industry, an activity closely allied with education in this modern day.

We hear, read and all are agreed that we should produce better newspapers, but how can it be done if we do not give students, having an aptitude for such work, training commensurate with the demands of



Southwest corner, Walter Williams Hall.
The ornamented stone is from the House of Parliament,
birthplace of a British-American heritage—freedom of the
press. The gift of Reuters News Agency,
it was presented in 1937.

these days? These requirements are more mature and exacting than they were in the days of Walter Williams but their fundamentals remain unchanged.

A friend, browsing in a London bookshop, found a small volume, published in 1880 and entitled "Journals and Journalism." It contained a quotation from Anthony Trollope to advise the beginner in this field. He said:

"If a man can command a table, a chair, pen, ink and paper he can commence his trade as a literary man. It requires no capital, no special education, and may be taken up without a moment's delay."

This view, you might say, is the reason for journalism education. The first efforts encountered almost unlimited skepticism in newspaper offices. Some of it lingers on. As one whose university has been the newspaper, I think I often have been able to sense the advantage the trained man has over one who comes to his task without benefit of journalism education.

For that reason I have been sympathetic through the years with the

efforts of the American Society of Newspaper Editors to collaborate with journalism educators, and at times I have been able to make a small contribution toward that end.

ASNE gave its first attention to the subject in 1926, and then followed 20 weary years during which progress came at a discouragingly slow pace. However, in 1946 President John S. Knight of ASNE appointed the society's first representative to the accrediting committee of the American Council on Education for Journalism and the several publishers' associations did likewise.

Before the work of ACEJ was completed it encountered opposition from the National Commission on Accrediting. This agency had been set up by college administrators to restrict accreditation activities on all levels. Journalism accreditation now is conducted simultaneously with regional agencies which generally accredit all or none of a school, something like the tail going with the hide. Blanket accrediting alone does not meet the requirement for improved journalism education.

There are indications the regional educational associations and the national commission have relented somewhat in their attitudes. The danger, however, lies in not holding to the originally accepted standards, as a result of criticism from several sources. These high standards were to improve journalism education; not standards to please some administrators. The policy of the commission was a blow to the confidence between educator-publisher-editor groups which had been built up over a long period of years. It was a blow even to the best of the schools.

As a member of a university governing body, I know the annoyance, even aggravation, sometimes caused by demands for improvements in curriculum and facilities made by accrediting agencies. Yet I must admit there never, in my experience, has been a time when these recommendations have not led to better education for the student.

But if accreditation isn't the method by which improvement in journalism education generally is to be brought about, then those who reject it have a duty to bring forward some other program based upon high standards which meets up to the needs of the hour.

Newspaper editors and publishers likewise have a decision to make. While many major industries are searching for the best talent available, we haven't yet made up our minds whether we want trained personnel or not. It always seems to be a question whether to promote a copy boy to be a reporter, to hire an applicant with a Bachelor of Arts or

Science degree, or whether to prefer a graduate of a journalism school.

In the tempo of the day, newspapers haven't as much time as formerly to train their own people. They require all possible qualified assistance in selecting men and women for their jobs. If we can find more of the right kind, perhaps some of the problems which now loom so large will assume less spectral form. This means, frankly speaking, that we must make the decision to give preference to graduates from journalism schools having high standards and meeting the exacting requirements of the communications industry.

If the editors and publishers and newspapers in each section of the country where there is a good journalism school, were to give it the same moral and financial support that has been accorded the American Press Institute, we would give a boost to faculty morale and help create conditions to enable these schools better to prepare graduates for newspaper work. The striking success of the API, which could not have been achieved without this newspaper interest, is proof of my statement. Further evidence is afforded by the results which flow from the backing given to journalism education by forward-looking men in several of the publishers' associations.

We need the American Press Institute for the same reason the field of medicine requires clinics so that its practitioners may keep abreast of developments in their science. In its way, the founding of the Institute through the inspiration of Sevellon Brown of the *Providence Journal* is like the founding of the University of Missouri School of Journalism by Walter Williams.

But even more we need solid expansion and improvement in journalism education. If a fraction of the money used in most medical schools were available for journalism education there would be a clamor from newspapers for the graduates of these schools. If this isn't so, the newspapers largely have themselves to blame. You can't pour it all on the educators.

