

THE RISING SUN--  
A HISTORY OF THE SUN NEWSPAPERS OF OMAHA, INC.

by

WILLIAM HERBERT BOYER

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Approved by:

*Del Brinkman*

Major Professor

## PREFACE

For David Blacker, the sun rose in the South and set at every point on the compass--and it continued that unorthodox pattern for more than 30 years, from the time he bought the tiny South Omaha Sun in 1935 until his death in 1965, when he left a city-wide network of Sun Newspapers that reached more than 400,000 Omahans each week.

From the first faint morning light in the old print shop in South Omaha until the days it shone into nearly every Omaha home, David Blacker was the driving, vital force behind the Sun Newspapers of Omaha, Inc. He pushed, planned and promoted until the South Omaha Sun with its 14,000 free circulation became the five Sun Newspapers with a paid circulation of more than 50,000 and an annual income exceeding one million dollars. It was not easy. At first, the Sun was hardly a noticeable glimmer in the southern sky.

The author would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance and friendly patience of members of the Sun staff, past and present, including Stan Lipsey, Charlie Hein, Paul Williams, Bill Drake, Phil Gurney and Pete Citron, a Sun desk man who can't stand to see a misspelled word. A note of appreciation also goes to Mrs. Jeanne Blacker Lipsey, who introduced the author to David Blacker the man, the husband and father.

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## INTRODUCTION

South Omaha, the city that gave the Sun birth, was a bawdy, free-wheeling by-product of the meat packing industry.

There was nothing humble about its beginnings. It started with a bang and grew as fast as livestock pens and buildings could spring out of the mud. From nothing more than a few hundred acres of open cornfield in 1883, it began a growth spiral so fantastic it earned the name "Magic City."

It was also the city of a dream, that of an enterprising group of Omaha businessmen, Alexander Swan, William A. Paxton, John A. Creighton, Peter E. Iler, John A. McShane, Thomas Swobe and Frank Murphy, the founders of the Union Stock Yards of Omaha.<sup>1</sup>

That infant company met December 1, 1883, and decided to purchase 156½ acres southwest of Omaha for stockyards. Work began in the spring of 1884, under the direction of Paxton, who is considered the founder of South Omaha. By August 1, the yards were completed and received their first load of cattle.

Things were slow at first. The yards were nothing more than a watering place for cattle bound for the packing plants of Chicago. It was not until 1885, when the farsighted developers saw the need for their own packing plant, that South

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<sup>1</sup>Bob Guthrie, "South Omaha--Centennial City," South Omaha Sun, April 13, 1967, p. 1.

Omaha began to boom.

And boom it did. By 1889, there were three major packing plants and more than 8,000 people in the "Magic City." Cattle were selling fast but property was selling even faster.<sup>1</sup>

With each incoming train, more people arrived. And, as with the boom towns of the mining country, the pioneer packing industry etched a rough character into the face of South Omaha.

An early newspaperman, E. O. Mayfield, described arrival in South Omaha like this:

The day I arrived was a raw and disagreeable one-- snow and slush and mud of various colors and of extraordinary sticking persistency everywhere.

'South Omaha,' yelled the conductor on the old dummy train, and I got off just in time to see a passing switch engine toss a Chinaman high into the air, and when he came down it required a basket to pick up the pieces. I had been looking for a lively town, and well, here it was.

In every respect the place reminded one of the western mining towns. Half-way up the gully street a commotion was observed to the right. The 'Bouncer' had boldly thrown from Con Groner's saloon a citizen, who landed on his head and stuck there.<sup>2</sup>

But despite the mud and fist-fights, South Omaha continued to grow like Topsy. By 1909, the assessed value of real property in the little, two-square mile city was more than \$15 million, or the same price that America paid for the entire Louisiana Territory, of which South Omaha was a part,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

a hundred years earlier. June 21, 1915, South Omaha became part of the city of Omaha, its big sister to the north.<sup>1</sup>

Into this rowdy city flowing with blood, cattle and beer, and destined to become the largest meat packing center in the world, came the pioneer journalist.

The first newspaper was a weekly, the South Omaha Globe, published by J. B. Erion on October 30, 1885. January 1, 1886, the Globe joined forces with the Omaha Live Stock Journal under the flag South Omaha Globe-Journal. Erion went daily June 12, 1886, with South Omaha's first daily paper, the Stockman. Replacing the Globe-Journal, the Stockman was printed in the parlor of the Union Stock Yard Hotel.

When Erion had finally proved a newspaper could live in South Omaha, it didn't take long for others to copy the idea. John A. MacMurphy established the Magic City Hoof and Horn on December 20, 1887. December 17 of the following year it became the Daily Drovers Journal, owned by L. F. Hilton.

