

PREFACE

Great American commercial enterprises often begin with a powerful idea backed by a charismatic and confident entrepreneur. Certainly, that's true of the Worrell newspaper chain – a venture that became one of the most successful of its kind in the history of Virginia and the United States.

Gene Worrell, the chain's founder, came to this enterprise with neither newspaper background nor practical experience with the realities of daily publishing and journalism. However, because of the strength of his character and will, he was able to turn a potential disaster into a stunning triumph.

Worrell, a lawyer by training, launched his first newspaper, The Virginia-Tennessean in Bristol, Virginia in 1949. By the mid-1950s, he was acquiring other newspapers and was well on his way to building a corporation that ultimately owned dailies, weeklies and television stations. For most of its history Worrell Newspapers had headquarters in Virginia – first in Bristol and then in Charlottesville. Later, it moved to Florida when Thomas Worrell, the founder's son, took charge of all papers, except the Bristol Herald Courier. In the 1980s, several of the assets were sold to the New York Times Corporation. In the 1990s, others were sold to Media General, a Richmond-based corporation owning The Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Worrell's success is a fascinating tale of triumph over adversity. It also provides a glimpse of a world and a proud American journalistic tradition that is now receding into history as the Internet Revolution remakes communications at the start of the 21st Century.

What follows is a short historical essay on Gene Worrell and his first foray into the newspaper business. Anne Worrell, his wife, commissioned Edward R. Crews, a former Richmond Times-Dispatch business reporter and columnist, to write this report.

In recounting the exciting and dramatic moment when the presses rolled and the first edition of the Bristol Virginia-Tennessean came to life in 1949, Crews based much of the story on information provided by three people who were not only witnesses to the historic event but also participants. They are Anne Worrell, wife of the owner; Herman Giles, editor; and Frank Robinson, advertising salesman.

Ed Crews

Where the press is free and every man able to read all is safe.”

Thomas Jefferson, 1816

INTRODUCTION

Gene Worrell's lifelong dream of going to congress was dead in November 1948. That was a bitter fact.

For most of his life, he had wanted to hold that office in which he could serve the nation and help shape its future. He began preparing to do so, first, in high school by mastering public speaking and debate, and later, after college, by studying the law.

At age 29, Worrell got the chance to make his dream a reality. The congressional seat for Virginia's 9th District was wide open. Longtime Democratic Congressman John W. Flannagan Jr. was retiring after almost 20 years representing this mountainous region. Plus, Worrell was a Republican, and 1948 was supposed to be the Grand Old Party's year. Pundits and pollsters believed that President Harry S. Truman couldn't be elected. Prevailing wisdom also held that disgust with the Democrats would sweep a Republican majority into congress. After his FBI service, Gene declared his party affiliation with the Republicans.

The experts were wrong. Truman won, and the 9th District went Democratic -- again.

Certainly, Worrell and his wife, Anne, had put up a hard fight. They campaigned vigorously and gave the race all they had -- money, energy and enthusiasm. It wasn't enough. The opposition was well-organized and willing to do whatever it took to win. That included a fierce and hard campaign as well as ballot tampering.

The day after the election, Worrell was a tired young man without a congressional seat or a clear future. However, he wasn't going to sit and let fate decide what would happen next. Instead, he figured the very next thing to do was to take a break, recover from the campaign and plan a new path. So, the Worrells packed their bags and headed to Miami Beach to lounge in the Florida sun.

Although he was supposed to rest, Worrell spent much time thinking about the future. One thing was clear to him. He was through with politics -- that was over. Worrell considered continuing with the law. He had practiced immediately before and after World War II. However, being a young attorney in Bristol wasn't very exciting or very challenging. He thought about industrial development, something he had a flair for, but that wasn't especially lucrative either. He might return to the FBI, where he served as a special agent during the war. That was exciting. Yet, the bureau's restrictive culture was too much for an independent man, like Worrell.

The solution came to him while lying on the beach near the White House Hotel where the couple was staying.

“I just can’t practice law any more. Two tries is enough,” he told Anne. “We’ll just start a newspaper, an independent newspaper, to serve all the people in Bristol.”

Anne was surprised, possibly even stunned. She’d known Gene for about a decade. He never had mentioned any interest in newspapers. Not only that, but Gene knew little about journalism, advertising or printing. He had written for his college paper. Yet, he had never worked as a daily reporter or as an ad salesman. He knew nothing about how a press worked or how finicky one could be. Anne knew little as well, having taken a year of journalism in college.

Not only did Worrell know little about the newspaper industry but Bristol already had a morning and an afternoon paper. The morning publication, The Herald Courier, was particularly strong and well-entrenched. Gene was well aware of The Herald Courier’s commanding position. It had been a factor in his political defeat. The newspaper was openly Democratic. It opposed Worrell’s candidacy on its editorial page, refused to sell him ad space and libeled or ignored him on the news and editorial pages. This sort of heavy-handedness had gone on for years and stirred lots of local resentment. As a result, Worrell believed that

residents of Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee would welcome an afternoon regional newspaper that was independent and aggressive.

Worrell lacked some important skills for this venture, but he did have major strengths. He was bright, persuasive and affable. He also was young, healthy and resilient. Plus, he had a loving and supportive wife. Perhaps most importantly, he had a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

Years later, Worrell summarized his reasons for launching his first newspaper: “I had a very strong in-born need for an avenue of self-expression – the same that leads one to law or politics. To own a newspaper seemed in that sense to be the best of all worlds. I believed, too, that the newspaper business could be financially rewarding as well.”

Those rewards would come. Starting with his Bristol venture, Worrell built one of the largest newspaper chains in the United States and one of the most successful in the history of Virginia. However, in 1948, business and financial success was far in the future. Immediately ahead, lay a lot of hard work, worries and surprises.

BEGINNINGS

Some people believe that entrepreneurs are born – not made. That seems to be the case with Gene Worrell. He belonged to a close-knit family in Bristol, Virginia well-known for its independence, industriousness and business acumen.

For example, his maternal grandparents, Kate and Baxter Denton, owned and operated the first grocery store with a meat market in Bristol. They were in business for over 50 years. Family members came to think of Kate as the town's first career women because she played an important role in the stores' success. She dealt with customers, handled transactions and kept a close eye on the finances for both operations. His mother's parents were very close to him. Not only were they emotionally close, but also they lived just two doors down from them on Euclid Avenue.

One of the greatest – perhaps the greatest – influence on Worrell was his mother's grandfather, Zack Shaffer, who was a self-educated stockman and farmer. He raised cattle, butchered them and sold the meat on his farm and from a wagon in his early years. Eventually, he would supply his daughter Kate's Bristol meat market. In addition, Shaffer taught Gene's father Hamp Worrell the ins and outs of the cattle and meat business. When Gene was young, Shaffer shared with

him what he knew about woodcraft, marksmanship and other hunting skills, giving the boy a lifelong passion for the out-of-doors and hunting.

Shaffer also lived and preached a doctrine of self-reliance that had a profound effect on Worrell. Speaking of his great-grandfather years later, he recalled: “He was a very independent man. He used to tell me that he would rather live in a cave and eat bat dung with a splinter than work for any man.” Worrell was no different.

While his family environment clearly shaped Worrell’s character, he came to his boyhood dream by himself. He decided while a teenager that his future lay in the law and politics. So, he began honing the requisite skills for those fields in high school by participating in speech and debate contests. Worrell excelled and was good enough that Wake Forest University awarded him a debate scholarship. He did extremely well in this activity. Worrell won many contests, including a national championship in oratory. He also was deeply involved in the North Carolina model legislature, which allowed talented college students to run a mock session in Raleigh. This experience whetted his long held desire to serve in congress.

Worrell graduated from Wake Forest in 1941 with two years of law school as well. While an undergraduate, he began dating Anne Rowell.

The couple met when both worked at a girl’s summer camp in Bristol that was affiliated with nearby Virginia Intermont College, which Anne attended.

Anne came to the college from Surry, VA where she was born, raised and went to school. After graduating from high school, she decided to attend Virginia Intermont. At the time, the college had high school classes and a 2-year college program. It also enjoyed an excellent academic reputation. Anne planned to attend the school, complete two years and then transfer to the College of William and Mary just across the river from Surry where she could continue her studies.

Anne knew Gene's family well before she met him. His father served on Virginia Intermont's Board of Trustees. The trustees had a tradition of inviting students to dine with them after church on Sunday. So, the Worrells extended an invitation to Anne. They became fast friends immediately. She became a regular guest during her freshman year.

That summer after her first year of college, Anne got a job teaching swimming at Virginia Intermont Ranch Camp. Gene taught riflery and ran the camp store as he had for several years. Although initially uninterested romantically in one another, Anne and Gene did become friends early on. Romance slowly developed. By summer's end, they were dating.

Anne returned to Virginia Intermont for her sophomore year while Gene headed back to Wake Forest for his senior year. When Gene went off to law school, Anne took a job in Richmond, working for General Motors Acceptance Corporation.

While Gene and Anne obviously liked each other, their relationship was somewhat informal. That changed after Anne was seriously injured in a bus accident en route to Richmond from Wake Forest. The incident revealed to the couple the depth of their feelings. They got engaged and were married in September 1941. Soon afterwards, they moved to Washington, D.C. where Gene planned to spend his third year of law school at George Washington University.

Like millions of Americans, the Worrells found their lives dramatically changed when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Both realized that Gene would be involved in the war. So, they left Washington and returned to Bristol.