I dwell upon this because today the need for trained personnel is more acute than it was in 1946. Almost every business field is engaged in a hot search for qualified talent. The bigger the enterprise, the more thorough the search. A small newspaper is at a serious disadvantage in this rough and tumble contest; it therefore becomes more important that the schools intended to serve this need live up to their opportunities as well as their responsibilities. We seek not only writers, reporters, and

workers in business and advertising, but those possessing the potential for executive leadership.

There is no evident shortage of applicants as beginners, but there are not enough who have reasonably good qualifications for newspaper jobs. What should their qualifications be?

Assuming such specialized training as students in the Missouri School of Journalism receive, there should be a zest for the business; a zeal to get into the game, and deep desire to be part of the scramble and romance of writing current history, whether it be local or national. With this there should go a conviction that journalism carries an obligation to perform public service.



West entrance, Jay H. Neff Hall.

Two stone lions, carved more than 500 years ago at Chufu, China, birthplace of Confucius, are the gifts of the Chinese National Government. Dedicated during the Journalism Week of 1931 by Dr. Chao-Chu-Wu, Chinese Ambassador to the United States.



They need to be able to reason, to think and to write. A few sometimes can learn and develop the art. Some, but all too few, have been touched by the divine afflatus. We need the spirit of men like Richard Harding Davis, Will Irwin, Dick Probert, Irvin S. Cobb, Frank I. Cobb, Bob Bender, Floyd Gibbons, David Lawrence as an AP reporter and war correspondent; Rollo Ogden, Edward P. Mitchell, Frederick Palmer, to mention but a few of those we regard as the greats in their field.

It has been a common practice to belittle the swashbuckling, possibly over-glamorized journalists of the past. Nevertheless, their legendary contributions helped newspapers gain large circulation and wider readership. They often told the story in depth and detail; they used what today seems like a lost art — description. These earlier men exemplified a spirit of loyalty eternally to their credit. Zeal drove them hard, irrespective of the hours and trouble involved.

Where is today's counterpart to Sylvanus Cadwallader or young Whitelaw Reid in the War between the States, if that's the way it is referred to in this part of Missouri?

Journalism graduates today, in most cases, soon come into contact

with the Newspaper Guild. Membership in it is a question each man must resolve for himself on the basis of circumstances, his own convictions and aspirations. If it is just economic security he seeks, this certainly seems to be one way to attain it. But if that is the main interest there are other fields where the rewards are greater and possibly come quicker.

I have no intention of denouncing the Guild. I hope my words will be received, if there is disagreement with them, as an invitation to consider broader fields of usefulness to the membership and to the newspapers they serve. My personal attitude still is expressed in the resolution adopted, after much consideration and deliberation in 1937, by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. It said:

"The American Society of Newspaper Editors sees no impropriety in organization of newspaper workers in editorial departments, but feels it is not suitable for journalists to affiliate with trade unionists. We believe they are professional people and not artisans."

Since that day, much has happened. Undeniably, and with justice, the Guild has brought about very substantial economic benefits to its membership, but how a beginner, who most needs the opportunity to work, can gain adequate experience in a 38 or 40 hour week is a question I can't answer. What he needs, among other things, is the encouragement to burn the midnight oil — an opportunity to work hard, a chance to spread his wings, and thus achieve knowledge and experience without which much of what you learn in college has no practical value.

I am trying to say that the Guild, in the interests of its membership, has the obligation not only to get a just rate of pay and create satisfactory working conditions but should have some responsibility in training and developing newspaper workers other than acquainting them with the terms of a contract.

There should be some way to combine with its objectives the ideals represented by the ASNE resolution. The Guild gives lip service to the theory that it is interested in having its members improve themselves, but I have seen no evidence that it helps concretely to bring this about.

Journalism graduates should exemplify a truly professional spirit. If it comes into wider acceptance a way can be found for a merger of these objectives to which I have referred. This would bring benefits to newspapers, but it should bring even larger rewards to the workers affected.

Walter Williams said many years ago that journalism, "in its final

analysis, is a profession of public service, not a business or a trade, though it may involve in newspaper manufacture and sale, the trade of the mechanic and the sagacity of the merchant."

C. P. Scott, the great editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, put it this way:

"A newspaper is much more than a business; it is an institution; it reflects and influences the life of a whole community; it may affect even wider destinies. It is, in its way, an instrument of government. It plays on the minds and consciences of men. It may educate, stimulate, assist, or it may do the opposite. It has, therefore, a moral as well as a material existence, and its character and influence in the main are determined by the balance of these two forces. It may make profit or power its first object, or it may conceive itself as fulfilling a higher and more exacting function."

