

HINTS TO REPORTERS

CHAPTER 1

Reporters should remember that newspapers are written to be read. The finest newspaper in the world, unread, is merely waste paper. Since newspapers must compete with other interests, reading a newspaper must be made exciting business which can be handled quickly. That requires, on the part of reporters, a real news sense, a thorough knowledge of the subject about which he is writing, and clarity in expression.

Sentences must be simple and concise.

Stories should be as interesting as facts justify and brief as possible but telling the whole story. Who, what, when, where and why are given as the essentials of a news story. Often the why is what makes a story rather than a statistic. Don't try to crowd too many annoying statistics in the lead when the reader wants to get at the story itself. There are three essentials in the lead of a story; the incident, action or thing recorded, the time, and the place. Other details may be important but these three essentials must be clear and accurate.

Write your copy double spaced (makes correction easier), put your initial in the upper right corner of page one, and number every page of your story. Leave a fourth of the first page blank for a head. Indent paragraphs an inch. Use special care in names and figures; check them.

Read your copy over. Cut out surplus words; they are excess baggage. Tighten every sentence. Long phrases destroy simplicity. Use nouns and verbs so expressive they require few adjectives and adverbs. This may seem like an order for skeleton-

ized writing but it will have punch and will be easy to read.

Use the active voice in place of the passive because it is more direct and takes fewer words. Make it "John hit Jack" not "Jack was hit by John."

Trite expression should be avoided. Hunt your own similes and avoid the current slang of the day.

Accuracy, terseness, and fairness are essential. Don't use such derogatory words as nigger, kike, and dago. Make them Negro, or colored man, Jew, and Italian. (It's a little contribution to racial amity which a newspaper should make.) Few references to race are necessary.

Don't, even if the wire reports carry them, use words that are vulgar, disgusting or obscene.

Watch names. Sound has little to do with the spelling of names. Get names spelled correctly over the telephone; when in doubt use the "s for Sam," "b for Ben" method.

If you don't know how to spell a word, look it up but remember that if you, trained as a writer, can't spell it possibly your reader, less trained, can't understand it. Sometimes a big word adds to a feature story but usually Anglo-Saxon words are better. They are nearly always shorter than foreign importations.

Use good taste. Treat the dead with respect unless proved a horrible criminal. Remember there is nothing funny about a crime or a broken home.

In writing, watch the tenses. Stories are generally written in the past or future tense and heads in the present tense. Use the present tense for statements of continuing truth. Watch tenses throughout a story to see that the story is properly "geared" in that respect.

Do not clutter a sentence with vague clauses. Move on with the story.

In rewriting stories have two aims: to get new leads and to save space for the day's developing news. Remember in writing the new lead that it must be complete; your readers may not have read the original story.

Remember the reader. Think of how the story would read to you if you were glancing through the paper. When you have told all the things that would interest you, stop.

Remember that YOU, personally, are responsible for what you write. Treat your profession with respect.

Special Pointers

A retraction does not excuse defamation. A correction does not quite make up for the original error.

Accuracy must not be sacrificed for speed.

It is not the duty of the press to gratify a public taste for scandal or gossip but the newspaper has a right to discuss matters which relate to the life, habits, comfort, happiness and welfare of its subscribers. Criticism of an official's public actions are proper; his home life except as it touches his public service is his own.

"It is reported" or "alleged" does not protect the publisher in case of libel.

In any criminal trial, the defendant must be presumed innocent until proved guilty. Arrests by the police or charges made by the police, however voluble and seemingly true, are not proof of guilt. A trial in open court is public and therefore privileged. Anything said in open court or filed in a court office may be printed. Arrest may of course be handled as facts but charges by the police should be qualified.

Avoid repetition of the same words or

phrases. Also avoid such tautological phrases as "new recruit"—if he's a recruit he must be new. Don't say murderer when you mean slayer, mob for crowd, revolver for pistol, less for fewer, relation for relative, anticipate for expect, liable for likely, audience for spectators, who in referring to animals or which in referring to people; "true" facts—there are no others. Why say he "acted as toastmaster" when he "was toastmaster"?

As some other examples: Don't write "the month of June"; make it June. The same rule applies to "the year 1900"; just say 1900. Such phrases as "for the purpose of learning" are poison; the simple "to learn" is much better. "At the present time" should be "at present" or "now."

"While" is often misused. Don't use it as a connective unless the actions discussed were simultaneous. "Jones received a 10 year sentence while Smith was fined \$100" is incorrect if the prisoners were sentenced separately.