Gene was eager to serve the country and pursued two possibilities. First, he looked into joining the navy. Oddly enough, the navy was uninterested in his legal training. However, recruiting officers were intrigued by his experiences with cattle and the family meat market. The navy needed a cattle buyer in Venezuela. Gene seemed like a good fit for the job. Second, Gene applied to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. At the time, all FBI agents were either lawyers or accountants, and the bureau was expanding to meet wartime needs. Unfortunately, Gene was too young for the FBI. So, he put all his hopes on the navy.

At some point, the navy lost his fingerprints. While a second set was on route to Washington, the FBI contacted Gene and offered him a job as an agent,

waiving its age requirements. He accepted the bureau's offer and became an agent in June 1942. After completing training at Quantico, Virginia, Gene reported to the FBI office in Buffalo, N.Y. After about five months there, he was reassigned to Boston. Subsequently, the Worrells were sent to Newark, N.J. where they remained until the war ended.

Assignments in all three cities were challenging. Because of the war, gas and food were rationed. Apartments were hard to find. So was furniture. In Boston, Anne and Gene found a \$200 apartment "set" of furniture on sale and considered themselves very lucky to get it. In addition, FBI pay was modest. So, the young couple had to economize all the time because there were no benefits. They also were expecting their first child.

Gene often found life as a FBI agent fascinating, although the hours could be long. He spent a lot of time monitoring communist espionage activities, even though the Soviet Union was America's ally. This experience profoundly shaped his political views. He became a firm conservative and lifelong Republican.

Despite the fulfilling nature of the work, Gene also was frustrated. The FBI was a confining bureaucracy. For example, agents could not socialize with people outside the bureau. That made for a limited social life. In addition, the Worrells were not supposed to tell people that he was an agent. This placed Gene in an

awkward position because he clearly was a healthy young man who was not in military service. The FBI also had an endless stream of petty regulations. For example, the bureau dictated which hotels agents could use. Everyone wore a uniform to work – dark suit, tie, white shirt and snap-brim hat on assignment. Agents were told to leave all identification at home. The men could only carry a limited number of items – keys, badges, handkerchief, etc. – and each went in a specific pocket. Even desk drawers followed a uniform layout.

For a man of Gene's independent nature, these rules and regulations were a constant irritant. As a result, when the war ended, Gene decided to leave the FBI and did so in January 1946. Gene had several excellent offers from law firms in New York and Boston. However, he and Anne decided to return to Bristol, and early in 1946, they found themselves again in Southwest Virginia.

BACK HOME IN BRISTOL

The Bristol that Gene and Anne knew in the late 1940s was a bustling regional business center with a small town feel. The population was around 10,000 and with post-war expansion would be almost 16,000 by 1950.

The city was a retail center for residents of adjacent counties and towns in Virginia and Tennessee. It also was an industrial area. Bristol was home to producers like American Thread Company, Burlington Mills, Mohawk Carpet, Monroe Calculating Company, Raytheon and Bristol Steel and Iron. It also was a transportation hub served by two railways – Norfolk Western and Southern. One of the biggest nearby infrastructure projects in 1946 was the construction of a Tennessee Valley Authority dam on the Holston River.

Given the community's vibrancy, Gene Worrell hoped to return and practice law. He joined the firm of Leonard Hall who Worrell had worked with briefly in 1942 before becoming a FBI agent.

Worrell also joined the Bristol Chamber of Commerce soon after arriving in the city. The chamber played a unique role in the region. This stemmed from the fact that Bristol was a city divided by a state line. There was – and is – a Bristol, Virginia and, immediately adjacent, a Bristol, Tenn. Each city has its own public services – schools, police and fire departments. However, the Chamber united

businesses on both sides of the state line. Worrell became deeply involved in Chamber activities and began to develop many friendships and contacts in both states. Given Worrell's energy and ability to put people at their ease, he soon was elected secretary, then director and then president. He quickly displayed a real talent for economic development and played a key role in getting several large industrial firms to locate plants in the Bristol area.

Although Worrell was engaged in the community and in developing a legal practice, he still harbored a desire to enter politics. His big chance came in 1948. That year, Democrat John Flannagan decided to retire as the representative for the 9th Virginia Congressional District. Known as the "fighting Ninth" because of the contentiousness of its politics, the district was – and is – huge. In fact, it's slightly larger than the state of New Jersey. The 9th ran roughly from Virginia's southwestern tip east to Christiansburg. This was a mountainous region that included small towns, farms and coal mines.

As in other Southern states in the 1940s, the Democratic Party dominated Virginia politics. However, the 9th district had a reputation for sending Democrats and Republicans to congress, typically alternating party representation every 20 years or so. This meant that, unlike elsewhere in the Commonwealth, a Republican actually could get elected in the district. That was good. Worrell

thought this would give him a chance. His loyalty to his party grew from his FBI experience, which convinced him that only the Republicans fully appreciated the threat from the Soviet Union.

One more factor boosted Worrell's optimism. Nineteen forty-eight would be a national election year as well as a local one, and Republicans were extremely upbeat. President Harry Truman was running for election on his own. He was vice president in 1945 when Franklin D. Roosevelt died. Three years later, his popularity was fading. Pundits were convinced that he would lose to GOP challenger Thomas E. Dewey, and Republican congressmen would probably ride to Washington on Dewey's coattails.

So, Worrell decided to pursue the Republican nomination for the 9th District. It was a daring move. He was young and without any experience in local politics. However, after a hard fought battle, in which his eloquence proved irresistible, Worrell became the party's standard bearer.

His Democratic opponent, Thomas B. Fugate, was a veteran campaigner. He had served as Flannagan's field representatives. Plus, Fugate, a farmer and banker, had served in Virginia's House of Delegates from 1928 to 1930. He also was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1944 and was a member of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia in 1945.

From the start, Worrell faced huge obstacles. He had angered Flannagan who thought Worrell might succeed him. When Worrell remained steadfast to his Republican principles, Flannagan became dead set against him. In addition, Worrell had no experience in the rough and tumble of real world politics. He lacked an organization and was not widely known outside of Bristol. In fact, Worrell's organization consisted of two men -- a campaign manager, who also was his law partner, and a driver, Bill Wampler, 21. Later Wampler had a successful career as the 9th District's Republican congressman, first winning a seat in 1952

Powerful regional interests, including miners' unions, the local newspaper and the Democratic machine, which dominated state politics, opposed Worrell. Bristol's Herald Courier was highly influential in shaping public opinion and was decidedly pro-Fugate and anti-Worrell.

The local newspaper was created in 1907 by the merger of two Bristol papers – the Daily Courier and the Herald. C.J. Harkrader, a local businessman, and Munsey Slack bought The Herald Courier in 1919. Slack died 20 years later, and Harkrader and his son, Carl, acquired full ownership in 1945.

Harkrader was a Democrat. He had served in Virginia's senate, believed passionately in the New Deal and belonged to Harry F. Byrd's political machine. Harkrader also viewed himself as a political kingmaker. Making no pretense of

journalistic objectivity, he blatantly used The Herald Courier to advance the Democratic Party, its policies and its candidates. Harkrader was in an extremely powerful position because to all intent he had a monopoly on local news. In the 1948 9th District race, Harkrader fought Worrell by either attacking him or ignoring his campaign entirely.

Despite this major obstacle, Worrell threw himself into the race with characteristic zeal. His enthusiasm compensated for other shortcomings. Plus, he enjoyed strong support from his wife and his extended family. In addition, Worrell's impressive speaking talent coupled with his friendly nature allowed him to make allies and to win votes even among some dedicated Democrats.

Although they were young, the Worrells found the campaigning demanding. They constantly were on the road, visiting towns and mines, meeting people, making speeches and seeking backers. The couple soon learned the hard way about just how vicious politics can be. Gene was the focus of a smear campaign that tried to portray him as a "draft dodger," an extremely serious charge after World War II. They also discovered that a close "friend" with his campaign was, in fact, a spy for the Democrats. They were even surprised further when union officials offered their support for Gene in an unsavory and unacceptable deal.

By Election Day, Gene and Anne were exhausted. They spent the final evening of the race awaiting voting returns at the Republican campaign headquarters at the

Hotel Bristol. Anne listened to the radio, trying to follow the presidential race. Given the confident predictions of defeat for Truman and the Democratic Party, she was shocked as news trickled in of Truman's strength. She soon realized that the Republican sweep of congress – and Gene's victory – might not occur.

Once the votes were counted and certified, Worrell had lost by 1,400 votes. The national media carried the story. "An investigation proved that we had been hurt severely by fraudulent handling of absentee balloting," Anne said. This was "black satchelling" at its worst. Several arrests were made as a result.

Worrell was disappointed but was philosophical about his defeat. He gave the race all his energy, attention and skill. So, losing carried no dishonor or reproof. In addition, the campaign was exciting. The Worrells had gotten to know the entire district, made new friends and discovered that some people believed strongly in Gene.

Of course, the campaign's unsuccessful end left the Worrells with an uncertain long-term future. However, they agreed that the best short-term course was to go to sunny Florida to rest, recharge and, maybe, to decide what they'd do with the rest of their lives.



Vote for
T. EUGENE (GENE) WORRELL
For Congress

To vote for me place an in the
box in front of my name.

My name is the last name on the
ballot.

**YOUR HELP AND INFLUENCE WILL
BE APPRECIATED.**

As a college student, Gene Worrell dreamed of serving his nation and state in Congress. So, nobody was surprised when he ran for a seat in 1948. Despite a valiant effort, he lost. This is one of the few surviving fliers from that race.