Those precepts have been guiding lights for a long time; they hold true today, and they will be increasingly vital in the years ahead. So long as journalists exemplify them in daily practice the newspaper properties we represent will be secure against assaults upon the press which presently seem to come with increasing frequency.

As we are confronted by a better educated, better informed readership, we must expect more critical reaction to our efforts. That should be welcomed because, like accreditation, it helps us to see or realize deficiencies to which we may have become habituated. We should conduct ourselves not to avoid honest criticism, but in such a way that we will not deserve it.

The ideal newspaper is one which will be the conscience and guide of a community, but in so doing it must be above reproach, and interested in building up sound values. In the long run if the right principles are established they will help prevent the election of faithless public men, so we can overcome what H. L. Mencken called the worst failure of man — government.

I have alluded to the need for better trained writers, editors, and suggested that our basic concept must be public service.

In an age when moral principles are being trod underfoot, it is of vast importance that we — as a secular institution — help people to have a firm foundation of truth and integrity. This can be done by making our religious ideals and ethical concepts patterns of behavior.

The journalism of the future will call for increasing concepts of

social responsibility, but that doesn't mean others should not be held to their responsibilities.

Our education must be directed to the masses who control the decisions. This is not a task for an election campaign; it must be carried on day in and day out.

There is another, an allied area in which newspapers can serve. We need to begin all over again to make people conscious that the American heritage is precious.



South of Jay H. Neff Hall. Sundial is gift of the class of 1921.

Daniel Webster said that those "who do not look upon themselves as a link connecting the past with the future do not perform their duty to the world." A great educator, a former chancellor of the University of Buffalo, Dr. Samuel P. Capen, extended this thought when he said mankind has a right to be free, but a concomitant obligation to protect that freedom, whatever the personal cost.

It has never been more important for the future of free men that all media dedicate themselves to expound the principles under which we live and have prospered so we can share with all the world.

You will owe it to yourself, and your constituency, upon occasion to espouse unpopular causes. But first you must be right; then in historical words, "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead."

The tendency in many cases is to try to latch onto a popular cause,

so that when the "campaign" is over you can score hits and runs but no errors.

Confronted by a great threat to intellectual freedom, we must distinguish clearly between that cherished right and the consequences of the struggle to control men bodily, mentally and spiritually, and thus to enslave human liberty. We need to understand the nature and the premise of that danger. It is subtle and sinister. The vast, continuing changes in all these areas present a long range challenge to the intelligence, understanding and integrity of all responsible for news presentation, in every phase of the communications industry.

We might, indeed, paraphrase an old maxim — "Let me write the songs of a nation and I care not who makes it laws," — to read — let me report the news of the nation and I care not who writes its editorials.

Educators can assist too. In the recent past we in New York state found a serious deficiency in the teaching of American History. Students were being passed through high school with hardly a speaking acquaintance with American history and our country's ideals.

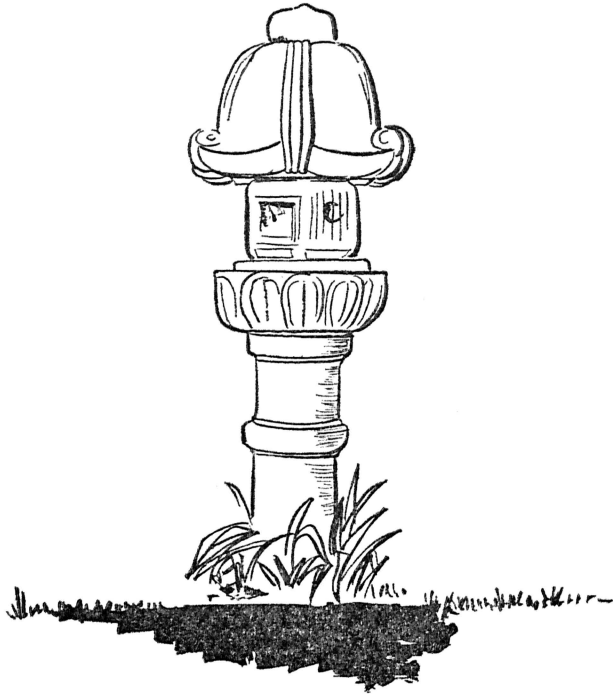
As a result of widespread criticism and with newspaper support, members of the State Board of Regents, the governing body of education in the Empire State, had the education department develop "a program to give more emphasis to a solid background of American history for all school children of the state." Now a new, three-year curriculum in American history is being put into effect.