John Titchar followed in 1890 with his South Omaha Daily Tribune. Many of the little papers died before the ink was really dry on their first editions. The Times, founded by E. O. Mayfield on February 24, 1887, died October 26, 1890. A. E. Brigham's Boomer lasted from February 15, 1889, to April 15, 1890. W. A. Root's News lived from June 19, 1890,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

to November 27, 1890. Brigham combined with A. H. Powers and founded the Enterprise. It lasted from July 12, 1891, to November 27, 1891.

S. P. Brigham joined the slaughter with the Bulletin. It died in less than six months, January 18, 1892, to June 27, 1892. Erion left his Stockman and had another go at it with the Eagle on April 13, 1892. The paper joined the Omaha Republican a short time later and died very quietly.<sup>1</sup>

This was the picture on November 27, 1895, when a new tabloid daily hit the still muddy South Omaha streets--the South Omaha Daily Sun. Founded as a penny paper by editor J. F. Ritchhart, it appeared every evening except Sunday. It ran eight pages and was printed by the South Omaha Printing Company, 2530 N Street. An ear claimed, "It Shines for All."

The Sun was typical of most early papers. A majority of the content was advertising. Some ads ran on page one in the right column. Body type was eight point, except for a page one column of editorial notes, which ran in ten point. Headlines were mostly one line label heads.

A typical item of local interest, which appeared on page one, April 4, 1896, was:

J. Vomacke, who is insane, left his home this morning in Brown Park and walked on the B and M railroad tracks at Plattsmouth yesterday and brought back today and is now at police court.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James W. Savage and John T. Bell, History of Omaha, (New York, N.Y., Munsell and Co., 1894), p. 657.

<sup>2</sup>South Omaha Daily Sun, April 4, 1896, p. 1.

The Daily Sun lived longer than most of the South Omaha papers. On May 21, 1901, it was absorbed by the South Omaha Daily Times, which had been founded the year before. Titchar's Daily Tribune was also absorbed by the Times on the same day. The Times also bought out the Magic City Hoof and Horn, which continued as the Times' weekly edition.

The South Omaha Daily Times officially became the Omaha Daily Times on April 4, 1902, and was absorbed January 1, 1903, by the Nebraska Daily Democrat.

The Daily Democrat, located at 2421 O Street in South Omaha, was edited by "Doc" John M. Tanner, described as one of the "best known characters in the metropolis of Nebraska."<sup>1</sup>

The Daily Democrat was forced to become a weekly, the Nebraska Democrate, on July 17, 1915, and finally died a quiet death in 1921. Along with it died the combination of papers which included the Daily Sun, the first paper to carry the Sun flag in South Omaha.<sup>2</sup>

On January 27, 1922, however, the Sun flag again appeared on the streets of South Omaha--the Omaha Sun, an eight column, four page, weekly. Editor and publisher of the new venture was Eugene N. Strahl.

The paper continued as a weekly until 1924, when it became tri-weekly, publishing on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Sorenson, History of Omaha, (Omaha, Nebr., National Printing Company, 1920), p. 458.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Monday edition was suspended February 8, 1932, and the paper continued as a semi-weekly until 1935. Like many of the papers before it, the Sun developed into an eight-page format, more than half of which were devoted to advertising. The remainder included social, club and Parent Teacher Association notes, a word or two on what was happening in the schools and politics and a little general news.<sup>1</sup>

The paper's reputation was not always without tarnish. During the 1920's, recalled present Sun publisher Stanford Lipsey, the paper was run by a bootlegger. "His idea of circulation was to put a roll of paper on the press and when it ran out, that was the circulation for the week!" The lack of records for this period seems to bear out the informal atmosphere which must have prevailed during those early years.<sup>2</sup>

On October 5, 1932, Strahal retired as editor but continued as owner under the name Omaha Sun Publishing Company. The new editor was Wellington A. Smith, who continued in that position until January 11, 1935, when David Blacker took over the Sun operation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Omaha Sun, bound volumes, 1924 and 1932.

<sup>2</sup>Stan Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Omaha Sun, October 5, 1932, p. 2.

CHAPTER I  
FIRST LIGHT

Thirty-three year old David Blacker first walked into the offices of the South Omaha Sun in January of 1935. He was the Sun's new publisher--a position not without problems. One major South Omaha bank flatly turned down his request for \$500 operating funds.

Still young in the publishing field, Blacker was no newcomer to Omaha journalism. The eldest son of a large Russian family, he had accompanied his father to America to help earn money to bring the remainder of his family to this country. Dropping out of high school at an early age, he worked at a variety of jobs.