LAUNCHING THE VIRGINIA-TENNESSEAN

The 1948 trip to Florida was a welcome break. Although the couple went there to relax, Gene clearly used the vacation to think about the future. He rejected both politics and the law. Instead, he decided to start a newspaper in Bristol, one that would be politically independent. In retrospect, it was an astonishing – perhaps foolhardy – decision. Worrell knew nothing about daily journalism or the newspaper business. The Herald Courier was strong and well-entrenched. The odds against success were extremely high. In fact, 30 years after he started his first paper, Worrell admitted that he never would have done so had he fully understood what it took to succeed in newspaper publishing.

Herman Giles, the first editor of Worrell's first paper, summarized the situation well 60 years later: "Our chances of survival were low. For starters, we were new and liable to fail. So, advertisers didn't totally trust us. The competing paper was well-established and family-owned in a small town. The competition also had power and money. It was going to be hard and risky. I didn't realize at the time just how risky the whole idea was. But, I was young, willing to take a risk and, besides, I like a challenge."

As soon as the Worrells returned to Virginia from Florida, Gene started organizing his venture. He quickly turned to the challenge of raising capital. The

venture would need a staff, a press, paper, ink, a truck fleet and a fully equipped office. Fortunately with his warmth and determination, he quickly lined up 100 investors who collectively put up \$260,000. The newspaper also soon had a board of directors. Members included: H.R. Bibee, Bob Boswell, Rudy Burroughs, Nat Copenhaver, Harry Frehn, Leonard Hall, Jack Stone, Bill Tilley and Hamp Worrell.

The biggest capital investment would be a press. Worrell knew nothing about pressroom operations. However, he believed throughout his life that diligent research could answer almost any question. So, he began reading about presses. He concluded that the Goss Printing Press Company of Chicago made the best ones. Founded in 1885, the corporation had developed a solid reputation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Worrell could not afford a new Goss, but he could buy a used one. After a lot of looking, he found one that the High Point Enterprise in North Carolina agreed to sell. The press had not been used for some time and was stored in a barn on a turkey farm. Gene bought the press. He was assured it could be cleaned and refurbished, although it had been built in the late 1800s.

Worrell also rented space on Shelby Street in Bristol, Tennessee. The building was not ideal, but it was big and available. It previously served as a Chrysler-Dodge-Plymouth dealership. Worrell decided to put the newsroom and the

advertising department on the first floor near the front door. The press also sat on the first floor in the rear of the building.

Oddly enough, the new journal went without a name for weeks.

“If I remember correctly, it was quite a while before even a name was selected,” reporter Jack Kestner wrote years later. “There were all sorts of proposals, including one that it simply be called, ‘The Newspaper.’ The proposer pointed out that this would bring us all sorts of free publicity, since people were always saying, ‘Well, I read in the newspaper the other day that ...’ ”

“The Newspaper” idea finally vanished. Instead, the title for the new publication was the Bristol Virginia-Tennessean, which indicated its coverage area in both Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee.

Once the name was selected somebody decided that it would be a good idea to paint a huge sign on the building’s exterior. Kestner reported that this decision created a lighthearted moment in the midst of the start up excitement: “Sign painter Bob Marshall (who had a reputation as the town humorist) had also been hired to announce to the world that this was the home of journalism’s newest baby. Bob had worked all morning on a ladder along the vast expanse of masonry that constituted the building’s western wall, painting in letters ten feet tall. Then he broke for lunch.”

“We (inside the building) became puzzled when we noted most pedestrians passing our plate glass windows seemed to be laughing. Finally, one of us went outside to see what was going on.”

“What was going on was the sign Bob Marshall had painted. He’d been commissioned to paint simply, ‘Home of the Bristol Virginia-Tennessean.’ And he’d made a good start. But when he’d gone to lunch, he’d left a sign that read, ‘Home of the Bristol Virgin.’ ”

Besides getting a building and a completed sign, Worrell also needed to find an editor. Friends suggested that he talk to Herman Giles who worked at the paper in nearby Kingsport, Tenn. Giles was a now long-gone type of journalist – one who came to the trade early in life and learned it exclusively on the job. Giles discovered in high school that he liked writing and had a talent for it. As a teenager, he also did some stringing for the Kingsport and the Bristol papers. As soon as he graduated, Giles hitchhiked to Kingsport, walked into the newspaper office and asked for a job. He got one, paying \$22.50 a week. At Kingsport, Giles learned all about the news business from writing a deadline story and developing sources to editing and handling wire copy. In time, he rose to be executive editor.

Giles met Worrell in July 1949. Giles had heard that a new newspaper was being organized in Bristol so he wasn’t entirely surprised to get a telephone call from Worrell, offering him a job. Giles asked for a week to consider the situation.

However, Worrell called back the next day around noon. Forty years later, Giles penned his recollections of their conversation:

“I’m in town with a friend,” Worrell said. “I’d like to meet you and talk some more about your coming to work for me.”

“Where are you calling from?” Giles asked.

“I’m in a restaurant right across the street from the Times-News.”

“There is no restaurant across the street,” Giles said.

Worrell replied: “Yes, there is. It’s called Carmack’s Place.”

“That’s not a restaurant,” Giles said. “That’s a pool room.”

So, Giles finished with the noon edition and headed to the pool room, which did have a few booths and offered a limited menu of hot dogs and hamburgers. With Worrell was H.R. Bibee, an investor, and member of the Virginia-Tennessean’s board. Worrell turned on his considerable charm. Bibee also encouraged Giles to come to Bristol as their editor.

Finally, Worrell leaned across the table and offered Giles \$5,000 a year, if he’d join the newspaper.

“Hesitating only briefly, I agreed to take the job. To someone accustomed to looking at the figures on a weekly paycheck, \$5,000 sounded like a lot of money in 1949,” Giles remembered later. “My pay at the Times-News was \$100 a week,

but I was so engrossed in conversation I didn't take time to multiply it by 52. To this day, I think Gene hypnotized me, but a deal is a deal, and I stuck by it. I came to Bristol about a month later to become editor of a newspaper with no name, no staff and an uncertain future – knowing I had taken a \$200-a-year cut in pay and feeling good about it.”

Giles proved invaluable. He quickly assembled a small staff of writers, including Roy Elkins, Joe Hill, Ed Norton and Mary Widener. Giles also got involved in selecting wire services. The Herald Courier used the Associated Press. So, the new competitor signed on with United Press International. Worrell also lavishly subscribed to all the offerings from King Features. Giles knew they'd never use that much material and quickly pruned half of Worrell's choices.

Jack Huntoon, a Sears sales manager, joined the venture as head of advertising. One of his early hires was Frank Robinson, a young U.S. Air Force veteran. Robinson became a star producer and later would play an important role in the expansion and success of the Worrell chain. He later was one of the first employees to leave the Virginia-Tennessean and to become a publisher. Robinson went to the Elizabethton Star in Tennessee and remained active there well into the 21st Century.

Immediately prior to printing the first edition, Worrell had 16,667 paid subscribers. These early readers got an incredible discount, paying only 10 cents a week instead of the generally accepted 35 cents fee.

Besides dealing with all these practical issues, Worrell also gave attention to some philosophical ones. He had a clear vision of what the Virginia-Tennessean's role would be. The newspaper would emphasize service to the community and would strive to fairly balance its responsibilities to readers, advertisers, employees and investors. It also would stress civic pride and spirit. As a statement of intent declared: "It shall 'accent the positive' without overlooking all the 'negative.' "

Worrell believed passionately that above all else the Virginia-Tennessean would be nonpartisan in its political coverage. To bolster this point, he adopted a motto that appeared on the masthead – An Independent Newspaper For All The People.

This idea of independence was so important to Worrell that he printed the following statement on Page One of the first edition: "It shall be an INDEPENDENT newspaper, now and forever more determined to print unbiased and unprejudiced news. Its purpose shall be to inform, not to sway. Its ownership being bipartisan, its editorial policy shall not be controlled or influenced by Democrat or Republican. It shall, however, stand firmly against 'isms' and 'ism-lovers' and will at all times say what it believes without regard to those affected."

With what he believed clearly formed and his operational needs addressed, Worrell was ready to become a newspaper publisher. Accordingly on Oct. 15, 1949, the Virginia-Tennessean began preparing its first edition.

STARTING ON THE WRONG FOOT

Everybody who was there the night the Virginia-Tennessean printed its first edition agrees only one word could describe the event – disaster. The evening was so bad that in hindsight the paper’s survival seems miraculous.

The mess that occurred had two sources. Oddly enough, the first was the good work of the ad department. Huntoon’s enterprising salesmen got enough ads that the first paper – a Sunday edition set for Oct. 16, 1949 – would run to 64 pages. The ad staff’s accomplishment was amazing, considering Harkrader’s position in Bristol.

“Harkrader was very influential in the Bristol area,” Giles remembered. “In addition to The Herald Courier, he had numerous other business interests. He was a stockholder and board member of the city’s leading retailer, H.P. King Company. Naturally, we did not get any advertising from that firm. He was also a stockholder and director of the First National Bank, where most businessmen kept their accounts and used as a source of loans. This probably led some merchants, including the second largest retailer, Parks Belk Company, to decline to patronize the new newspaper rather than offend a potential lender.”

So, Huntoon’s staff had done a remarkable job. However, they also presented the pressmen with a problem. The 64-page paper was a great start, but the press could only handle a 32-page edition. That meant it would take two press runs to

complete the job. In addition, because of the number of pages, each newspaper would have to be assembled by hand, an inefficient and time consuming process.

The second problem was the press and the man sent to refurbish it. Worrell knew when he bought this antique that it needed repairs. So, he contacted Lorenz & Company, which specialized in press repair. That company sent a workman, Willie Nam, to Bristol. Nam supposedly was skilled. He certainly projected an air of unconcerned competency. Whenever anybody asked if the press would work, Nam, who's English was not polished, responded: "She fly like a hummingbird when I'm finished her." Those words would come back to haunt everybody associated with the Virginia-Tennessean.

