

We Offer a Salute To George Averill

"Unswerving dedication to industry, self-discipline and high ideals."
 This has been the story of George R. Averill, who after 42 years as editor and publisher of The Birmingham Eccentric, sold his interests in the paper and announced his retirement last week.

From the time he was 15 years old, George has known hard work. Another part of his character is his intellectual curiosity.

It is recognized in his maritime achievements, for example.

George became a chief engineer for fresh water ships, sailing the Great Lakes, at the age of about 20 and of salt water ships of unlimited tonnage at the age of 24.

In the latter capacity, he served aboard Liberty ships in the U.S. Merchant Marines during World War I, an unusual feat for one so young.

AFTER THE WAR, George obtained a job as reporter on a Postoria, O., daily newspaper. He gained still more experience after moving to the Journal in Detroit (since acquired by The Detroit News).

In February, 1920, George bought The Birmingham Eccentric. It then had a circulation of about 1,000 and one full-time employee.

Today, The Eccentric has a circulation of well over 13,000 and employs more than 100 people.

WHEN GEORGE bought the paper, the limited machinery in its print shop was hand-operated. George displayed his industriousness, his will to endure hard labor, by operating the machinery himself.

When publication day rolled around each week, George worked straight through from Wednesday morning to Thursday noon without stopping to sleep.

It has been this type of devotion to the task before him that has helped to bring about the success this newspaper has achieved over the years.

IN THE BEGINNING, the paper was printed by the Western Newspaper Union in Detroit. Later, a flat bed cylinder press and a folding machine were purchased. Still later, a flat bed web-perfecting press was bought.

Today, The Eccentric's composing room is the largest of any weekly in Michigan. Five linotype machines operate day and night five days a week.

When George purchased the paper, it was housed in the old telephone building behind Shain Drug Store on Pierce at Maple.

Then, for 38 years, it was located at Woodward and Hamilton. In May, 1960, The Eccentric moved into a new, modern plant at 1225 E. Bowers, which houses its operations as well as those of The Averill Press.

These are steps of progress—progress that reflects the intelligent leadership, industriousness, courage and fortitude of George Averill.

GEORGE HAS always been tremendously interested in politics as an observer, both at the local and state level. He served as chief aide for Kim Sigler's campaign for governor, then as his executive secretary after his election.

Because of his role in the newspaper, George refused to have any elective office so that he would always be in a position of impartial, objective chronicler and critic. This again attests to the character and ability of the man.

THROUGH THE newspaper, as a tool of communication—reporting accurately and interpreting understandingly—his constructive influence in the Birmingham-Bloomfield community has been of significant value and an important contribution over the years.

George now has the distinction—and responsibility of editor emeritus. We are happy that he has the opportunity to enjoy the much deserved reward and privileges of retirement.

And we are pleased that George will still contribute, from time to time, to the editorial contents of our paper. His "This and That" column will continue as a regular weekly feature.

Yes, we salute you, George Averill, and we pledge ourselves to continue your long tradition of community service and uphold and improve upon the standards, principles and ideals which were identified in your many years as publisher of The Birmingham Eccentric.

Swizzle Stick



NATURE NOW

By Lydia King Frensch
 Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Summer Ferns Fading As Fall, Winter Near

By late September much of the tangled wealth of summer's foliage is beginning to fade. Now, the ferns die as gracefully as they have lived. For the most part their fronds are already broken and broken. Only a few of those found in our range, including such species as the Christmas fern and the several varieties of the evergreen wood fern, keep green throughout the winter under the protection of the covering snows.

THE LINEAGE OF these ancient plants goes back some 250 million years when their foliage was the dominant feature of the Coal Age swamps. They are their kind righted the earth. That we know because they have left us a wide belt of coal as their contribution to our carbonized age. Even today ferns are widespread and some varieties are found everywhere except in the desert and the high regions. There are some 6,000 described species in the world.

My correspondent with former students and campers, I often read this line written from a far off land, "Today I saw the broken fern."