Don't use "demise"; most people die. Don't say "sustained injuries"; the victim may die. Don't say "unique" carelessly; few things are unique. Don't use phrases like "blue-blooded canines"; let them go as fine dogs.

Remember that nothing that is planned occurs. It takes place. A dinner for a few people, however tasty the bill of fare, is hardly a banquet. It's well to treat all foreign phrases with the most distant courtesy and to look up all geographical names. And one of the musts to remember is this quote from the late Editor Paul Kelty: "Data always are. They never is."

Tips

Planning, day by day, is the essence of a good newspaper. A newspaper's reputa-

tion is built on its day in and day out performance and not on its few lucky breaks. Read everything there is in your paper every day to get the "feel" of Yakima and tips on the off-the-beat feature stories. Explore Yakima as much as you can. Meet and talk to as many people as you can. Read as many outside newspapers as possible to learn what others are doing. There are always stories to be found in hospitals, in homes for the aged, in dog pounds, on Produce row, and in the back rooms of the fire and police departments. Such stories won't be found by looking at the police blotter or the hospital admission list. Visit your news sources at odd moments to learn all you can about the community in which you work. It won't hurt to read a book, report, or chamber of commerce blurb about it once in a while. Even the telephone book and city directory are worth leafing through.

ALSO—remember that no person lasts long in the newspaper field if he cannot be trusted to keep secrets.

Don't Forgets

Undue haste in rushing copy may cost the paper thousands of dollars in good will if not in actual cash. The good or bad intentions of the writer are not important factors in deciding whether an article is libelous or not. Giving the source of the story, when libelous, will not save the publisher from responsibility.

Such words as "it is reported" or "alleged" do not protect the publisher.

Conclusions of detectives are not privileged and a person wronged by the publication of such findings could recover damages. Accusations brought in open court are privileged and publication of such charges, however outrageous, is never libelous.

Arrest of a person is not proof of guilt.

Under the American judicial system a man must be held innocent until he is proved guilty.

Never, in writing an interview, make it appear that the person interviewed conferred a great favor on the person writing the story. A newspaperman should not apologize for his method of earning a living, especially in print. A toady is as much out of place as a bully and almost as bad as a blackmailer.

Never let any person "refuse to be interviewed" or "decline to discuss." You might, by using the story in that manner, put ideas into the heads of other small people. This will needlessly debase yourself and put the paper which employs you in a humiliating position. Once in a while the "refuse to be interviewed" may be made funny and the onus placed on the person doing the refusing, as when a public official refuses to answer questions that the public has a right to ask. That's a different matter entirely from the refusal by visiting "stars" or home-town "big shots."

No one "submits" to be interviewed in the Yakima dailies. It's an honor to be interviewed by any representative of the Yakima papers. Never allow it to appear that a reporter was snubbed or insulted without the decent resentment any self-respecting person should show.

GAL TWO—STYLE BOOK HINTS TO PROOFREADERS CHAPTER 2

Proofreaders are the newspaper's court of last resort. In the final analysis, they are responsible for any errors, except those of fact made by careless reporters, which get into the paper. Proofreading is IMPORTANT.

Proofreading should not be done mechanically. It's a matter for brains as well as eyes. Good proofreaders must train themselves to read proof **thinkingly** instead of **mechanically**. Concentration is required to read proof accurately. Any proofreader will fall into the habit of reading mechanically unless he is determined in his guard against it.

Proofreading errors which require an alert mind include:

- 1—Agreement of subject and predicate, especially if divided by clauses, and of noun and pronoun. Example: The remainder of the winter schedule of operations is as previously outlined. The subject is remainder, not operations.
- 2—Inserting the second comma in a parenthetical expression.
- 3—Correcting faulty punctuation.
- 4—Noting the negative not, whether it should or should not be used.
- 5—Checking for uniform spelling of all proper names and lack of uniformity in other spelling.
- 6—Watching for words where the s or ed has not been set.
- 7—Checking against calendar for accuracy of day and date and for all number totals.
- 8—Watching sentences to be sure they read intelligibly so as to make reader's work easier and more rapid.
- 9—Avoiding repetition of statements in story or of words. Proofreaders should NOT change words without asking desk but there are times when desk should be informed so as to advise reporters.
- 10—Remembering that a compound noun must take a plural verb and pronoun. "The boy and girl are busy; they study hard."
- 11—When the subject consists of both plural and singular elements, the verb should agree with the element nearest it. Examples:

Right: Neither the twins nor the nurse is well.

Wrong: Neither the twins nor the nurse are well.