By the early 1920's, young Blacker was ready for his first newspaper job. He quit a rather well-paying grocery store job and joined William Norman, publisher of the North Omaha Booster, as a salesman. The bookkeeper at the Booster was a young girl Blacker had known for some time, Marie Racusin. In 1922, the two were married.

"The next few years were the formative ones, not particularly successful but crucially important to Dave Blacker," reported Paul N. Williams, a long-time friend of Blacker's and the former Sun managing editor. "He became a protege of the late Harry Lapidus, a leader of the Omaha business community; he learned business and a broad philosophy of life from

the many people he met as an advertising salesman for Norman and briefly for the World-Herald."<sup>1</sup>

In 1930, he was ready to strike out on his own. He bought the Jewish Press, a modest little news sheet for the Jewish community, printed at the Interstate Press in central Omaha. After a limited amount of success and some initial setbacks, he took the biggest step of his short career--he moved into South Omaha and bought the old Sun.

"A Paper Reborn" announced a page two headline on January 11, 1935, Dave Blacker's first edition. The story said nothing about Blacker the man but, instead, said much about the man's hopes and ideas.

Today the South Omaha Sun is reborn. . .a healthy, progressive newspaper devoted to the best interests of the people living on the South Side.

Though the South Side is legally a part of the Omaha family, it is not an infant depending upon its mother; it is a full-grown community with its own interests and needs--political, economic, social, communal. To serve these needs is the aim of the new South Omaha Sun.

We who live and work and do business in South Omaha, look forward to better times and greater prosperity. The South Side represents a definite trade area which meets all of our wants, and it is the residents, workers and businesses of South Omaha who benefit from the money spent in this territory. Through the Sun, the consumer and merchant will have a pleasant meeting place.

We invite you to use our columns freely--we want the Sun to be the clearing house for all that

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<sup>1</sup>Paul N. Williams, "David Blacker--His Quest," Sun Newspapers, April 15, 1965, p. 30.

happens on the South Side, the trading post for the ideas and opinions of South Siders. If you do not receive the paper, please call us, because we are paying to have the South Omaha Sun delivered to your door each and every week. Read the paper and we know that you will enjoy it. For our services to the South Side, all we ask is your loyalty to our advertisers, whose advertisements make your papers possible.<sup>1</sup>

Blacker's first paper was an eight page, eight column edition. A large house ad announced that the Sun had "100 per cent South Side coverage," and reached 63,000 people. Circulation at the time was 14,000 free distribution. Advertising made up approximately 50 per cent of the paper's content.<sup>2</sup>

In his first editorial, Managing Editor, Business Editor and Publisher David Blacker outlined the editorial policy the Sun was to follow for many years.

#### The Policy of the New South Omaha Sun. . .

To serve the people on the South Side and to do our utmost to promote what is best for their welfare.

To present through our columns a picture of the activities and happenings which make up South Omaha's throbbing, interesting life.

To keep within the South Side territory as much as possible the benefits from the territory comprising 'Nebraska's largest Payroll.' To this end, we shall try to stimulate pleasant business relations between South Siders.

To battle without let-up for full representation by South Siders in public office, changing

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<sup>1</sup>"A Paper Reborn," South Omaha Sun, January 11, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4.

the present attempt to treat the South Side like a poor in-law in the city's politics.

To help South Omaha grow and prosper. To uphold what is right and just.

To co-operate with all South Siders and particularly with the booster organizations in improving the South Side and beautifying it.

To deliver a paper to your door regularly. If you live within the boundaries of the South Side as outlined on the front page, you should receive your copy without fail. As we are paying to have a paper delivered to you, we will thank you to call us when you fail to receive one.<sup>1</sup>

The rebirth of the South Omaha Sun, "News Medium of Nebraska's Largest Payroll," was not without resistance, however. One long-time associate recalls the problems Blacker encountered when he went to advertisers, one at a time, to explain why he had to raise ad rates.

"Dave had this inner fire," he recalled. "He was convinced he was going to make the South Omaha Sun something, a medium that people would listen to and believe in. He needed money to get the staff to do that job, but a lot of merchants down here didn't believe him. It was rough going for Dave for many years."<sup>2</sup>

Emphasizing that, Stan Lipsey, Blacker's son-in-law, added, "The Sun didn't show a profit for the first eight years that Dave owned it."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Williams, "David Blacker," p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Stan Lipsey, interview with William H. Boyer, January 6, 1968.

The rough going proved no brake for Dave Blacker, though. With offices in the Breen Building, 4504 South 24th, the chain that would eventually cover all of Omaha began to take form. Less than a year after he purchased the Sun, he was joined by Frank R. Ackerman as editor. Not long after, Robert M. Singer became associate editor.