Whatever Nam theoretically knew, his work pace was profoundly slow. He was so slow, in fact, that the press was not ready to run until 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 15. There was no time for a test run. So, nobody knew what lay ahead.

Within 30 minutes of Nam finishing his work, everything was ready. It was just a matter of starting the press.

Giles recalled that everybody associated with the Virginia-Tennessean was excited: "About every employee and every board member of the company was gathered around the press room walls, eager to see the first edition of the country's newest daily newspaper. It turned out to be a great disappointment. The

drive motor started with a nice hum, the press cylinders began rotating as they should and a cheer went up from the people standing around. The jubilation lasted only a few minutes. Just as the press was gaining speed there was a loud k' chunk from the pit, and the foreman quickly shut it down. The sound of a falling object proved to have resulted from a part of the folder, which had broken off and fallen to the concrete floor. It was the cutting cylinder, and it was badly damaged. This was a vital component since it was the part that determined the length of the newspaper. It gathered the web, held it in place for a complete revolution and then ejected a sharp steel blade that cut the web to the proper length.”

Somebody called Kinkead Company, a nearby machine shop, and the owner agreed to try to fix the part. It took about 30 minutes. The pressmen installed the repaired cylinder and ran the press. Within five minutes, the cylinder again fell off the machine. Again, the cylinder went to Kinkead. This repair took an hour. The cylinder was installed again, failed again and went to the shop again.

After the third repair, the shop owner announced he was done for the night. “You fellows had better make it work this time,” he said, “because I’m not coming back to the shop any more tonight.”

Ignoring Nam, Jim Dudley, the paper’s press foreman, installed the cylinder after the third repair. He discovered that a previous installation had put the cylinder in cockeyed, which ensured that it would break.

Dudley's keen eye and repair skills corrected the cylinder problem. However, as soon as the press reached full speed, everyone noticed smoke rising from the machine. Overheated bearings were the cause, they determined.

"Quickly a worker grabbed an oil can to lubricate the bearings where the units were mounted to the press frame," Giles said. "At first, no one could find any holes. When they did, curses filled the air. The steel covers that protected the bearings had been mounted upside-down. The oil holes were on the bottom instead of the top, and oil dripped out as soon as it was squirted in. Sooner or later, the bearing would lock up and stop the press."

The pressmen saw no solution but to reassemble the press. Doing so meant that the first edition would not appear the next morning as promised – or in the near future. The debate about what to do went on until somebody suggested using dry ice to cool the machinery. Bassett's Dairy, a milk-products manufacturer, was nearby, and the owner agreed to give the newspaper dry ice. That did the trick, and the bearings worked just fine.

However, other problems cropped up throughout the evening. In fact, neither the pressmen nor Nam got a moment's rest. The web kept breaking. The plates needed recasting. Ink smears obliterated whole pages. Waste paper piled up like snowdrifts.

Throughout the evening, Worrell welcomed a steady stream of well-wishers and, undoubtedly, nervous investors. At one point, he sat down beside the press and fell over sound asleep into pile of newsprint. Anne eventually persuaded him to go home and get some rest.

Near 3 a.m., a pressman suggested they quit struggling and ask the Kingsport Times-News to print the Virginia-Tennessean. Giles nixed the idea, saying “We’re going to print it here or we don’t print it at all.”

Worrell was back by 5 a.m. and immediately started making a list of equipment needed to make the press fully operational.

The press run ended at 10 a.m. on Oct. 16. It had been about 15 hours since it began – 15 hours of unrelieved stress and strain. The situation was so bad that one employee took the front page mat, declaring “I’m taking this home with me as a memento of the newspaper that never was.”

At 10:30 a.m. papers were ready to be delivered. Everyone at the plant pitched in to help. Directors and staff alike were loading their cars with papers to deliver to the anxious public. Even 4 year old son Tom and his mom, Anne, took the airport route. Tom proudly ran to the terminal telling everyone, “Here’s my Dad’s paper.”

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The rocky start of the Virginia-Tennessean began an exhausting and frustrating four-month struggle for survival.

The list of problems was long. For example, the press never did work properly and required tremendous amounts of attention. Plus, ad revenues, the lifeblood of any publication, were weak. Established businesses were reluctant to take a risk on advertising with the Virginia-Tennessean, which didn't seem to have much future. Companies also believed that they already could reach buyers through The Herald Courier. Ad salesman Frank Robinson demonstrated creativity when he convinced local grocery stores to go to "war" against each other, which stimulated much needed ad sales.

In terms of content, the Virginia-Tennessean was living up to its pledge to be a local paper. During the early months, its pages were filled with high school sports scores and features, stories about area coal mines and miners, and reports on car wrecks, crimes, women's club meetings, weddings, engagements, House of Delegate races and briefs from small communities, like Big Stone Gap, Wise County and Marion, Virginia

Perhaps, the biggest worry was the rate at which the Virginia-Tennessean burned through capital. The initial investment disappeared in just a few months.

Giles recalled that one morning the newspaper's bookkeeper came to Worrell with bad news: "We're broke." The business needed \$10,000 immediately to stay afloat. Worrell began visiting investors right away. By day's end, he had the funding. However, he told the bookkeeper that nothing more would be forthcoming. The investors were tapped out.

Although Worrell and the staff were young, the stress and long hours sapped their strength and enthusiasm. Anne Worrell recalled 60 years later: "We were tired all the time and utterly consumed by the newspaper. Gene never worried it wouldn't work. I thought that if things kept up as they were we'd have to close. That was my fear."

Somebody suggested to Worrell during these dark days that he sell the venture. He characteristically rejected the idea. However, it was clear that if the Virginia-Tennessean's situation did not improve, then in a matter of weeks it would close.

And then, like something out of a Hollywood movie, a miracle occurred. The Herald Courier capitulated. Amazingly enough for all of its problems, the Virginia-Tennessean had hurt the competition more than Worrell imagined. Harkrader was much older than Worrell and simply didn't have the energy or enthusiasm to stay in the battle. Although Harkrader had two sons, neither of them was interested in continuing the fight either. So, severely battered, he approached Worrell with a proposal – combine the two newspapers and sell them

as a package. Worrell's response probably surprised Harkrader. "Look," Worrell said, "why don't I buy The Herald Courier."

Harkrader must have been skeptical. He gave Worrell just three days to get the money. Worrell accepted the condition immediately. Of course, he didn't have the money. Neither did his investors. He needed somebody else with deep pockets. That person turned out to be Carroll Reece, a major figure in East Tennessee politics and Tennessee's Republican Party. He also was chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Worrell had met Reece as he moved through regional Republican circles. In addition, Reece had supported Worrell in the 1948 election. In 1950, Reece, a veteran politician was temporarily out of office. He recently had lost a U.S. Senate race to Congressman Estes Kefauver. Reece was biding his time until the 1951 House of Representatives election. Reece entered congress in the 1920s and ultimately served 18 terms there, establishing the longest congressional tenure of any figure in Tennessee history.

Reece was a social and fiscal conservative, and a fierce opponent of the New Deal. He was an isolationist in the 1940s, supported early civil rights legislation, opposed communism during the Cold War and was an ardent advocate for East Tennessee and its business community.

A native of Butler, Tenn., Reece undoubtedly first ran for congress largely on his impressive World War I service record. During the conflict, he served in the U.S. Army, was wounded and won the nation's second highest decoration for bravery, the Distinguished Service Cross. Reece was well educated, holding a bachelor's degree from Carson-Newman College, a master's degree in economics from New York University and a law degree from Cumberland University. He also had studied at the University of London.

In addition to everything else he had done, Reece had married well. His wife Louise D. Goff was wealthy. Her relatives were bankers and lawyers who were both wealthy and well-connected. Her father had been a U.S. Senator. Apparently, the couple met in Washington during Reece's first term in congress in the 1920s. They wed in 1923.

Worrell visited the politician the same day that he accepted Harkrader's proposal. Worrell explained the situation. Reece and his wife thought it was a good idea. They agreed to provide the funding to buy the Herald Courier.

Ultimately, the agreement worked out between all parties was simple. The two Bristol papers would share production, ad and circulation functions under a joint operating agreement. News operations would be separate. Each paper would have a publisher and a reporting staff. The staffs would only collaborate on the Sunday

edition, although The Herald Courier reporters would have the primary responsibility for it.

The legal agreement covering this arrangement provided that the Bristol Herald Courier Publishing Corporation owned The Herald Courier. The Bristol Independent Publishing Corporation owned the Virginia-Tennessean. A third entity, the Bristol Newspaper Printing Corporation was the agent-business manager for both parties. This arrangement was formally agreed to on Feb. 21, 1950.

A NEW ERA BEGINS

Soon after the joint operating agreement began, the Virginia-Tennessean staff left their Shelby Street offices in Tennessee and moved into the Moore Street building in Virginia that housed The Herald Courier. It was an old structure with very old wooden floors that had been oiled for years to keep down the dust. The two reporting staffs shared one newsroom, which made things tight – and tense.

While the Moore Street building wasn't impressive, the initial results from the joint operating agreement were. Ad revenues rose almost immediately. Work hours became stable and normal. And, the Virginia-Tennessean's cranky press and its dreadful debut soon became history.

Unfortunately, the new arrangement also brought new problems. Many employees of The Herald Courier resented the agreement. They viewed the Virginia-Tennessean as an upstart. Tensions existed between the two factions for years. This led to complications with the reporting staffs and workmen in the composing and pressrooms. These frictions became so severe that Herman Giles left in 1950. He went on to the Nashville Tennessean and later joined the Louisville Times. However, Worrell eventually persuaded Giles to return a few years later to serve as executive editor in Bristol. Giles remained there until he retired as publisher.

