

Hawley Herald Celebrates 130 Years of Service

By **MARC C. NESS**
Managing Editor

The Hawley Herald has been a fixture in our community for more 130 years. We have kept people informed and entertained. We have elicited a wide variety of emotions including: Joy, Anger, Anxiety, Surprise, Trust, Grief, Fear and do I dare say ... Even Love.

Here at the Herald, we have created and published more than 3,132,263,000 letters forming over 513,000,000 words printed on one paper each week for 6,780 weeks. That is a lot. Now consider publishing, on average over the years, 1,200 copies per week and multiply that by 52 weeks and you are looking at 62,400 issues per year. That means the Herald has published more than 8,103,000 Heralds. Now line those papers up, end to end one sided you would travel nearly 54,000 miles.

I am not a math wizard, but those numbers are truly staggering. We all hope to be publishing the Herald in another 130 years. I, unfortunately, will be gone. Unless they figure out how to freeze my brain in time to put in inside of an android. Now that would be great, right?

The Hawley Herald has had a rich and full history and I will touch on some of the high notes over the years. Much of the research below is courtesy of my former colleagues Lori S. Dittmer, who moved on to bigger challenges, Jim Fawbush, who has retired and sadly passed away a couple years ago and Leona Anderson, who passed away about 10 years ago. They are all missed dearly.

The history of early newspapering in Hawley is vague; the first newspaper didn't appear until 1886 with 16-year-old Charles W. Sibley as editor and E.H. Harrison as publisher. The paper was printed on an 8x12 hand-fed job press. Publication ended June 10, 1887 and no copies are known to exist.

Archie Whaley, who later was a sheriff of Clay County, started the second Hawley newspaper, The Clay County Enterprise, June 30, 1887.

This paper also ran one year and a few issues are still in existence.

U.S. Pendergast, who is said to have a colorful vocabulary and a short temper, started the Herald July 1, 1890. He ran The Herald for one year, made some dedicated enemies and legend has it that he left town on the train only a few jumps ahead of a tar and feather squad. Archie Whaley returned as publisher and ran the paper until 1897 when Civil War veteran N.H. Fulton and son James took over. Before long N.H. Fulton became postmaster and creamery manager and James continued the paper in a small building located on the present site of the Tiede building (Lewis Electric).

John Reid became publisher on June 20, 1899, and he stayed for 10 years. One of the first things he did was to increase the circulation of the Herald. He offered subscriptions to two magazines along with the Herald and canvassed every home in Hawley. He also hired a horse and buggy to cover the rural mail routes. Sometimes he followed a farmer around his barn as he did his daily chores, sometimes along the plow, and even climbed up on the roof to talk to a man shingling his roof. When he finished, he found that all but two farmers had signed for a subscription.

Archie Whaley returned to the Herald in 1909 and printed the paper in a small building on the present site of the Senior Citizen Center. He sold the Herald to Ralph Ritteman, who at the age of 25 became the youngest publisher in Minnesota.

He introduced some of the first timesaving typesetting equipment. He first bought a Linograph which eliminated some hand setting of body type. Prior to this, every letter in The Herald had to be picked out by hand from a case and after publication the type had to be put back into the case so it could be used again the following week. He joined the Army in 1918 and served in World War I. His uncle, P.F. Fountain, ran the Herald during his absence.

Ritteman was forced to replace most of his equipment in 1937 after a

linotype operator set fire to the building, apparently crazed by alcohol, obstinate equipment and deadline willies. Quick action by Hawley firemen saved the building but the press and linotype had fallen into the basement before the blaze was stopped. Many copies of the Hawley Herald were burned or lost. The work on the paper had to be farmed out until repairs were made on the building and equipment purchased.

A flatbed press was lowered into the basement before the building was repaired. This press printed four pages at a time on a flat sheet, the sheet was reversed and the other four sides printed. He also brought a new Omaha folder which folded the newspaper into quarter page size. At various times this machine was known to devour newspapers, split them out in shreds or jam to a standstill trying to eat too many at one time. These two machines are still in the basement although neither has turned a wheel since 1966.