In 1936, two major changes took place that would shape the face of the Sun for the next 30 years--the paper changed to its present-day format and number two joined the family.

Discarding the unwieldy eight column design, the first tabloid edition appeared Thursday, June 11, 1936. Content and writing remained basically the same, however. A small box on the front page heralded the event.

Progress is the keynote of the South Omaha Sun and in keeping with our trend forward, we are changing the form of our newspaper to a tabloid.

This change was made after careful consideration and we feel certain that our readers will be highly pleased with the tabloid form, giving you a more compact, handier and more interesting communal publication.

We invite the comment of our readers on the tabloid size of the South Omaha Sun.<sup>1</sup>

With the tabloid form came a new style of delivery that was to be the Sun's hallmark for many years; each paper was neatly rolled and fastened to the reader's front doorknob with a rubberband.

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<sup>1</sup>South Omaha Sun, June 11, 1936, p. 1.

CHAPTER II  
THE DUNDEE NEWS

Had all been well with the tiny Sun's profit and loss columns, there might never have been a rebirth for Miles Greenleaf and his Dundee Advertiser--but it was not.

In an effort to maintain the printing plant, Dave Blacker decided to expand. The result was the refounding of a minute but salty weekly in the influential Dundee residential area, the Dundee Advertiser.

The Advertiser had a short but saucy life. Founded on March 5, 1911, the paper was the brainchild of Burke H. Sinclair, then city editor of the Omaha World-Herald. A year later he was succeeded as editor and publisher by Paul Sisson, editor of the Omaha Daily News. Twelve months later the paper passed into the hands of Harry D. Reed, trustee of the Village of Dundee.<sup>1</sup>

Not a journalist himself, Reed hired Mr. and Mrs. Miles Greenleaf as editors and Kenneth F. Reed as business manager. Greenleaf was a newspaperman of the old school. Writing and editing from an "office" in a booth at the Dundee Dell, a favorite area tavern, he put out a salty, entertaining paper that rapidly became the talk of the Village.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dundee News, October 9, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Paul N. Williams in an interview with William H. Boyer, Nov. 26, 1967.

The largely upper-class residential Village did not remain a Village for long, though. Metropolitan Omaha had been knocking on the door for a long time and early in 1916, Dundee was annexed. With no need for an official Village paper, Reed and Greenleaf closed the doors of the Advertiser.

Those doors remained closed until Friday, April 24, 1936, when a surprised public received number one of the Dundee News, Dave Blacker, publisher, and Miles Greenleaf, editor.

A front page editorial by the Mayor of Omaha, set three columns wide of the five column tabloid page, heralded the event.

A newspaper is indispensable to the life of a thriving community. This becomes even more emphasized when that journal honestly devotes itself to the furtherance of all that is sound and good economically, socially and politically.

The commencement of the publication of a newspaper dedicated to the advancement of the interest of the western part of our city signifies a step in the right direction. It opens an avenue for a better understanding of the problems of your neighborhood and a means of crystallizing public sentiment in the solution of those problems.

I am especially happy to welcome the advent of the Dundee News because of the solid reputation for good journalism possessed by the publisher. From my personal knowledge of his work and effort in the local newspaper field, I have an abiding confidence that the western part of our city will reap appreciable benefits from this organ that comes into existence to represent its interests.

As Mayor of your city it is my privilege to welcome this addition to our newspapers and to assure you through these columns of my real interest in your future activity.

(signed) Roy N. Towl<sup>1</sup>

Back at his roll-top desk, the 20-year break hadn't dimmed Editor Greenleaf's style any, as his first editorial in that same issue testified.

Dear Vision and Green Lights. . .

More than a quarter of a century ago, the first Dundee newspaper was born. The blessed event was on March 5, 1911--and it was quite a boy!

It was christened 'The Dundee Advertiser' and enjoyed a robust eight page career until early 1916 after the 'villian' of the piece, Metropolitan Omaha, had kidnapped Dundee, South Omaha, Benson, Florence and other adjacent points of interest, all in one legislative gulp.

The 'Advertiser' had been the village organ and so, when the village faded out--so did the organ. But the music lingers on!

Today the DUNDEE NEWS takes up the torch of community and neighborhood interest where its faithful predecessor had it snatched from its fingers so many years ago.

This service has something of genuine affection in it, too, since the editorial staff of the DUNDEE NEWS is the same that labored for the 'Advertiser' in those good old village days.

The boys and girls and vistas and problems that then confronted this community have now grown into adult entities, and it is the task of the DUNDEE NEWS to catch up the warp and woof and weave a magic carpet of flying progress.

