

Dedicated to Higher Journalism

The year 1959 is a special one for journalism.

It is the 50th anniversary of the founding of Sigma Delta Chi, professional journalistic fraternity, devoted to raising the standards of journalism. More specifically, the fraternity encourages every individual journalist to keep his eye on the ideals and responsibilities of his profession.

The Birmingham Eccentric salutes Sigma Delta Chi and its 16,000 members on the anniversary. Some of these members are world-famous newspaper columnists or television news commentators. Others are hard working but less well-known reporters and editors on press, radio and television throughout the country.

IN THE EYES OF the fraternity, the specific position of a member does not count. What does matter is that he aspires to the highest level of performance in his work. In the measure that he lives up to his ideal, he earns the respect of every American who benefits from a strong, free press.

A group of student newspapermen at DePauw University, Greencastle, Ind., founded Sigma Delta Chi in 1909. Hence the Greek name. But since its founding the fraternity has grown into the largest professional organization in its field.

Today there are 63 professional chapters with several thousand members actively engaged in journalism, as well as undergraduate chapters for journalism students at 70 colleges and universities. The fraternity is the only group to em-

brace all ranks of journalists—reporters, deskmen, editors, and others concerned with the preparation of news and editorial material—and all segments of the journalism field—newspapers, press services, radio and television, and professional and business magazines.

ONE OF SIGMA DELTA CHI'S long-time goals has been the fight for the people's right to know. The group has campaigned militantly for federal and state laws requiring open meetings of governing bodies and open access to public records.

In the last two years alone, the fraternity has cooperated with other press groups to obtain the passage of model "open record" laws in nine states and "open meetings" laws in seven states. Sigma Delta Chi continues to fight for such laws in 22 states where they are needed, and its campaign has helped to bring into the open the activities of public officials who oppose such laws.

Most of the fraternity's emphasis, however, is on the individual journalist and his professional standards. In Sigma Delta Chi, there is no employer and employee. All members are journalists who are pledged to contribute personal services to fellow workers and to practice their profession with high ideals.

With such an objective, the society seems assured of continued growth in the next 50 years and of many worthwhile accomplishments.

May each of us be able to apply our best thoughts and actions in our daily living—so that 1960 really will be A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From The Eccentric's Point of View . . .

Regardless of the various exposes on the deceptions practiced by some portions of TV and radio, let's not indict these electronic marvels per se. They are O.K., just as most human inventions are—when correctly used. The present "mess" will be cleared up, and the programming should improve. The real problem, of course, is to keep it improved.

New York, biggest State in population, was deepest in debt at the end of its 1958 fiscal year. It is reported as owing \$10,593,600,000 . . . and yet Nelson Rockefeller has been its Governor for a whole year and hasn't even been generous enough to pay it off!

Congressmen "Live High On Hog"

A good many U.S. Congressmen and Senators are worth all they get. But many aren't.

Anyhow, if they're underpaid, why do they fight like bull dogs to hold onto their meat? We reckon their habit of "living high on the hog" helps explain the free and easy way they toss billions of your taxes hither and yon.

A Congressman gets \$22,500 a year. But look at the fringe benefits.

By paying a total of \$844 in five years, he nails down a pension of \$2,000 a year for life when he's 60 years old. A leading

life insurance company says such a pension would cost any of his constituents around \$40,780. The difference in the Congressman's favor is \$39,936.

AFTER 30 YEARS' service, the pension goes up to \$18,000 a year for life.

He gets free medical care from Capitol doctors, and bargain hospital rates. Turkish baths are free; and beauty shoppes for lady Congressmen and wives of men Congressmen are extra cheap.

It's a tough life—on whom?

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ONE THING OR ANOTHER By George Wm. Averill

Let's start the new year with some laughs:

A drinking-while-driving motorist lost control of his car, ran into a phone pole.

When he regained consciousness, he was on the ground clutching telephone wires.

"Thank goodness!" he murmured, "it's a harp!"

Joe: "The greatest man who ever lived was Juggins. He was brilliant, broadminded, tolerant, generous, temperate. Yet he died with his talents unsuspected."

Jim: "Say, how come you managed to find out about him?"

Joe: "I married his widow!"

We went into the record store the other

day and asked for an album of Victor Herbert's songs.

The young, modern miss behind the counter smiled brightly.

"Why, yes, Sir. Whose band does he sing with?"