But—Right: Neither the nurse nor the twins are well.

There are many other proofreading errors which require mental alertness. The more one knows the better one is equipped to read proof. A retentive memory is a great asset. A dictionary at hand is a prime necessity. Look up the meaning of words with which you are not familiar. If you break away from mechanical proofreading, work as a proofreader will be a great education.

Special Tips

A. Become familiar with type faces.

B. When possible read the proof silently once for typographical errors, wrong facts, cold metal, and poor alignment. Then examine the copy to see that interlineations or inserts have been set. Then read again.

GAL THREE—STYLE BOOK

C. Beware of interruptions; always check copy when interrupted and start a few words ahead of the interruption.

D. Your initial on your proof should indicate honest, accurate, and productive craftsmanship.

Here are some words every proofreader must scan carefully to see that they are correctly used.

Ability—the power of applying knowledge; capacity—power of receiving or retaining knowledge.

Affect, a verb which must have an object (The moon affects the tides); effect, means to accomplish (He effected the reform).

Among refers to any number of persons more than two; between refers to two only.

Appropriate and embezzle are not synonyms; to appropriate means to set apart for a particular purpose; to embezzle denotes illegal possession of property belonging to others.

Are there or is there: The words are there should be followed by a plural noun; is there by singular. (A compound noun is plural, you know.)

Aspirant or candidate. A man may aspire to be governor; he is not a candidate until he is formally nominated.

Balance or remainder; balance denotes equilibrium; remainder is what is left after something has been used up.

Believe or expect. Believe refers to credibility; expect refers to the future with an implication of desire or interest.

Bimonthly means every two months; semimonthly twice a month.

Compose or comprise. Compose denotes makeup (The group was composed of people from many walks of life.); comprise means to contain or include (The committee comprises thirty persons).

Continual or continuous. Continual action is constantly renewed (continual applause); continuous means without a break (continuous music at the reception).

Deadly or deathly: deadly means likely to cause death; deathly means simulating death.

Differ from or differ with: differ from points out dissimilarities; differ with points of disagreement.

Explicit or implicit: explicit means clear or distinct; implicit means unreserved.

Hardly or scarcely: hardly is often improperly run for scarcely. The term hardly means "not wholly" or "barely"; the idea of quantity is conveyed by scarcely.

Lay or lie: Learn these two words.

Tenses of lay: lay, laid, laid.

Tenses of lie: lie, lay, lain.

Like: like is an adverb expressing similarity of manner, as: you look like your mother. The use of like as a conjunction is incorrect.

More than or over. More than is greater in size of number; over means elevation or surplus.

Nearby or near by: Nearby, one word, is an adjective; near by is an adverbial phrase, synonymous with close by.

Ordinance or ordnance. Ordinance is a law or regulation; ordnance means military supplies.

Perform or render. To perform means to accomplish or complete; to render to melt down or clarify in the exact meanings of the words.

Pupil, student, scholar. A pupil attends elementary school; a student high school or college; a scholar is a gifted or highly advanced student.

Homonyms

Homonyms are similar-sounding words of different meanings. Proofreaders must check to see that the correct homonym, regardless of sound, is used. Some true homonyms to be treated with attention are:

Adds, adze
Aerie, eerie
Ail, ale
Bridal, bridle
Calendar, calender
Canvas, canvass
Air, ere, heir
Aisle, isle
Altar, alter
Arc, ark
Ascent, assent
Auger, augur
Bail, bale
Bait, bate
Beach, beech
Berth, birth
Block, bloc
Born, borne, bourn
Breach, breech
Bread, bred
Capital, capitol
Carat, caret, carrot
Censer, censor
Cere, sear, seer, sere
Site, sight, site
Complement, compliment
Council, counsel
Cue, queue
Desert, dessert
Draft, draught
Formally, formerly
Guaranty, guarantee
Hoard, horde
Hold, holed
Holy, wholly
Immanent, imminent
Incite, insight
Indict, indite
Laps, lapse
Lead, led
Lessen, lesson
Links, lynx
Mantel, mantle
Marshal, martial
Mead, meed
Meat, mete, meet
Minks, minx
Peal, peel
Pearl, purl
Pedal, peddle
Pendant, pendent
Pole, poll
Principal, principle
Prophecy, prophesy
Rain, reign, rein
Right, rite, wright, write
Ring, wring
Sac, sack
Stationary, stationery
Straight, strait
Their, there
To, too, two
Troop, troupe
Vice, vise
Weather, wether, whether

Proofreading Symbols

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