

Loyal, Tribune Record Gleaner

Printer's ink runs in his blood

Berglund wraps up column after decades in newspaper business

By Valorie Brecht

With the publishing of his final installment of his column, "Over the Back Fence," in last week's issue of the Tribune Record Gleaner, Bob Berglund officially wrapped up his time in the newspaper business. He wrote 2,900 columns over 56 years, or approximately 1.4 million words.

Beyond his work as a columnist, though, Berglund has served as a newspaper editor, publisher and printer, having become very familiar with all the ins and outs of the newspaper business.

I sat down with Berglund to hear some reflections on his lengthy career, marked with milestones that few achieve.

Berglund grew up in the Pipe Lake area, just west of Cumberland, on his family farm. He graduated in 1948. He worked at the Swift & Company meat packing plant in South Saint Paul and Andersen Windows in Bayport, Minn., for a short time before an opportunity presented itself.

"I went home and the Turtle Lake Times was laying on the table. It said, 'Help wanted: linotype writer. Will train.' So I went in and they hired me on the spot," said Berglund.

Thus began Berglund's work in newspapering. He started as an apprentice for The Times in 1949. He spent two years in the U.S. Army, 1951 and 1952. After completing his time in the military, he returned to The Times. He also worked as a printer for The Colfax Messenger at Colfax.

Berglund's employment took a different turn after he completed a civil service exam and earned top marks. He decided to apply to work for the post office and spent 11 years there.

It wasn't long before he ended up back in the newspaper industry, though.

"I cut an ad out of the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune that a paper down in Spencer and Loyal was for sale," said Berglund.

Upon encouragement from a friend, he decided to go for it. In 1968, Berglund and his wife, Florence, purchased The Loyal Tribune and The Spencer Record from W.D. (Bill) and Jean Hesse.

"Just what prompted me to give up my job with the Post Office and enter the printing business is still sort of a mystery. There is an old saying about once you get printer's ink in your blood you can never get it out. However we are looking forward to this new venture," wrote



Bob Berglund

Berglund in his first column for the Loyal Tribune on Oct. 3, 1968. "It gives a person butterflies in the stomach sometimes to take on a task which is entirely new, but as one of my friends said, 'Nothing ventured - nothing gained.'"

The new venture was a whirlwind at first, but the Berglunds adapted quickly.

"Bill showed us how to offset type," said Berglund. "It was all new for Florence. When we started, someone told her to make a 2-by-4 ad and she no idea what that meant. But she learned quickly."

In the summer of 1969, a new opportunity came along. Albert "Abbie" Neuenfeldt, owner of the Greenwood Gleaner, telephoned Berglund with a business proposition.

"He had always been saying I should buy his paper. Well, he called me that Friday and said his linotype (press) had broke and he wasn't gonna fix it," said Berglund. "He asked if I would buy his paper."

Berglund agreed and made the decision to combine the three local papers - the Loyal Tribune, Spencer Record and Greenwood Gleaner - into one combined publication. Less than a week after Neuenfeldt's call, on June 19, 1969, the first Tribune Record Gleaner (TRG) rolled off the presses.

Together, Bob and Florence Berglund merged the three struggling weekly newspapers - with a combined circulation of



CHEYENNE THOMAS/STAFF PHOTO

Enjoying a visit with Saint Nick

Elliot Slough has a seat on Santa's lap for a photo during a Santa visit hosted by the Greenwood Area Chamber of Commerce on Saturday at Greenwood High School. Kids also had the chance to play games, decorate a Christmas-themed picture and pick out gifts for family members. For more photos, please see page 24.

about 1,300 - and were able to double the circulation to about 3,000.

They oversaw the publication of 1,364 newspaper issues from October 1968 to January 1995. Through that time they witnessed many changes, not the least of which were advancements in technology. From typewriters to computers, and from linotype to phototypesetting and computer typesetting, Berglund saw technology grow and evolve.

"I remember the first time Jay O'Leary (publishing colleague) told me he could write something at home and send it to Medford instantly, I didn't believe him," said Berglund.

Berglund also had the opportunity to cover many unique stories over the years. He said his favorite story probably was when the Loyal girls softball team played in the first-ever girls softball state tournament and won. They won that first year, and the following two years.

In 1995, the Berglunds and their editor,

Dean Lesar, formed a corporation, TRG, Inc., with the goal of maintaining local ownership of the paper. The Berglunds retained majority ownership for a while, but ceased being involved in the day-to-day operations of the business.

"Florence and I have no doubt that the new venture will be successful," wrote Berglund in his Jan. 4, 1995, column announcing the change. "Every issue in the past 26 years was the combined efforts of everyone on staff. It has been that dedication that made the TRG what it is today. We will be eagerly watching it continue and improve."

In 1998, Lesar purchased the stock and took ownership of the paper.

That did not end Berglund's involvement in the paper, though. He continued to write his column, "Over the Back Fence." His column actually began in Turtle Lake. He spent a year and a half

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