To that purpose this weekly newspaper pledges itself. . .and relies upon the fidelity of its readers to do the rest.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dundee News, April 24, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

Averaging twelve to sixteen pages from the start, the News caught on quickly. A full-page house ad in an early issue termed the reborn paper a "gold mine of buying power" and claimed that "your advertising message, large or small, will be carried directly and infallibly to every address within the GUARANTEED COVERAGE boundaries. . .

38th Street west, including Fairacres  
Hamilton Street south to William Street  
Country Club district  
52nd to 56th Streets  
North to Blondo Street."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the regular features, in addition to neighborhood happenings, included a column on Bird Lore by Greenleaf (this was one of his favorite hobbies), Kitchen Chats, Society by Mrs. May Greenleaf, School Notes, Churches, a short review of world news and a free-wheeling Greenleaf column about everyone and everything called "Push the Middle Valve Down."

Editorially, the little paper stayed square in the middle of every question that could have more than one side. Politically, Greenleaf had no qualms about dictating a slate of candidates to be voted for and those to be spurned at the polls. Dundee residents loved it and circulation shot to 7,200 almost immediately.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

With Blacker charting the course and Greenleaf at the helm, the News was firmly under way. But Blacker wasn't satisfied. On October 9, 1936, a small box on page one announced a change.

In the interests of a better DUNDEE NEWS, the publication day of the paper will be changed from Friday to Wednesday. . .starting on October 21st.

This change will not only promote a more timely presentation of the community news but will also enable our readers to take advantage of any thrifty mid-week shopping values offered by our advertisers.

The selection of Wednesday as the publication day is made in the belief that it will make for a bigger and better newspaper. So watch for the DUNDEE NEWS on WEDNESDAYS on and after October 21st.<sup>1</sup>

The staff at the time of the change still included only three people, Mr. and Mrs. Greenleaf and David Blacker, Business and Managing Editor. It was not until 1940 that Nate Cooper was hired to become advertising manager for the growing little paper.

The success of the paper, however, remained largely due to the neverdull Greenleaf style of writing. A typical editorial, which illustrates both the man and his style, appeared on July 7, 1937.

Journalism. . .

Nearly every major high school, college and university now boasts a course in journalism.

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<sup>1</sup>Dundee News, October 9, 1936, p. 1.

The Students in these classes, for the most part, are those who find in this study a surcease from the woes of Latin, Algebra, Solid Geometry or other of the old-fashioned diseases that once infested classrooms before the invasion of modernism.

To read the daily press, one might well believe that the sons and daughters of every high dame and low charwoman are shoulder to shoulder in their studies in some 'school of journalism.'

Now look:

In the first place--there's no such thing as a 'school' of journalism, except that of actual experience and hard knocks. No sorority darling nor fraternity brother ever became a 'journalist' by walking off the streamlined stage with a diploma worth ten cents, net.

To be a 'journalist' in all that the word implies you must not only be able to write anything about anything at any time, but also to know your way about an inky press room or makeup room--and catch holy hell from your lousy editor--God bless him!--all the time you are doing it. And to 'smell' news and be able to get it--no matter what!

And then--taking it for granted you really have become a 'journalist'--what are you going to do about it?

Newspapers and even magazines are folding up or consolidating more than occasionally these days, and the field grows narrower and narrower. The radio cuts into news and advertising. There are fewer and fewer jobs for journalists, with or without diplomas.

The days of the journeyman reporter, like those of Mark Twain's Mississippi River Pilot are about gone.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to editing the News, Greenleaf was also doing a series of columns on birdlore and a version of "Push

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<sup>1</sup>Dundee News, July 7, 1937, p. 4.

the Middle Valve Down" for another of Blacker's publishing endeavors, the ill-fated Omaha Post, which is discussed elsewhere in this paper.

Greenleaf continued as editor of the News, to the joy of some and the chagrin of others, until Sunday, February 18, 1951, when a final -30- was written below his name. The fiery editor died quietly in his sleep.

A February 23, 1951, editorial, probably written by Blacker, expressed the feelings of the now prosperous newspaper.

The passing of Miles Greenleaf, editor of the Dundee News for the last fifteen years, is a distinct loss to this community. During his editorship he contributed greatly to the advancement of Dundee and was a consistent advocate of everything that was good and wholesome.

Mr. Greenleaf had unusual talents as a newspaperman. He was talented, witty and had the power of appealing to all the readers of his publication.

He was an outstanding authority of birdlore, had no equal in Omaha as a golf writer, and was a sports editor of unusual ability. In addition, he was a columnist, writing for years one of the best liked columns in the city--'Palaver.' which had appeared regularly in the Dundee News.

He had a sense of humor seldom found in newspaper writers of his capacity.

He was an outstanding reporter and his unique style of writing made a number of the old Ak-Sar-Ben Den shows sparkle in the way that made them equal of many a professional performance.