Then there was the old judge who summarized his case with this comment:

"Gentlemen, I have in my hand a check—you might call it a bribe—from the plaintiff. It's for \$10,000. I have another check—from the defendant. I am going to give \$5,000 back to the defendant, then decide the case strictly on its merits."

And a Happy New Year to all of you!

Happy New Year



NATURE NOW

Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Bird Watching Is New Winter Sport

Every locality has a varying bird population depending upon the season. Winter has its permanent residents as well as migrants and unusual visitors.

It is always a game to watch for unusual birds whether or not you maintain a feeding station. Your "finds" are sure to correspond to the particular living advantages your terrain offers.

FOR THE past three weeks our barberry hedge has had an unusual and delightful visitor. It is the golden-crowned kinglet, a small bird which breeds in spruce forests from Manitoba to Minnesota and occasionally as far south as New York and Michigan.



Mrs. Frehe

Its winter home may extend from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. However the rarity of the kinglet is supported by the fact that it is seldom seen during the Audubon Christmas bird count. It is most frequently discovered in our area during the migration period.

THERE ARE two closely related species of the kinglet. The "golden-crowned" and the "ruby-crowned," easily distinguished by the color markings of the head of the male. The female golden-crowned shows a yellow stripe bordered with black and white, the female ruby-crowned shows a white wing bar and light grey vests. The ruby-crowned shows a white eye ring and the female lacks the crown.

The kinglet is a tiny bird measuring three and one-half to four inches in length. It is smaller than

the average warbler, a family in which it is frequently misplaced.

ONE WONDER'S how this bird can keep alive on its scanty fare of insect eggs. However, your birds feed confident that our birds seen feeding in the barberry hedge were the oak-leaf-eater moth. This insect invasion left our foliage covered with tiny green caterpillars.

The bird keeps alive by eating almost constantly during its waking hours. Because it destroys such enormous numbers of insect pests the kinglet's value is beyond measure. Wherever it feeds it does a thorough job.

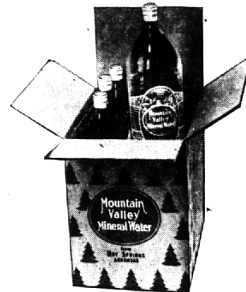
ORNITHOLOGIST E. H. Forbush tells of watching a group of seven kinglets feeding in a grove of white pine. Here they remained for three months during which time they "cleaned" the trees of countless numbers of insect eggs. Other interesting winter birds include the evening grosbeak, large and beautifully marked with black, yellow and white. It resembles its cousin our summer "rose-breasted" grosbeak. Last winter we found a fine flock of these feeding in a pine grove near a Rochester home.

THE TINY brown creeper, another insect eater, is usually seen climbing the bark of trees in search of his dinner.

Other rare winter visitors include the purple finch, the Bohemian waxwing, the redpoll and the yellow-bellied sapsucker.

Watching for unusual winter birds can be a rewarding winter sport.

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BIRMINGHAM

Happenings of Long Ago

Bits of News Gleaned From Old Files Of The Eccentric

50 YEARS AGO

Dec. 31, 1909

"If the present holder of the diamond ring advertised for holds it much longer, there will be a crash and no names withheld. A word to the wise is sufficient!"

"Guess everybody got all the Christmas presents they expected or wished for, judging from the happy smiling faces on Saturday last."

The Troy Dairymen's association Friday won a single victory at Lansing when they secured a ruling from the railroad commission requiring the DOR to conform to the new scale of freight charges prescribed by the commission."

30 YEARS AGO

Dec. 31, 1929

"Completion of the grading and laying of the four-track main line through Birmingham in 1930 is predicted by the general manager of the Grand Trunk Railway Co."

"The English game of badminton is being introduced into Birmingham by a group of women who have organized a club for the purpose of playing it."

15 YEARS AGO

Dec. 28, 1914

For relaxation during the hours

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

By Neva Whitfield

Thirty-two years is a little late

To 'sweet talk' to communicate

Still I think it is one for the book

We can say everything with a look!

SAD ENDING

Our first dinner date and I'm a success

Right up to dessert without any mess;

Now why does a parfait

Have to act that way?

STRICTLY FRESH

If you can't remember what you did last New Year's Eve, plan a quieter time this year.

It isn't smoking that's habit-forming, it's giving it up that is so hard to acquire.



The eloquence of the speaker is in direct proportion to the number of nap-takers in the audience.

You know winter is here when the spring flower catalogues begin to arrive.

Spring, on the other hand, is announced by the early bird anti-freeze mail for next winter.

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