

The Club Reporter

GUIDE BOOK

Containing Suggestions to
Club and Fraternal Officials
and Press Chairmen on the
Preparation of Reports
for Newspapers

THE CLUB REPORTER

Essentials of a Good Club Report

- 1—It must be timely.
- 2—It must be accurate.
- 3—It must include real news.
- 4—It must have names and titles correctly and completely.
- 5—It should answer the questions **who, which, what, where, when, and how.**
- 6—It should be submitted so early in the day that the news reporter has time to do herself justice in handling it.

Press and Public

Club, lodge, and social publicity—what is it and how should it be handled? This pamphlet is designed to give press chairmen of Yakima organizations and others some idea of the way in which they should do their work so as to get the most satisfactory results.

To begin with, every club should have a press chairman. She should be responsible for all news reports of her organization or activity and should be readily accessible by telephone, as a means of saving time. The first duty of every press chairman should be to get acquainted with the newspaper workers with whom she will do business.

Timeliness is always an important factor.

A newspaper deals with news; it wants reports when they are new and not when they have become antiques. The report of today's club meeting, for example, is worth much today, less tomorrow and in a few days hence it is worth nothing at all in newspaper space; it has become history. Only current history belongs in the newspaper columns. The Yakima dailies—**The Yakima Daily Republic** and the **Yakima Morning Herald**—will appreciate advance notification of important happenings in your organization; this in-

cluding such matters as the election of officers, visits of national leaders, timely measures on which action is to be taken at any particular date, or similar business, so that provision may be made for getting out a full report at the earliest moment. If such information is of a confidential nature, it is so regarded by the paper and will not be released until the time you wish.

If your club is planning an entertainment for which public support is wanted, it's always a good idea to consult society editors to see what, if any, competing events are scheduled for the date under consideration.

Failure to do this may be costly. Only recently three Yakima groups planned public entertainments for worthy causes. All picked the same date and arranged for halls and entertainers. By the time public announcement was made, the arrangements could not be changed. All three lost money; any one could have made a neat sum had it not been for the competition.

Incidentally, it is also a good idea to tell society editors about engagements and wedding plans; such matters are always held in confidence until publication is authorized. Advance information enables the newspaper workers to present a more satisfactory announcement or report than is the case when the item must be handled in a hurry.

It may not make much difference to the rest of the world whether the bride's dress is accurately described, but it's a major tragedy to the bride if there's any error—and human beings, even newspaper workers, are prone to err when they are greatly rushed.

Value of the news of your social, club, or lodge affairs depends upon a number of factors, one of which is the size of the organization and its worth to the community. Naturally a group of 14 women, say, if engaged in the same work as another group of 200 women and with the same proportionate results, cannot in fairness expect as detailed reports as given to the larger organization. On the other hand, if the 14 women achieve a noteworthy accomplishment and the 200 merely belong, the smaller unit is entitled to a larger share of publicity. Notices will not be repeated. For the most part, reports of coming club or fraternal meetings are not news in any sense of the word after their first publication and do not merit more than one publication. Emergencies necessitating changes in announced plans happen but seldom; real emergencies are always given due consideration.

Newspaper space is valuable; the papers endeavor to allot it according to the importance of the news reported to

their wide circle of readers and the number of people it will definitely interest.

A newspaper has only so much space to allot—never sufficient to print everything which comes into the office in the course of a working day. Naturally an item which is no longer “new news” draws less space than one which is a surprise to the readers. For this reason, an event which is dealt with fully in one newspaper cannot receive more than a summary in any succeeding paper, unless there are additional or developing news features—actual factors and not mere padding. If a coming entertainment or program has been given one advance notice, that is all which should in fairness be asked, in view of the mass of material which newspapers are urged to consider. Addition of a name or two to the original notice, a slight change in the program, or the like should not be considered as entitling any event, unless of outstanding importance, to second or third mention.

Newspapers desire to be of service to their communities and to the different organizations, but there is a limit to what they can do.

If some coming event is of such importance it will attract a thousand people, say, it is naturally entitled to

more space than one which, at best, cannot hope to interest more than a hundred. That holds true even if the event is one designed as a benefit. All newspapers give generously of space for entertainments which are for charity, when the entertainments are local. Of course if a “promoter” gets the larger share of the income, the entertainment drops to the level of a business, staged by a promoter largely for his own benefit and with a local organization “worked” for backing and ticket sales. Such entertainments are considered as business enterprises for the promoter and newspapers cannot go far in boosting for them, however worthy the cause, since the cause at best will reap but a small return.

In the last two years, at least three major entertainments were given here “for charity.” In each case organizations blithely sold tickets and in each case received considerable free publicity. In each case “expenses” of the promoter and his entertainers were so high the charity received practically nothing—in one case the organization even had to pay bills the promoter left with local merchants. It is an imposition to even ask a newspaper to aid in such entertainments.