Miles Greenleaf will be missed, not only in the Dundee community but throughout the entire

city. His like will not be found in Omaha or elsewhere for a long time.<sup>1</sup>

In the same issue, a story and picture of Greenleaf at his roll-top desk appeared. The story was signed by the staffs of both the News and the Sun.

The symbol '30', used by newspapermen to designate the end of a story, has been typed at the close of the life of Miles Greenleaf, editor of the Dundee News.

Mr. Greenleaf died in his sleep last Sunday morning.

No one can estimate the number of words Mr. Greenleaf wrote about the passing of Omaha's big and little people during his 45 years as a newspaperman.

But none he wrote about could have filled the particular niche he carved for himself in the community and in the hearts of those who knew him.

There was a humaneness about him that showed through his writings like the heat of a pot-bellied stove glows through its metal body.

He could make the little things in life take on new significance. He wrote on such varied topics as how a neighbor pampered a tree, the difficulty of navigating along Dodge street on a windy day, and the loneliness of a little boy who has lost his dog.

Mr. Greenleaf had a gentle, ribbing kind of humor that endeared him not only to his readers but to those who were being ribbed.

He often made fun of himself. The last feature story he wrote before his death was of that type. He told how a barber tried to shave off 'Ye Editor's three-weeks' growth of beard' and likened the procedure to 'trying to shave a porcupine under a circus tent.'

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<sup>1</sup>Dundee News, February 23, 1951, p. 1.

The story showed Mr. Greenleaf had no defeatist attitude about his illness even towards the end and is indicative of his courage--his long fight against great odds to recover his health.

He successfully combatted a crippling attack of arthritis 15 years ago by shoveling snow to limber his muscles. While he was convalescing, he started this newspaper which has been the rallying point for worthwhile community enterprises.

Mr. Greenleaf and his News had a large part in the successful launching of the Southwest Civic Club which now is one of the more powerful improvement groups in the city.

Several times during his career as editor of the News, he has been felled with a heart ailment. He enjoyed ribbing doctors who told him his days were numbered.

'I've lived on borrowed time for most of my life,' he used to say, 'Now I'm collecting the interest.'

He loved birdlore and the out-of-doors and it was a great disappointment to him when he no longer could tramp the woods. But he kept his interest keen by writing his widely-read Bird column.

Reasoning that if he couldn't go to the birds he would bring the birds to him, Mr. Greenleaf always kept a well-stocked feeding tray outside his study window.

There will be a lot of white space in this paper that no one can fill like Miles Greenleaf. He had a way of saying things that hit a responsive chord. And the reason he could strike the note all of us recognize, is because he loved people.<sup>1</sup>

The name of Miles Greenleaf disappeared from the paper's masthead the following week. The slot labeled "Editor" remained black until June 15, 1951, when reporter-columnist

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

Verdun R. Daste moved into Greenleaf's battered chair. But it wasn't the same. No other Sun editor would ever hold the personal touch of Miles Greenleaf.

CHAPTER III  
THE OMAHA POST

The 1930's were "the parlous but exciting days Blacker liked to recall. The newspaper business was wilder than most; reporters and editors changed jobs frequently," reported Paul Williams.<sup>1</sup>

And one of the wildest spots in newspaper geography was the daily field in Omaha. Never far from the action, Blacker decided to join the fray. The result was the founding of the Omaha Post in an atmosphere far from friendly to new publishing endeavors.

Daily newspapers had been appearing and dying regularly since 1860, when the Telegraph, Omaha's first daily, died in less than six months. Between 1860 and 1930, more than a dozen daily papers came and went. By the mid-30's, the market was held by three papers, the News, the Bee and the World-Herald. Then the Bee combined with the News and promptly went under. This left the present daily, a strong youthful combination of the World and the Herald unopposed. Into this journalistic graveyard came the Omaha Post.<sup>2</sup>

Staffed with some good Bee-News alumni, the tabloid Post began as a weekly with the intention of becoming a daily

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, "David Blacker," p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Sorenson, History of Omaha, (Omaha, 1920) pp. 460-468.

within six months. It never had a fighting chance. The first number, Friday, September 16, 1938, represented Blacker's first and only attempt to abandon community journalism and tailor a paper for the entire city. The first issue ran 24 pages and cost three cents. James R. O'Hanlon, Jr., was the editor. The paper was supplied with wire news from the Transradio Press Service.

A proud page one editorial announced the birth of the Post to the Omaha public.

Our Creed. . .

The Omaha Post launches, with this issue, a newspaper which it hopes will have a long and cordial relationship with the people of Omaha. Inaugurated as a weekly newspaper of liberal opinion, the Post will be converted by degree into a daily afternoon publication within six months if the public's support warrents it.