Worrell also dealt with two problems that overshadowed the employee situation. Carroll Reece was the source of both. First, Reece had sent a publisher to Bristol who was a loyal political operative that knew nothing about the newspaper business. The publisher's decisions often created needless turmoil. Second, Reece expected the papers to print news favorable to the Republican Party and unfavorable to the Democratic Party. His view of journalism was the same as Harkrader's, although it came from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Given Worrell's repeated public pledges that the newspaper would be nonpartisan, this created an unbridgeable gap between the two men.

Worrell and Reece discussed the situation. Both readily agreed that Reece would sell his interest. He told Worrell "find a buyer."

Worrell already had somebody in mind – Carmage Walls. Walls was a legend in southern newspaper circles during the 1950s. Like Worrell, he had a fierce independent streak and desire to succeed. Born in 1908 on a Georgia cotton farm, Walls was largely self-educated and began his career in newspapers stuffing comic sections into the Orlando Sentinel at age 15. He moved from there to the circulation department. Then, he took a correspondence course in accounting and became an assistant bookkeeper at the paper.

Walls' energy and intelligence caught the eye of the Sentinel's management. Within a year of becoming an assistant bookkeeper, Walls was named the paper's

business manager. He soon came to the attention of the Charles Marsh, owner of General Newspapers, which owned the Sentinel. Marsh supported Walls, and, in 1940, named him publisher of two recent acquisitions in Macon, Georgia – The Telegraph and The News. Five years later, Walls became president of General Newspapers.

Walls fully justified Marsh's confidence in him. Walls played a major role in General Newspaper's expansion and advised Marsh frequently on a variety of business and financial matters. However, Walls also wanted success on his own terms. So, he found time to start his own newspaper corporation, Southern Newspapers. By 1951, he was aggressively looking for acquisitions. (Walls' chain lives on well into the early 21st Century. His wife, Martha Ann, and daughter, Lissa Ann, still operate Southern Newspapers in 2010. Walls died in 2005.)

Walls enjoyed a reputation for generosity, business acumen and sound personnel decisions. He easily recognized and understood men of ability who had a fierce drive for independence and success. That's why he often offered ownership positions in his papers to promising managers. As a result, many "alumni" of Walls' papers went on to build successful newspaper chains on their own. The Macon, Georgia newspaper in particular became a training ground for many capable executives and owners.

Worrell and Walls met well before Reece agreed to sell his holdings in the Bristol papers. Worrell and Walls liked, respected and understood each other.

Worrell realized quickly that Walls would be the perfect replacement for Reece. Walls understood the newspaper business, wanted successful operations and didn't have any particular political ax to grind. So, Worrell approached Walls about acquiring Reece's share of the operation. Walls readily agreed and bought out Reece in April 1951.

BUILDING WORRELL NEWSPAPERS

From the beginning, the Worrell-Walls partnership was strong and amicable. Walls was the perfect partner for Worrell. In addition, Worrell learned much from Walls. Worrell especially was impressed by Wall's success at creating a newspaper chain through acquisitions. Worrell recognized that this was far easier than starting a paper from scratch.

With the desire to acquire more papers and create his own group of papers, Worrell eagerly listened and learned from Walls.

Worrell's original statement when he printed the first edition, "We want to create an independent paper for all of the people," carried on as he created Worrell Newspapers, Inc.

He said many times that in creating the newspaper group, it allowed him the right of expression to make a difference. "If it is done honestly and right" he said, "it could also be financially profitable." That was a longtime coming, but his theory proved right.

Worrell's first purchase of an operating newspaper was a modest affair. About 1955, he became interested in the small journal serving Pulaski, a small town located in southwest Virginia. Undoubtedly using Wall's approach as a model, Worrell soon acquired the paper. That act signaled the real start of Worrell Newspapers.

By 1969, the Worrell-Walls group chain owned daily papers in Corinth, Mississippi; Elizabethton, Tennessee; Florence and Jasper, Alabama; Lenoir, North Carolina; and Pulaski, Radford and Suffolk, Virginia. Weeklies were in Blacksburg, Virginia; Blountville, Tennessee; Princeton, West Virginia; Spruce Pine, North Carolina and Winter Park, Florida. In addition, Worrell and Walls shared ownership of operations in Galveston and Texas City, Texas, and Montgomery and Florence, Alabama and Appaloosa, Louisiana.

Worrell steadily bought other ventures. He did so at an opportune time. In some cases, small newspapers run by local families were old, poorly managed and struggling to adapt to rapidly changing printing technology.

“We acquired many that were not running at satisfactory profits levels. And that’s one reason they’re sold,” Worrell told a magazine reporter in the early 1980s. “Newspapers have become so highly technical and difficult to manage that it’s beyond the average single family to keep up with the technology to keep it going. They don’t have the help that group operations can furnish at spot notice.”

Worrell acquired Carmage Walls’ portion of the business in 1968, and they parted as business partners. Their friendship remained strong through the years.

Worrell played an active role in growing and managing the chain over the next decade. It ultimately owned 34 properties. In 1969, a new offset newspaper plant

was built on Morrison Boulevard in Bristol, Virginia. He also developed other business interests.

Both Gene and Anne wrote for the Bristol operation. Gene occasionally prepared editorials. Anne contributed a column, "The View From Here," which began during the 1952 political convention and continued until 1976.

In February 1978, Thomas Worrell, Jr., Gene and Anne's son, acquired the chain through an inter-family transaction. Tom continued to make acquisitions. Worrell Enterprises eventually would own television stations as well as daily and weekly newspapers across the United States.

One paper did not fall under Tom's control-- The Herald Courier-Virginia-Tennessean, which Gene Worrell retained. The Herald Courier-Virginia-Tennessean thrived in the ensuing years. However, changing demographics, newspaper economics and cable television competition led dozens of afternoon dailies to close in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1985, these factors combined to force the deletion of the Virginia-Tennessean on the masthead.

In 1995, Worrell Enterprises under Tom's guidance sold 29 Virginia newspapers to the New York Times and to Media General, a large, publicly-held media company based in Richmond. The acquired papers included the Culpeper Star-Exponent, The Daily Progress in Charlottesville, The News & Advance in

Lynchburg and the Suffolk News-Herald. The transaction also covered 19 weekly papers and six monthly and semimonthly publications.

Two years later, Gene Worrell sold Media General the Herald Courier and two weeklies – The Washington (Virginia) County News and the Sullivan County (Tennessee) News. It was a tough decision but one necessitated by Gene's health and economic reality.

Gene Worrell died at age 86 in April 2006. His passing was noted by journalists, community leaders, friends and family. All mentioned his success, drive, energy and focus.

In retrospect, Worrell's achievement is remarkable. Despite stunning obstacles, he was able to create a credible newspaper from scratch, acquire his rival and then go on to build a thriving newspaper chain that has been described as one of the most successful in United States history.

Worrell's achievement proves that while luck and business skills are needed for commercial success the most important ingredients are resilience, a clear vision and an unconquerable spirit.

APPENDIX A

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

This employee handbook was used during the early years of the Virginia-Tennessean. This guide covered many topics -- journalistic ethics, writing style, news sense, court reporting, spelling and employee benefits.

The handbook carries no date but clearly was written after a joint operating agreement was reached with the Herald Courier. The booklet appears to have been typed and reproduced by mimeograph.

This pamphlet reveals how the newspaper's leadership viewed the role that newspapers and journalists play in American society. The author, who is unknown, emphasized the need for honesty, clarity and fairness in reporting local news. He encouraged reporters to look for stories that would capture the public imagination and tug readers' heartstrings. One suspect that Gene Worrell played close attention to the handbook's lengthy treatment of court and police coverage, and the need to assume that anybody arrested was presumed innocent until a court found otherwise.

The handbook's observations and guidance hold up remarkably well. The vast majority of his advice would find favor at any modern news organization.

In this appendix, the handbook appears in its entirety as originally written. Readers will find that the guidebook provides a fascinating look at newsroom operations at the Virginia-Tennessean as well as insights into 1940s thinking about the power, methods and responsibilities of the press in this county.

VIRGINIA-TENNESSEAN EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Born October 16, 1949, the Virginia-Tennessean is the youngster of the Bristol Newspapers. Its founders and staff hold great pride in the fact that is it now a well established newspaper, being one of a relative few new newspapers to succeed in the last 20 years.

Because of its newness it is adaptable to change, to trial and error and to growth as few other papers are.

It was first conceived as an area newspaper, covering much the same area as the Herald Courier now serves. That conception was dropped with the consolidation of the interests of the two newspapers.

The Virginia-Tennessean now is a metropolitan newspaper, covering principally an area of three counties – Sullivan, Washington, Smyth – and the city of Bristol.

It is, then a LOCAL newspaper. To the V-T the metropolitan Bristol area is the most important place on the face of the earth – the people of that area the most important people! The V-T is to be edited unswervingly with this principle in mind.

What may be good taste in New York is not necessarily good taste in Bristol. We are therefore not as much concerned with editing our newspaper to please the professionals as we are with pleasing our own people.

You must realize that we are in the middle of the “Bible belt.” We are a small town. We are essentially rural in economy. We don’t have open bars. We have strong “dry” forces. We have more church-goers than non-church-goers. We have more fundamentalists than perhaps any other part of the country.

We are “south,” but we are not southern. Our speech is western. We have no race problem. We are 92% Anglo-Saxon. We are financially conservative. Our ancestors were mountaineers, few of whom owned slaves or plantations. Their dollars came hard, from the hillsides, producing a congenital attitude of self-sufficiency and independence.