A reform of that nature brought about by a newspaper will transcend by far a transient victory in a municipal election.

Competition, instead of coming from other newspapers, more often will be offered by other media. But the newspaper is the most flexible medium. There is nothing comparable to it for selectivity. It has the resources to sense and detect trends and the needs of the community it serves. As it does so, it will challenge readers for their attention and competitors in their efforts to skim the cream off the news.

We hear it said that newspapers simply have become business operations — big business at that. Yet it is true that the biggest and the most successful are rendering the largest public service. Among the smaller papers, where most of us must work, the challenge — the need — to render this public service will be greatest.

The mere reporting of news, all kinds of news, honestly and accurately is a major public service. The publication of the advertising which



East of Walter Williams Hall.
The Japanese stone lantern is the gift of the American-Japan Society of Tokyo. Dedicated in 1926 by Tsuneo Matsudaria, Japanese Ambassador to the United States.

gives economic fluidity to enterprise is a business service, essential to the national well-being, in spite of the counter-claims in some textbooks and in the writings and speeches of those who want to put newspapers into a regulated format.

In conclusion, may I leave a few wayward sparks from the anvil of thought used in the preparation of these remarks:

Let us warn our readers to be on guard against pseudo liberals who are ready to tear down what our fathers have built, without having a better replacement.

Don't take talking editors too seriously; judge them by their works.
Don't confuse theory with the lessons of experience.

Don't confuse freedom of the press with the responsibility of a newspaper to its constituents. Freedom still remains the right of the editor or publisher to write freely.

Simulate cracker-barrel discussion and thinking.

Above all, be yourself; develop your personality as a newspaper worker and put it into your work.

I deplore the tendency toward greater standardization of the newspaper product which could result from a gargantuan teletypesetter operation.

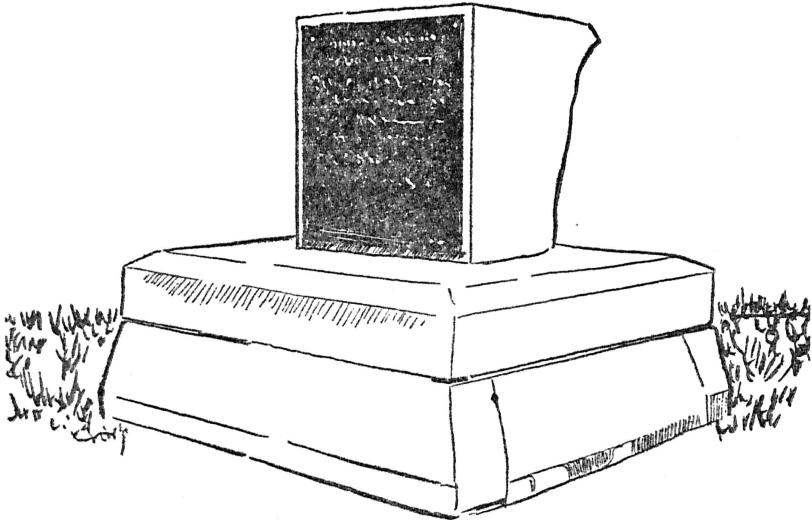
Much must be done if you would prepare yourselves for the big responsibilities — opportunities — ahead.

Don't as writer, or editor, be like the journalism student taking an exam at Memphis State. He was asked to name two kinds of libel. According to the AP — he wrote: "Libel to, and libel not to."

That foremost American cynic, Henry L. Mencken, wrote in the *American Mercury* in 1924, referring to professionally trained journalists:

"Sooner or later the youngsters will get on top. When they do so, there will be an immense improvement in American journalism."

That thought might have been my opening text, but I would leave it with all young journalists as their shibboleth. A great future calls you to service through journalism.



West entrance, Walter Williams Hall.

A meridian plate capping stone, quarried in 1724, from St. Paul's Cathedral, London. This is the gift of the British Government. The stone, which looked down on the birthplace of the English press, was dedicated in 1925 by Sir Esmé Howard, Ambassador to the United States.

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