OF COURSE, these plants are most prolific in the hot and moist climate of the tropics where growing conditions are similar to those that existed in the ancient swamps. Ferns have an interesting life cycle. They reproduce by microscopic spores instead of growing from seeds as do our flowering plants. These spores ripen in small fruit dots on the back of the fronds or they may be born on special fronds set aside for this purpose.

UNLIKE A SEED, which is a complete embryo capable of growing into a new plant, a spore must first produce an intermediate growth-stage, the case of the fern, this is called a prothallium.

It is a small and heart-shaped unless it is seldom noticed by the botanist. It, in turn produces the male and female gametes from whose union the new fern grows.

During the meantime, the prothallium acts as a nurse helping to nourish the young plant until its new root system is established.

A FEW SPECIES of fern reproduce vegetatively. Among these are the ferns which grow by attaching itself to the ground at the tip of its long slender leaf, where a new plant becomes established.

Another in this group is the heart-shaped bladder fern of our moist woodlands which produces tiny "bulbs" at the axis of the frond which grow directly into new plants where they touch the earth.

BECAUSE FERNS are reproduced by wind blown spores they are widely distributed in all sorts of odd places—in rock crevices, on

high cliffs and walls, in trees and on old roof tops. While most species require rich soil and abundant moisture, some of the above such as the cliff brake seem to grow out on the bare rock. Like all plants which have survived millions of years of earth's changes, they have learned to adjust to many harsh environmental demands.

FERNS, BECAUSE of their beauty and grace, make an interesting study for the amateur as well as the professional botanist. Almost any woody place will yield 15 or 20 common varieties which, with the aid of a good manual, can be mastered in a single season.

Our own states are fortunate indeed to have our native species so well described by the late Cecil Billington in his "Ferns of Michigan."

Of our Michigan ferns, the bracken (or brake) is our hardiest and most common species. It carpets the pine barrens and roadides of our northern counties and lends itself to so wide a variety of uses that it is generally dispersed over the world.

THE BRITTLE FERN is our smallest species and is also the earliest to appear in spring. In the Oldman field, which includes the rail, the interrupted and the cinnamon fern, we find some of our largest and most graceful ferns. These generally grow in rich and moist woodlands and swamps or along the banks of streams.

Our rarest fern is the hart's tongue. It grows in only few localities in the entire United States. However, since the publication of Mr. Billington's book, it has been identified in several Michigan stations.

Dr. Dickey Attends State Conference

Among the more than 1,000 school administrators and school board members who throughout the state who attended a joint conference of educators at Cobo Hall in Detroit last week, Dr. D. D. Dickey, Superintendent of Schools, was one of the Michigan Association of School Administrators met Thursday through Saturday.

Themed, "Education and Government," the 32nd annual meeting of the MASA (Michigan Association of School Administrators) and the thirteenth annual conference of the MASE (Michigan Association of State Educators) were held at the Cobo Hall.

Dr. Dickey presided over the three-day conference were addresses by Dr. Lynn M. Bartlett, state superintendent of education, University of Michigan, and Dr. Robert H. Richards, former Olympic decathlon champion.

Group discussions centered around such topics as: legislative policies and programs, education as viewed by the press, the role of public school, farmers, etc.) expect of public education.

The first of four school buses for the Birmingham school system has been received and is expected to be placed in operation next week. Dr. Dickey, superintendent of Schools, informed school board members Tuesday night that the new buses, now being fitted with bodies and will be ready within a month, Dr. Dickey said.

At the annual Homecoming of Girl Scout adult workers Friday at the Community House, the Scouts of Birmingham were presented with a beautiful silver American flag and standard by Mrs. F. G. Samuelson on behalf of the Auxiliary of the Veterans' Foreign Wars.

STRICTLY FRESH

A man owes success to himself and owes the rest to the internal revenue department.

If at first you don't succeed, you're usually fired.

The only man who ever got all his work done by himself.

Frida was Robinson Crusoe.

An ideal marriage is one where one has a measure of the other's mind and the husband, a treasury.

Women have two ideas about a man who is not worth keeping or it's too good to keep.

Editorial Page • A Free, Responsible and Aggressive Press Is Democracy's First Line of Defense

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 George R. Averill, Editor Emeritus

Wanted: \$75,000

Residents of the Birmingham-Bloomfield area have much justification for pride in the outstanding cultural image which our community has acquired over the years.