Politically we are divided – the only area in the South with a strong two-party system.

These are elements you must recognize and understand before you can do your part in producing the V-T as a LOCAL newspaper reflecting the mores, fashions, loves and prejudices of the people we serve.

It is impossible to lay down all of “do’s” and “don’ts” that make up the policy of the V-T. In light of the thinking of the area, however, certain don’ts are obvious:

The over use of sex or the too frank wording of sex stories.

Debunking the area, the town, the people, or their institutions.

Trite treatment of serious news.

Clumsy attempts at cleverness in headlines, crude humor or crudity of any kind.

Favoritism.

Reflection of personal opinion in news stories.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, when you are in doubt about the good taste, the policy or the propriety of the story you write discuss it with your editor or publisher, or leave it out of the paper.

There is one trait that has characterized the staff members of the Virginia-Tennessean: They are loyal to purpose, to the paper and to each other.

The following manual has been prepared as a general statement of ground rules. Obviously, it is not all-inclusive and the policies and suggestions covered in it may be changed from time to time as good judgment dictates. You are asked, however, to study it carefully and follow its principles. Your suggestions for additions or deletions will always be appreciated.

Gene Worrell

Publisher & Owner

GROUND RULES FOR THE NEWSROOM

PERSONAL CONDUCT

Editors, desk men and reporters are not only the eyes and ears of the newspaper. They are the newspaper's representatives to the public.

The good reporter is NOT the fictional prototype with a pint on his hip, a turned-up brim and a cigarette carelessly dangled in the corner of his mouth.

The good reporter is a courteous, clean-living, polite, inquisitive, neatly dressed gentleman, or lady, who commands the respect of his associates and of the community where he works.

He has no on-or-off-the-job habits that will reflect unfavorably on his employers.

He is fair, honest, and sincere, with a stronger than usual belief in the responsibility of the free press.

He does not use his job to clobber his enemies or favor his friends.

In short, he is a personality who conducts himself in a manner becoming the representative of the only business in America whose perpetual freedom is guaranteed and protected by the Constitution of the United States.

GOOD WRITING

Good writing is the Number One rule. Your job is to tell a story, and not to flaunt your vocabulary. Tell it swiftly, tell it accurately, and tell it with a clarity which a child can grasp.

ETHICS

The newspaperman's code of ethics is universal, and you will be wise to observe it religiously. The company will share confidences with you which are not for the ears of the public. One news source will share confidences with you which are not for the ears of another news source. Respect this trust, and you will be respected by them; violate it and your value to the newspaper is at an end.

THE "UNFORGIVABLE SIN"

The deadly sin of newspapering is to be WRONG. A deadlier one is to be wrong and unreasonable. When you make an error, correct it immediately. You owe it to your reader and to your source, and it establishes a reputation for sincerity. Your second mistake will not be looked upon so harshly, if your first one was corrected.

GOOD LIVING

The rules of good living are important in any job. Be courteous, be considerate, be yourself. Actually, no man works for another. What he does for his employer is reflected by his own success.

ADD COLOR

It is unlikely that it will ever be our privilege to write a story which has not been written before. But this does not mean it has to be written the way it

was written before - in dead, unmoving language which reads like an almanac or a table of statistics.

There are many ways to record for public consumption the fact that a man has been killed by violent means and that another is being held on a charge of murder. Still, daily newspapers which follow the line of least resistance record it, even now, in this manner; "John Smith is dead today and Sam Jones is in city jail, charged with murder in connection with the crime."

An alert reporter, one who has the keen perception necessary to be a good newspaperman, most certainly should be able to convey to the reader a more vivid picture of violent death and impending tragedy than the flat, unimpressive example above.

ENTHUSIASM

Trite, hackneyed writing is usually the result of a reporter who regards all his material as routine chores. A REPORTER'S MATERIAL BECOMES ROUTINE STUFF ONLY WHEN HIS MIND BECOMES ROUTINE AND HIS ENTHUSIASM

DIES. Whether or not a story is routine depends entirely upon the way it is treated; if he writes it in routine style it is bound to be routine; but if he gives each story something of himself, a touch of understanding which the average person would never see, then he has a story which is fresh and interesting.

THE UNUSUAL TWIST

Often a story is uninteresting because of meager facts upon which to base it. After several hundred such incidents, the report of an automobile collision does not give a reporter thrills of excitement. But, if the occupants of the two cars happened to be brothers; or if one of the principals had had a similar misfortune in the same spot on the same day of the month in another year, then you have a twist which makes the reader look upon the report with appreciation and say: "Well, whattya know?" A wise reporter asks every conceivable question about every

incident, and his chances of coming up with an angle are almost assured.

The difference in a good news story and a mediocre news story is usually that one has an "angle" and the other does not.

HUMAN INTEREST

Human interest material, the stuff that gives a newspaper heart and soul, almost invariably depends on the angle. Human interest material is that which plays to the weaknesses and soft spots of all humankind: the story of the stray cat rescued from a traffic jam by a big burly policeman, the story of the bulldog grieving at the spot where his master died, the story of a bird building its nest in the corner traffic light, the story of the crippled man faced by the perplexing problems of locomotion when his crutch snaps in two while he's hobbling down the street. They are stories which happen every day in any city or settlement; incidents in which nothing astounding or shocking occurs, wherein no great problems of the world are

solved, but men or women are placed in such position that the rest of the world is interested in them because they have a heart.

A PARAGRAPH OF HUMAN INTEREST MATERIAL, SKILLFULLY HANDLED, WILL EVOKE MORE COMMENT THAN TWO COLUMNS OF COMMENT ON THE EUROPEAN SITUATION, and the reporter who remembers this will make a valuable contribution to the news columns of his newspaper. Once the material is gathered, treat it with concern. Do not use it flippantly if the matter is a serious one, but if it is something to laugh about make it amusing. Where there is drama and pathos in the situation, try to write it in such a way that the reader will share the experience of the person involved in the story.

SIMPLICITY

In all its news columns, the newspaper will seek to have a combination of smooth, vivid writing combined with clarity and simplicity which will distinguish us in our field. The modern trend is

toward rules of thumb for the proper preparation of readable news copy, with the number of words per sentence specified along with the number of syllables per word. Some of the rules are plain gibberish.

Good news writing is no different from good writing of any kind. Its object is to inform the public and, at the same time, attract readers. This is a rule in itself. To inform the public we must collect facts and put them into comprehensive form. To attract readers we must do this forcefully and colorfully, give them more information in each story than any other newspaper and give it to them in a way that is easier to read.

USE OF ADJECTIVES

Basic rules include simple sentence structure and a minimum of adjectives. Adjectives for the sake of adjectives, or because the writer likes words, should be discarded before they are put on paper. Adjectives that will give the story a lift or added force should be used without question.

PARAGRAPHING

Break stories up into many paragraphs. A long block of type without the relief of indentation is unattractive and has the air of complication in its appearance.

TWO-BIT WORDS

Stay away from two-bit words when a five-cent word will do. The dictionary habit is a good one, but a Tennessee farmer with a fourth-grade education does not want to stop in the middle of a sentence to go look up the word "apprehended" when you could have written "arrested" and let him keep his seat.

Think of your reader, and remember this: You are never writing a story to please yourself; you are writing it to please your reader, for he is the man who pays the paper's way.

INVESTIGATE

Every story is not a big story, so don't get in the habit of discounting the little ones. ANYTHING

WHICH HAS THE FAINTEST AROMA OF INTEREST SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED AND EXPLORED. Never pass up information because you believe it is trivial. If it is debatable, get the information and discuss it with the City Editor or the Managing Editor, for they are to be the judge of what is newsworthy and what is not. If it isn't a story when you hear it or find it, there are possibilities that it might develop into one and you will be that much ahead. It is much better to spend a little time on five false leads than to miss one good story because you judged it prematurely.

COURT REPORTING

ACCURATE. Unless he has studied law, a newspaperman is not expected to be a legal expert, but there are certain fundamentals with which he must familiarize himself. When legal terms and phrases become a necessary part of the reporting job, don't attempt to put two-and-two together and come up with a vague explanation of them. There are attorneys and clerks and judges in every court, and any of them will

be glad to explain procedures. Don't hesitate to ASK them; don't write a story about court procedure unless you understand it yourself. It is a reporter's job to get this information and interpret it in language our readers will understand. They are not legal experts, either, and they will be confused and annoyed if they do not understand what they read.

POLICE NEWS

In handling police news, remember A CHARGE IS NOT A CONVICTION. Be cautious in reporting arrests, make certain names are used as they appear on police records, and get the address whenever possible. Many people are named John Smith. When John Smith, of 1818 Orchard Drive, is arrested for larceny there is no doubt as to which John Smith it was. But if John Smith is being held in City Jail (and nothing more is written) John Smith of 105 State Street is going to be embarrassed and angry enough to attempt some action, even if it's nothing more than dropping his subscription to the paper.

Use of names in crime news should be restricted until a hearing is held, and it is determined whether or not there is enough evidence to support charges which have been made. In this case, the defendant will either be bound over for grand jury action, jailed, or released on bond. IN MOST CASES CHARGES WHICH DO NOT CARRY JAIL SENTENCES ARE HARDLY WORTHY OF PLACING THE MAN IN THE PUBLIC EYE AND AT THE MERCY OF CRITICISM.

One danger of using a man's name in connection with criminal charges, when the charge is brought by another INDIVIDUAL rather than by state or county, is that many of them never come to trial. The prosecutor, or man who swears the warrant, can drop the charge, pay the costs, and that is the end of the incident. If the newspaper prints the story in the meantime, we are placed in the position of charging the man, when police authorities are not. The same thing can happen in the case of city or county, and when the reporter is "in" on the story from the start, he will have a fairly good idea of whether or not the charge is going to stand up in court.