Notices of such business enterprises as food sales, rummage sales, or the like are not news; they must take rank with similar business activities which

announce their plans by advertising. Neither are directions to take this or that street car news—they have not the slightest interest for the general public. Nor are admonitions to bring cups to a picnic rally, or to remember mite boxes at a church meeting, news.

No mention can be made in news columns of any lottery, public guessing contest for prizes, or raffles; to do so is contrary to federal postal regulations. Penalty for doing so is a \$500 fine and loss of mail privileges—a chance the newspapers cannot take.

Suppose your church organization will sell tickets for an automobile and raffle it off on the final day of your annual bazaar. You are allowed to do that under the laws of this state but the newspaper is not allowed to print anything about it—news or advertising—under postal regulations. The same ban covers the contest wherein people may guess at the weight of this or that, or cases where every tenth person buying a ticket gets a free prize, and the like. And, too, if there is an admission charge, door prizes given by lottery may not be mentioned.

Do not ask newspapers to pay for your refreshments. You gasp at that? It's often done. Smith, the grocer, donates coffee for some meeting, say; you ask the newspaper to mention it, giving the grocer's name and his product. That's chiseling free advertising; the grocer

often makes the donation only with that in view and urges the club women to "tell the paper" about it. If the paper does so, the only actual donation is the one the paper makes—advertising for Smith and his product.

Do not ask the newspapers to pay for your prizes. Often prizes are contributed by this or that merchant—with the understanding the merchant will get public credit, including mention in the newspapers. The papers must take the stand that such mention is advertising, and reject it. It's fine, always, to say thank you—but the thanks should be extended by the one benefitted and not be broadcast in the guise of news, which they are not.

Incidentally, it's a courteous gesture to spend money where you ask assistance. A newspaper can hardly be enthusiastic about giving free publicity, which represents an expense on its part, when programs and tickets for an entertainment are printed elsewhere. It doesn't seem quite right for a music teacher, say, to urge free notices for his pupil recitals — which represent his method of advertising his success as an instructor—and then take his business of having programs printed to some establishment from which he cannot get free publicity.

Copy for newspaper publication should be written on one side of the paper only, preferably in triple spaced typing. If notices are handwritten, they should be written legibly in ink or soft lead pencil with names printed. No names will be used without correct prefixes, Mrs. or Miss, and correct first names or initials. Titles for officers or chairmen, or names of clubs, lodges, and other organizations should be written in full.

For example—make it B. A. Perham. After that he will be referred to as Mr. Perham. Make it Mrs. James K. Smith—then Mrs. Smith. Make it Miss Ida Brown—then Miss Brown.

Make it: John P. Case, past grand master of Lodge No. 24, Free and Accepted Masons; Harrie Bohlke, exalted ruler Yakima Elks lodge, etc.

Notices should be written or telephoned in concise, brief news style in complete form, using the third person always. The pronouns I, we and our are to be avoided, as are superfluous adjectives and matters of personal opinion in material intended for the news columns.

It is suggested that press chairmen read carefully their newspaper copy before submitting it for publication to assure themselves that all of the essentials of a complete notice—WHO—

WHAT—WHERE—WHY—WHEN — and occasionally HOW—are included and that important details of time, place, or person have not been omitted. In reporting news in person or by telephone, the same care should be exercised. It helps out a good deal to be sure of names and initials before trying to give an item; the time taken in looking these up while at the telephone may keep some other person from getting service.

In telephoning, watch initials. For example, t, d, p, b sound much alike over the telephone; it's wise to say T as for Tom, D as for Dan, or some similar system to be sure of getting the initials correctly. F and S are always bugbears—F as for Frank and S as for Sam will make them explicit.

An item containing news essentials: Mrs. John Smith (who) gave a card party (what) at her home (where) Monday afternoon (when) to raise funds for the Orthopedic hospital (why). Play was at four tables and Mrs. Leonard Short won first prize (how). Details, in case there is space in the paper and the item justifies it, can be added easily to this skeleton.

The earlier in the day a news item is presented the better the opportunity for having it handled advantageously and placed satisfactorily. Copy for the Republic society columns is due by 10:30 each day; it cannot be handled

later. The society editor is at her desk from 8 in the morning until noon; after hours she can be reached at her home. The Herald society editor is at her desk at 4 in the afternoon and remains until 10 in the evening. Letters should be addressed to the society editor of the paper in which the communication is to be printed.

New and unusual interests and activities of the club or lodge groups have special interest. If your group is sponsoring a health clinic, a flower show, a day nursery, or some other public enterprise, if it is aiding deserving young people obtain an education or helping in the call for charity, that is news. The Yakima papers will be interested to learn about it, as will their readers.

Society and club columns of the Republic and Herald are maintained for your enjoyment and for handling news in which you are especially interested. Their value and reliability depend to a great extent upon the co-operation given by press chairmen of clubs and lodges and by others interested in social events. Such co-operation is appreciated and these suggestions are intended to aid you—and us—in maintaining a high standard of interest and accuracy in the women's section of the newspapers.