Ritteman also bought a model 14 linotype which could set six different type faces. It was hauled uncovered on gravel roads from Montana. Printer Everett "Doc" Riedberger told horror stories week after week of and gravel coming out of the linotype. Ritteman changed the name of the Clay County Herald to the Hawley Herald Feb. 17, 1927 to give the community more publicity.

Ritteman sold the Hawley Herald to Bob Brekken March 1, 1952 and he continued as editor for 37 years. At 24 years old, Bob was the youngest editor in the state. He was born in Ulen and moved with his parents to Summit, S.D. in 1927 where the family lived for 10 years before moving to Hawley and graduating in 1945. He joined the Navy where he served on the USS Alamosa, an ammunition ship of the Pacific fleet. He attended Concordia College for a year, was graduated from the school of journalism of the University of Minnesota in 1951. He worked at the weekly paper of Red Lake Falls for nine months before purchasing the Herald.

During those years he added automated equipment, all of which cost money. One of these was an Angle Bar Duplex Press which would start with a 1400 pound roll of paper and at the other end an eight page folded newspaper would come in about a half an hour. The first day the run started at 1 p.m. and ended at 11 p.m. Learning shortened the time of the press run to 45 minutes. This machine is now at Steamer Hill's Print Shop.

The Herald switched to offset printing in 1972, which meant that printing would be done at Lakes Publishing. The printing industry was changing so fast that it doesn't take long for equipment to become obsolete.

The paper is now printed on a Macintosh computer with layout work done at the Herald and then the pages are taken to Detroit Lakes to be printed. At this point, the computers are outdated and work toward faster ways of doing things continues to get closer.

Now, all of the work is done on the computer, but I still miss my time in the darkroom developing pictures of Travis Olson, the Martodam kids and Danelle Dolva just to mention a few. But those days and weekends filled with long, long hours as well. Things are much easier now, but also much harder. Advertising continues to dry



The Hawley Herald staff in 2012 standing in front of the Herald prior to rehabilitation, from left to right, Marc Ness, Melissa Stock, Evonie Drewlow, Renne Nysetvold and Shirley Strand.



The new look of the Hawley Herald was done in 2014.



The new sign was installed in 2015.

up, which continually threatens the future of small town newspapers.

The Hawley Herald has had valuable employees through the years. Linotype operator Stanley Shippey retired in 1964 after 26 years of service. Everett "Doc" Riedberger, who set type with hot metal for 36 years, was grateful when the change to offset printing and cold type came in 1972. He retired in 1974 after 36 years of working for the paper.