The Post comes into being with a clear conception of its purpose. The public, in a sense, has created it. Twenty-five thousand people, by subscribing, sight unseen, to this enterprise, have said that Omaha needs another medium for the expression of public opinion.

The Post expects to fill a niche in the city's life which no other publication has attempted to occupy in the city's history. Accordingly, it undertakes to establish a forum for the people, devoted at all time to the ideals of truth and justice and to the betterment of Omaha's civic and economic life.

The Post pledges to support what it sincerely believes to be best for Omaha and to oppose with all vigor it possesses what it believes to be not in the city's best interests.

The Post proposes to fight with all its energy for the broad social and economic objectives

of the New Deal. We believe that President Roosevelt is sincerely attempting to do what is best for the nation and that, given the cooperation he deserves, he will accomplish this program to the everlasting benefit of the nation. Yet we concede that he has made honest mistakes and that, being human, he will make others. When and if he does, we shall be the first to acknowledge them and to take issue with him. The Post will be as independent of those it favors as it is of those it opposes.

We hope that the Post's devotion to these ideals will be steadfast, that it will never give way to the venality which with few exceptions, now characterizes the nation's daily press.

We have said that the Post hopes to fill a real need in Omaha. That such a need exists here and elsewhere was demonstrated by the crushing repudiation of the American press in the 1936 election. The vast majority of the nation's newspapers learned in 1936 that the public had rejected them as the interpreters of public opinion. The overwhelming re-election of President Roosevelt was just as clearly a public revolt against the nation's press. This expression of free thought brought into sharp focus the growing public desire for a small, independent, liberal press.

This is the niche which the Post hopes to occupy. To fight all that is wrong, to support all that is right. But right or wrong, we hope that our integrity shall never be questioned.

These principles and promises are our creed. We hope we shall not falter in upholding them. We are answerable only to our readers. Your support alone can make this newspaper the success that we envision. It is your newspaper.<sup>1</sup>

The small, liberal newspaper attracted immediate attention from Omaha and its public. It also caught the eye of

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<sup>1</sup>Omaha Post, September 16, 1938, p. 1.

the World-Herald, who promptly decided that something must be done about this young upstart. So they did.

Less than five days after the publication of the first issue, the World-Herald hired away two key Post men. The Post came back with a page one story headlined

World-Herald Raids  
Staff of Omaha Post

Of all the praise which the Omaha Post received after publication of its first issue, the least expected was an implied compliment from its competitor, the Omaha World-Herald.

The first edition made such a deep impression on the World-Herald that already, in our first week, it has hired one member of our staff away from us (snatched him from under our very noses) and has used its vast influence to deprive another staff member of the right to work for us.

In our first edition, we published the well-known 'Round-the-Town' column of Omaha gossip, conducted by Jake Rachman, which was a feature in the Omaha Bee-News. We engaged Mr. Rachman, who has been doing radio work for the last year, in the expectation he would conduct the column in every issue.

At noon Wednesday, Mr. Rachman was working for the Post. Imagine our surprise, then, when we read in the World-Herald at one o'clock that he had been hired by the World-Herald.

The notice was published on Wednesday; on Thursday Rachman's first column appeared in the World-Herald. The World-Herald in its evident desire to embarrass the Post, had told him he must quit his job at once.

The World-Herald gave Mr. Rachman no chance to tender the customary notice of resignation, observed none of the ethics which are an accepted part of business practice.

We wish to point out that the World-Herald, for one year after the Omaha Bee-News suspended publication, was given every opportunity, yes, inducement, by Mr. Rachman to engage him. It was not until the Post came into existence that it found his services necessary.

The World-Herald may raid the staff of our newspaper with its huge war chest, but it cannot grab the contents of it. Post subscribers will continue to read a better, brighter "Round-the-Town" column in each issue.<sup>1</sup>

Reactions of other Omahans were not quite as swift and sure. Omaha Mayor Butler commented, "I enjoyed the first issue of the Omaha Post. It was well edited and had the appearance of a real newspaper."<sup>2</sup>

Another prominent Omahan, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Homer Anderson, added, "Newspapers perform an important educational function in any community. A city the size of Omaha is lacking in the fundamental facilities for the education of the public as long as its news comes from only one source."<sup>3</sup>

Omahans weren't the only ones to take notice of the newly-formed Post. The September 23, 1938, issue carried this letter on page one.