Behind this image is the substance of the many local organizations whose operations specifically center on the offering of programs running the gamut of the cultural spectrum of the Arts, including music, drama, ballet, art, etc.

One such example is The Bloomfield Art Association. In a period of less than five years, BAA has burgeoned into a full-grown organization of substantial influence within our community.

It has provided in the form of both audience and participation character through exhibits, lectures, movies and workshops.

Over 500 persons annually are enrolled in its educational courses. And through its annual Arts Festival it has, for four years, provided a vehicle for involving the entire community in an event of area-wide art appreciation.

ITS GROWTH, with a roster of 500 members, has resulted in a need for expanded and more adequate facilities.

The fortunate coincidence of this need and the availability of the deactivated Birmingham Sewage Disposal Plant served to solve both BAA's problem and a city problem. Through the imaginative cooperation of the city commission of Birmingham early this summer, BAA was able to obtain a 25-year lease for use of a city facility coming to be known as a "white elephant."

After several months of planning, BAA is now ready to convert the building into an art center.

ITS BOARD is seeking support from both membership and area residents to raise the necessary \$75,000 to effect the conversion of the building. Its building fund committee has begun work to raise this money.

We agree with and commend a statement contained in the BAA fund raising booklet issued last week:

"If it is appropriate that our area be privileged to enjoy the rich benefits expansion of a community-wide expansion of the influences of Art, it is also appropriate that community-wide financial support be given by our residents to provide money to develop such a program."

IT IS REFRESHING to see a citizen-activated group such as BAA seeking to give its fellow citizens a better and fuller opportunity for enjoying the enriching influences of art as a force in our lives and a prod for our inner aspirations.

It is to be hoped that the citizen-interest response to the request for community support will measure up to the challenge.

(The \$75,000 can be raised if the residents of our community become convinced of their responsibility to support and help maintain a civic project solely designed to benefit everyone calling this area "home." We believe they will see their responsibility.)

Talk of the Towns

By DENI SCANLON

Here we go again. "Where are your kids, who are they with, what are they doing?"

Last week this reporter and her husband went to Dearborn to visit my parents. As we drove down the street, there were cars and kids all over the neighborhood. They congregated in front of a home across the street.

"What's with the crowd?" I asked as we went into the house. After an hour of sitting on the porch, I knew.

Who were the kids? All 13, 14- and 15-year-olds. All junior high school aged smart alacs with vile tongues and similar behavior.

The girls? They were all in tight Bermuda shorts. They had sophisticated bouffant hair-dos, precisely manicured nails, bushel basket sized purses and there was a cigaret in almost every dainty mouth.

The boys? Their hair was slicked combed back and they wore pointed toe shoes. Their air was cocky and irresponsible.

Twice the male side of our family chased a bunch of them away from the "fun of jumping through" a lush private hedge that took 25 years to grow.

My 4 ft. 200 lb. father hauled a "cute young couple" from beneath the raspberry bushes. Needless to say, their dress was no longer adequate for a party.

How often does it happen? An average of once a week, my friends. Is it just in Dearborn? You can bet your house insurance policy it's not. It's happened in Beverly Hills, in Birmingham, in Bloomfield Township.

Two years ago, I was called to take photographs of damage done to a Bloomfield Township home where an all-day all-night week-long teenage party went on.

That time, some smart young men shot their way back into the house when the "discriminating crew" inside decided they had had enough of the two youths.

Then, try standing in police headquarters sometime when this happens.

Two young things (13 years old) are arrested for shoplifting. One parent can't believe what her little daughter has done and says helplessly to the officers, "I don't know what to do with her."

The father of the second says, "I ought to beat her brains out."

To which comes the reply from his child, "Go ahead and hit me you . . ."

Is the tender fruit of this nation spoiling on the vine? Could it be that the good old USA is getting soft? It is caused by poor parents, poor guidance, not enough cooperation with law enforcement officials, not enough court backing, not enough, not enough, not enough, is it too much, too much, too much?