In the interest of fairness, remember to FOLLOW UP ON STORIES wherein the name is used. If the man is accused, tried and freed, he deserves the same notoriety for his acquittal as he did for his arrest.

FAMILY SQUABBLES

There are certain types of criminal cases which should be taken always with a grain of salt. These are the family squabbles, in which the wife charges the husband, father his son, or in-laws against in-laws. Family arguments often result in criminal charges during the heat of anger, and then die before they reach a preliminary hearing. Once a newspaper gets involved in one of these, it does not have one member descending upon the staff, but all of them banded together against a common interloper.

HOODLUMS

In the same category as the family brawl case is the hoodlum war. When a known bootlegger or a confidence man charges his opposition with a crime, it

is usually a grudge game. Nine times out of ten, he never shows up to prosecute, because he's figured out some better way to get satisfaction. Often this better way is a gun or knife, and the reporter who watches these things develop gets a bigger story in the end than he would have gotten from the court case.

POLICE NEWS WRITING

Never write any criminal charge without attributing the facts to some authority: Two men and a woman were arrested on State Street last night and charged with robbery in connection with the looting of a jewelry store, BRISTOL POLICE REPORTED TODAY.

POLICE RECORDS IDENTIFIED the trio as John Smith, Jim Jones and Kate Kupp.

Exceptions to this rule, of course, are statements of fact and personal observation by the writer: At a hearing this morning in City Court, the two men were bound over to the Sullivan County grand jury and their bond was set at \$10,000 each.

SPELLING

Develop the dictionary habit. Use the preferred spelling, which is listed first. Poor spelling is the mark of illiteracy, a bad mark for any newspaper. Do not take chances when you are in doubt, but look it up and make absolutely certain you are correct.

Misspelled words, proof errors and grammatical errors are ruinous to the reputation of the reporter and the newspaper.

INGENUITY

The difference in a good reporter and a bad one is the good reporter develops his nose for news. The "nose" is not inherited or something you are born with. It is nothing more than ingenuity.

In Bristol, there are no days when there is "no news." An enterprising reporter can find news every minute of every day, of every year, in Bristol, if he is wide awake and a bit ingenuous.

News is generally not found in the office or collected by building calluses on the fanny and

elbows. It is the product of sole leather and ingenuity.

COMPANY SET-UP AND GENERAL POLICY

The Herald Courier is owned by the Bristol Herald Courier Publishing Corp.; the Virginia-Tennessean by the Bristol Independent Publishing Corp. The Bristol Newspaper Printing Corp. is the agent-business manager for both papers, but as such has nothing to do with the editorial policies of the two papers. The news and editorial policies of the two papers differ in as many ways as the respective publishers decide.

Since the business operations of the two papers are joint, what one or the other paper does, good and bad, equally affects the other paper's business welfare. The job here is to produce two legitimately different newspapers - both the finest Bristol can afford.

The news staffs are competitive, developing their own news sources and fighting for first breaks in the news. But competition should cease when it may cause

damage to the other paper. In other words, competition between the staffs should be maintained INSIDE the building, but not at the expense of the reputations or welfare of the competing paper OUTSIDE.

The Sunday paper is a joint endeavor, with the Herald Courier staff having the primary responsibility for it. The V-T staff will make assigned contributions and assumes the continuing responsibility of informing the Sunday staff or covering any news developments which, from the standpoint of time, should appear in the Sunday editions.

In the absence of the publisher of either paper, the other publisher should be contacted regarding questions of policy.

Business copy of the type generally run in connection with special advertising promotions should originate, or be cleared with the advertising manager. If, in the opinion of the editors, the requests of the ad department are not in conformity with sound news judgment, the publisher should be consulted.

PICK UP POLICY

In order to maintain the individuality of the two newspapers, and at the same time stay within the limitations of our production facilities, the following general rules will govern pick up between the two papers. THE MANAGING EDITORS MAY VARY THESE RULES WHEN SPECIAL EDITIONS OR OTHER CAUSES THROW AN IMPOSSIBLE PRODUCTION PROBLEM ON THE BACK SHOP. Otherwise they are to be strictly maintained.

1. It is to be considered high priority and must be handled or closely supervised by the managing editor, or city editor.
2. No features or feature pictures will be picked up.
3. No news pictures, except top spot news when no other picture is available, will be picked up.
4. Top local news stories may be picked up, but shall ALWAYS have a new lead. The relative position as to page, spot on the page and general play should be changed in order to give a different appearance.

5. Top local news stories MUST ALWAYS be investigated for possible new angles by the staff picking them up. New leads should come from legitimate investigation rather than from rewriting. Because a story appears in one paper does not mean that the other staff can accept it and print it without verifying the facts in it.
6. Routine stories may be picked up in their entirety if a new head is written, and the lead and the position play are changed. Most of the time they should be condensed.

EMPLOYEE PROGRAM

After three months, each employee is given a \$2,000 life insurance policy with premiums paid entirely by the company.

Also, after three months, each employee is entitled to a hospitalization policy with premiums paid by the company. The employee may include other members of his family at nominal rates which may be paid by payroll deductions.

Vacation terms: One week the first year of employment, two weeks thereafter. Vacations must be taken during the year in which they are due, except when management requests otherwise.

There are no sick leave provisions for salaried employees, but reasonable arrangements will be made when time off for sickness is necessary.

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS

This appendix contains some photos of the equipment used by the Virginia-Tennessean in its earliest days and some of the people involved in its creation. Captions are arranged by page.

Page 74

The Virginia-Tennessean adopted the symbol of a newsboy early on. In fact, he appears in a slightly different pose on page 77. After Worrell Newspapers was well-established, the Worrells commissioned this statue.

Page 75

The first edition of the Virginia-Tennessean almost didn't appear due to problems with the Goss press. This picture, taken the night the newspaper first published, captures both the confusion and exhaustion that everyone felt. Gene Worrell is the sleepy subject.

Page 76

The first edition of the Virginia-Tennessean appeared on Oct. 16, 1949. As this facsimile of the front page shows, it was dedicated to a mix of international, national and local news.

Page 77

Gene Worrell was determined that the newspaper would be objective. He formally made a pledge to the community that it would be "an independent newspaper for all of the people" paper.

Page 78

Herman Giles (right) was a veteran newspaperman and editor when he came to the Virginia-Tennessean in 1949 as its first editor. Giles learned the reporter's craft on-the-job in east Tennessee. Ultimately, he spent decades with Worrell Newspapers and became close friends with Gene Worrell, whom he often described as being as close to him as a brother. Gene is to the left. This photo was taken in 1969 during the official opening of the new Bristol, Virginia newspaper plant.

Page 79

The linotype was a major breakthrough in newspaper printing technology. Developed in the late 19th century, the machine was used to set type for decades. Advances in computer technology brought about the demise of the linotype in the 1970s and 1980s.

Page 80

This is a Ludlow machine. The maximum size type that could be produced by Linotype machines was 36 points, about ½ inches in height. Larger sizes were generally set on the Ludlow machine, which was named for the company that manufactured it. The Ludlow machine had precision-cut brass or copper molds for each letter of the alphabet. The individual letters were locked in a metal "stick," which was placed over an outlet that allowed the molten metal to be pumped into the molds for headlines or display advertising.

Page 81

This is a Goss mat roller, which involved a part of the hot-metal printing process. Columns of news type and advertising displays are locked in a page-size steel frame called a chase. A moist, fiber-like sheet similar to cardboard is placed on top of the chase, which rests on a heavy steel bed. The bed then moves forward beneath the roller, under heavy pressure. A mold of the page is produced, used later to cast a curved metal plate, which can be fitted on a press cylinder for fast printing.

Page 82

A worker operates this curved router to prepare a press plate for color printing.

Page 83

This piece of equipment is generally known simply as a lead melting pot, and that's its function. After the day's edition is finished employees began tearing down the pages and dumping the used type on the floor. It was then shoveled into the pot, where it was re-melted and poured into forms that shaped new "pigs" for use on the Linotype machines once again.

Page 84

Anne and Gene Worrell made an unbeatable team. Together, they worked tirelessly in Gene's failed 1940s bid for a congressional seat and later supported one another while building a successful newspaper chain.







Russia Ready with Enough Planes, Men To Attack Washington, Bradley Warns

Accused Slayer Surrenders To Sheriff on Wise Mountain

U.S. Conferees Switch Stand On Farm Bill

Sex Parties Bring Charge For 14 Men

Reds Rig Trial of Minister To Up Army, Insider Claims

Virginia Oil Gusher Keeps Gushing

Polite Local Police 'Aid' Escapee

Murray Will Help Lewis In Strike

Youth Held In Shooting

Marine Attack On AF Listed

100 Rich Barrels per Hour

Plants at Alcoa End Preparations For Monday Strike

Disling Segregation On Southern Cars Belongs CIO Brief

Soviets Can Mass Three Million Men

Cafe Proprietor In Customs Wounded

Our Apologies

100 Rich Barrels per Hour

Plants at Alcoa End Preparations For Monday Strike

Virginia Oil Gusher Keeps Gushing

Disling Segregation On Southern Cars Belongs CIO Brief



100 Rich Barrels per Hour

The first edition ...

It was a big paper (64 pages) even by 1989 standards. And it took the total skills and dedication of everyone to make sure the new baby was born healthy --- even if she was just a little late coming out.