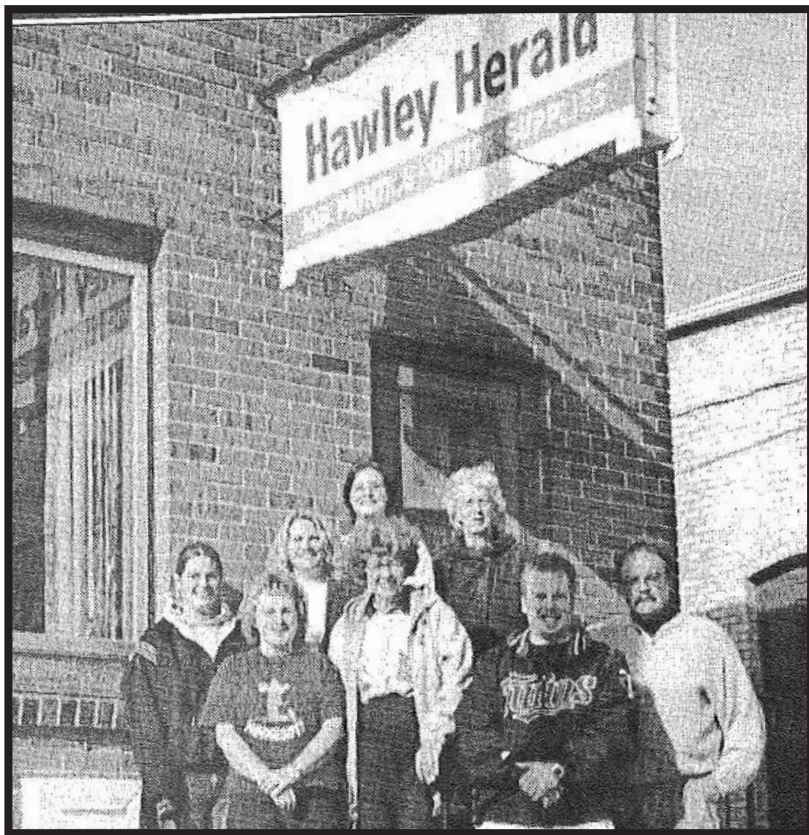
Mrs. H.O. (Amanda) Tall began work as bookkeeper, local correspondent and related duties in 1952 and worked until 1972 when she was succeeded by Bev (Mrs. Leroy) Webster. Beverly (Mrs. Kermit) Nelson joined the firm in 1989. Shirley (Mrs. Lyle) Strand was hired as receptionist/bookkeeper in 1978, and retired in 2005. She returned to the Herald in 2006 as a Copy Editor and Journey Back writer. Rubye Brekken worked on press day and did the quiz. Jerome Ekre became the printer in 1974, worked part time until 1992. Leona (Mrs. Arnold) Anderson became copy editor, writer of journey Back and the quiz in 1982 and continued until her passing in 2010. A succession of editors followed Bob's retirement: Jim Martodam, Tom Jensen, Linda Walter and the present editor, Marc C. Ness. Marc is in his 24th year with the Herald. His wife, Lisa, has helped

out and filled in over time and had help from the couple's Twins Marshall and Connor. Other employees at present are Evonie Drewlow, front desk/Book keeping / Subscriptions in her 21st year, and Melissa Stock, Layout/ Ads Design in her 12th year. Shirley Strand continues to help us out at the paper, spending hours proofing the paper for us. We can't forget Renne Nysetvold who did Ad Design / Layout, and retired from the newspaper business in her 14th year at the paper. We miss her very much.

The Herald has had many loyal correspondents thorough the years: Alma (Mrs. John) Young, Eileen (Mrs. James) Emerson, Joyce (Mrs. Gordon) Brandser and Mildred (Mrs. Roy) Noreen were the writers. Former correspondents were Mrs. Leonard Salomonson, Mrs. John W. Meyer, Mrs. Roy Hemness, Mrs. Lowell Brown Mrs. Alfred Ronsberg, Mrs. Ken Ulven, Mrs. John Elton, Mrs. Edna Robinson, Mrs. Raymond Grefsrud, Mrs. Norman Nelson, Mrs. Leonard Nelson, Mrs. Laurence Aakre, Mrs. Paul Swenson, Mrs. Albert Langseth, Mrs. Charles Thorson, Mrs. Bill Brokate, Mrs. Kenneth Ekre, Mrs. Ralph Lofgren, Eunice Eide, and others.

Now, the Herald staff produces three newspapers out of its office. The Herald and the Clay County Union are weekly and the Lakes Country Connection is a monthly publication. The Herald team also produces countless special sections including the Breakfast on the Farm / Hawley Rodeo special section, the Western Minnesota Steam Threshers Reunion special section and the Valley Connection Phone Directory just to name a few.

We all feel a sense of pride when we finish every one of our 52 issues and our special sections. One thing is for sure, there is a never-ending story at the Hawley Herald and we never have a dull moment.



Employees of the Hawley Herald say good bye to the old building at 608 Main Street in 2003. The Herald staff at that time included from left to right up the steps, Becky Bentley, Lynae Schenck, Kathy Jorgenson, Evonie Drewlow, Shirley Strand and Leona Anderson. Standing on the sidewalk is Marc Ness, left and Jim Fawbush.



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