Is all this an indication that America might be teetering toward that vulnerable point—the one that history has unhappily recorded about many a nation?

Suburban Sidelights

By 'HANK' HOGAN

Behind cans of soup in a local supermarket, I got into an interesting discussion on labels (and soup) with a person of political influence in our community.

He indicated that "tags" have become politicians' trademarks in this age of specialization. For example, Goldwater is a "Conservative," Rockefeller a "Liberal" and Kennedy is a "New Frontiersman."

Many "Conservatives" don't realize, he told me, that the label they have espoused is defined by Webster as one who is disposed to maintaining existing institutions but, opposed to change.

"Liberal," on the other hand, does not mean that a person believes that more power should be vested in the Federal Government or that we should spend more government money for new projects. It simply means broadminded."

A "New Frontiersman," apparently, is one who would rather be in Hawaii or Alaska than Washington.

All of which leads one to believe that politics is a branch of the advertising field. Don't worry about the meaning; coin a phrase that is easy to remember.

In our discussion on what is a Democrat and what is a Republican my friend indicated that in New England one's party has a lot to do with one's religion.

Boston is 75 per cent Catholic. Decades ago they joined together for political strength and took over the Democratic party.

He asked me if I had noticed that we Americans, who are free thinkers in everything we do, including selecting a political party that represents our political philosophy, predominantly select the party of our forefathers.

This practice led to a continuation of the religious strain in the New England scene. Then our discussion went to the core of the Democratic Party, namely the Solid South. We found party lines were determined by one's position in the community.

For decades the merchants and plantation owners have espoused the Democratic Party—actually, since a man named Lincoln was President of the United States. The workers are the only ones that dare call themselves Republicans.

Here in our own Michigan, the party line is (See SUBURBAN SIDELIGHTS, 6-B)

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

When do you do your thinking? What's the best time for you to put the thought processes to work; to reach decisions, to determine when and how to do something?

Is it at night before dropping off to sleep? Or in the morning when you're driving (or riding the commuter train) to work? Or in the evening on the way home? Or do you have a set time for thinking?

I HAVE FOUND that my brain functions more efficiently in the morning, when mind and body are both fresh.

The best time is when I'm shaving. Often I'll have ideas that have been roaming around in the cranium for a day or two. While shaving, after breakfast, I consolidate these thoughts.

Sometimes I'll have several ideas for this column, for instance; or for a news story I have to write.

While I'm shaving, I'll think these things out and come up with the exact subject matter, the lead (beginning) and the organization of the column.

Then when I get to the office and start writing, the words often come quite easy. (I use a safety razor, by the way, and so far my face bears no scars.)

ANOTHER GOOD time for thinking is while driving along an uncrowded highway.

This is more of the dreamy kind of thinking, though not the decision-making kind. I like to take a road I've never been on before and just cruise along thinking about anything that comes to mind.

Sometimes it's about the past, sometimes it's about the present, sometimes the future. Like dwelling on what has happened, what is happening and what might happen.

As the car rambles on down the road, so do the thoughts; only with no direct objective in mind. I sometimes compare myself with a pilot high up in the sky. Just musing along on a clear, pleasant day, enjoying the scenery and the solitude.

DO YOU have thinking aids? Everybody should have. I consist of writing little notes as reminders. Sometimes I place them on the kitchen table so I'll see them when I eat breakfast; sometimes on the dresser, alongside my billfold; sometimes in my shirt pocket; sometimes on my desk at work.

And once in a while on my desk calendar, the most logical but least used place.

The messages carried there are usually quite brief; many times only a word or two—designed to stimulate the memory.

If I get to them soon enough, the memory is sufficiently stimulated. If not—I'm lost! Worst part of it all, though, is when I can't even read my own writing. My abbreviations are so short and the markings so illegible that sometimes I just can't recall what something was supposed to be.

I'M A MAN with a crutch when it comes to thinking while writing. I like to have a cup of coffee beside me. Sometimes I drink all of it; other times I hardly touch it.

But it's there, and it helps. Yes, I'm a man with a crutch who likes to think that he can think and that he can write. No harm in thinking, is there?