"In truth, the Virginia-Tennessean shall keep before it the slogan now printed on its masthead: 'AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER FOR ALL THE PEOPLE'."

From the paper's first editorial, headlined "The Whole Story," Oct. 16, 1949



The Whole Story

The Virginia-Tennessean which you are reading for the first time today is the result of five months of arduous effort by its organizers; weeks of preparation, study and concerted effort by its staff; and the realization of dreams envisaged for years by many people of Bristol, Southwest Virginia and Upper East Tennessee.

Bristol is now the third city in Tennessee with two independently-owned newspapers. Until today, Knoxville and Chattanooga were the only two cities in the state which could be assured this degree of fine expression and public information.

The Virginia-Tennessean is owned by the people it will serve, being a stock company with over 50 stockholders among whom are many of the business and civic leaders of the entire section. Ownership is divided among Democrats and Republicans; Catholics, Protestants and Jews; retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, professional men and farmers. The Board of Directors is equally representative. Members of the Board include Jack Stone, chairman, and Dr. Nat Copenhaver, president, both well-known business and civic leaders and both prominent in Tennessee-Virginia Democratic politics. Vice-president and publisher of the Virginia-Tennessean was last year the Ninth District Republican candidate for Congress.

Personnel of the newspaper includes the managing editors from three other daily newspapers; two advertising managers of other dailies; one manager and one assistant circulation manager from other fine neighboring newspapers. Every man was handpicked for his knowledge, ability and desire to be of service to the area.

The Virginia-Tennessean has set many goals toward which it will strive. These goals, will, from time to time, become the subject

of public expression. Generally speaking, it shall be an AREA newspaper, dedicated to the improvement and advancement of Bristol and all of Bristol's neighbors in Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

It shall be an INDEPENDENT newspaper, now and forever more determined to print unbiased and unprejudiced news. Its purpose shall be to inform, not to sway; its ownership being bipartisan, its editorial policy shall not be controlled or influenced by Democrat or Republican. It shall, however, stand firmly against "isms" and "ism-lovers" and will at all times say what it believes without regard to those affected.

It shall be a newspaper of SERVICE to the reader, to the advertiser, and to the area. Because, as a newspaper, it will affect the thought and the business lives of so many, it shall be considered by its management a quasi-public institution. This newspaper, like other businesses, will strive to make a profit; it must make a profit in order to exist at all. But its duties and obligations to its employees and to the public are to be held more sacred than its balance sheet.

It shall be a newspaper filled with CIVIC PRIDE and SPIRIT. It shall "accent the positive," without overlooking the "negative."

It will not be technically perfect all the time, but it will be honest all the time. Its readers are invited to participate in its efforts toward civic betterment by constructive criticism, by submitting ideas, and by joint effort with the paper in making their representative communities better places in which to live.

In truth, the Virginia-Tennessean shall keep before it the slogan now printed on its masthead: "AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER FOR ALL THE PEOPLE."
T. E. W.

A strong editorial voice ...

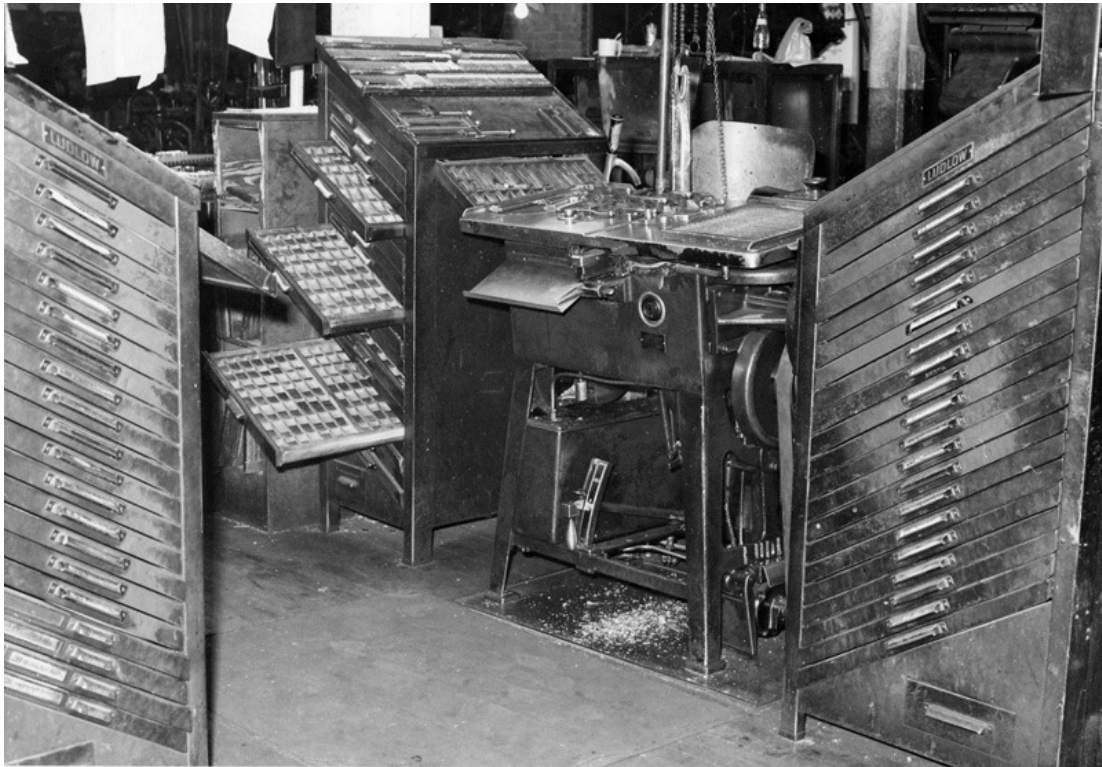
The V-T meant to speak out both loud and strong on its editorial page. From the first issue's declaration of intent, a thoughtful message grew into the region's leading voice of reason.

Gene Worrell

Herman Giles

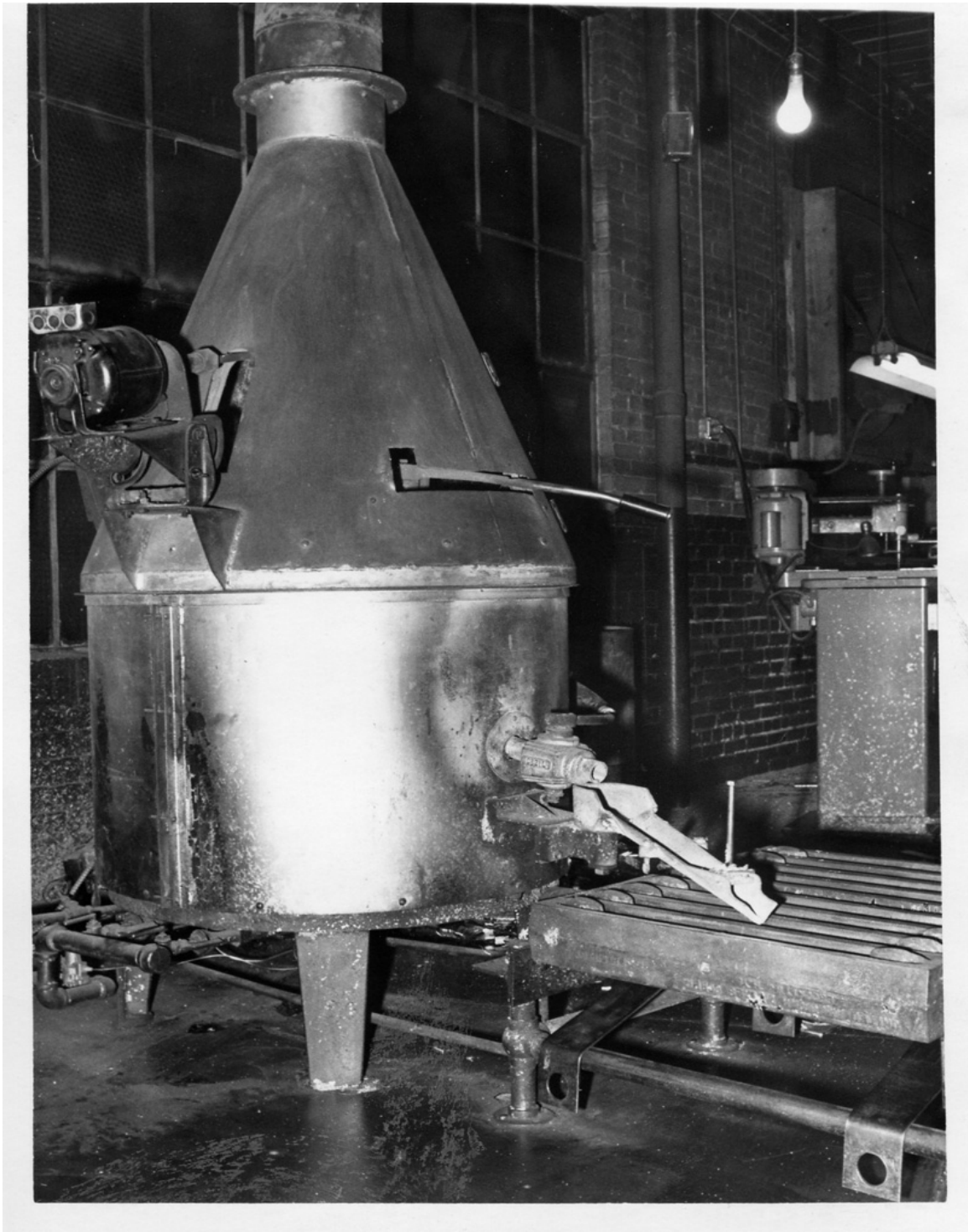














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