My dear Mr. O'Hanlon:

There is always room for a medium of liberal thought and such a medium which combines a strong

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<sup>1</sup>Omaha Post, September 23, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

sense of justice with independence and liberalism can fill a very genuine need in our day. In all of the readjustments and revaluations with which we are confronted today in our quest of a new approach to old problems, a sound and informed public opinion is indispensable. It follows, therefore, that a liberal newspaper which serves the dual mission of creating and informing public opinion is an asset of incalculable value in the maintenance and perpetuity of our democratic institutions.

Very Sincerely yours,  
(signed Franklin D. Roosevelt)<sup>1</sup>

Taking reader reaction at face value, Blacker took the first step to make the Post a daily. November 4, 1938, the paper announced it would begin publishing two editions each week, on Tuesdays and Fridays. "By publishing two editions a week, we will be able to give our readers more of the news as it happens, a closer continuity of features, and a greater opportunity to champion the things which will make a better Omaha," a page one editorial claimed.<sup>2</sup> Cost of the paper was to be ten cents for four issues. Initial press run on the first Tuesday edition was 40,000--15,000 going as sample copies to non-subscribers. Makeup also changed, using larger, blacker headlines and more art. A radio log was included for Omaha's three stations, WOW, KFAB and KOIL.

Then, without warning, the end came.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Omaha Post, November 4, 1938, p. 1.

A small box with turned rules appeared on page one, Friday, December 16, 1938, issue number 18.

To Our Readers. . .

With this issue, the Omaha Post suspends publication. This decision has been made after lengthy consideration and with the deepest regret--a regret that is coupled with gratitude to the more than 22,000 average paid subscribers to the Post in its brief period of existence, and to the advertisers for their loyal support.

Our gratitude and regret also extends to our large family of employees, including more than 200 loyal, energetic delivery boys, who will make their last collections this week-end.

If the Omaha Post has brought moments of interest and pleasure into your lives, we are gratified. We take this final occasion to wish you and everyone a very Merry Christmas.<sup>1</sup>

No other mention of the paper's death appeared in that final issue. It was the first Blacker paper to die--before the Sun chain was soundly forged, one more would die.

With the Post dead and buried in the stacks of bound volumes of old Omaha Newspapers, Blacker retreated back into South Omaha where the twin weeklies, the Sun and the News, were rising out of the old print shop. The early 1940's saw them become firmly established--a look at their content might help explain their popularity.

With the transition in 1936 from eight columns to the tabloid format, the Sun began to average twelve to sixteen pages. Often, more than fifty per cent of the content was

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<sup>1</sup>Omaha Post, December 16, 1938, p. 1.

advertising. The paper was still looked on by many as just an advertising circular. It would be another fifteen years before it left that stigma behind.

Physical appearance was as might be expected. Little or no organized attempt was made at makeup or display. Headlines were limited to serif or Roman faces and were seldom wider than one or two columns. Occasionally, a forty-eight point banner went screaming across page one. Column rules and cutoffs were still very much in for the well-dressed newspaper. Photography still had to gain a foothold, however. Outside of one column mug shots, pictures were seldom used--with the exception of a picture of world news shots that ran weekly.

Much of the paper's content consisted of regular features and columns. Some of these were hold-overs from the pre-Blacker days, while others were the product of his own enterprise. Some of these included Society, Locals, At the Alleys, a bowling review, Seen and Heard on 24th Street, a gossip column by Associate Editor Singer, What's Doing at South High by the Informer, Footnotes on News Headlines, a short review of world news, PTA Notes, Churches, With the Politicians, Kitchen Chats, Football Forecast and a world news picture page, This Week's News with the Cameraman.

In an effort to become involved in the community, the Sun sponsored a number of contests and tournaments, including an essay contest, a children's reading club in connection

with the public library, and an annual tennis tournament for South Omaha youngsters.

An early interest in sports was evident, as the Sun became involved with the forerunner of little league baseball, as well as tennis. A long standing editorial campaign, begun in Blacker's first issue, was the fight for a football stadium at South High School.

By 1942, the Sun and the News were healthy young children and fast outgrowing the little office in the Breemer Building. Time was ripe for a change. At the same time red ink was exchanged for black in the profit ledger, they packed up and moved to their present home, a rambling, one-story brick building at 4808 South 25th Street--hardly two blocks from the stockyards that had fathered South Omaha many years before the Sun was even a dream.

CHAPTER IV  
THE BENSON TIMES

The Benson Times, the oldest member of the Sun chain, began life as had the Dundee Advertiser, as the official Village paper for Benson, Nebraska. Founded on November 7, 1903, by Lew W. Raber, the Times began its career in a tiny one-room, false-front frame structure at 705 Main Street. An oval-shaped sign hanging in front of the building proclaimed that it was the home of the Benson Times.<sup>1</sup>

The paper was published on Saturdays and averaged eight pages. A decorative flag portrayed the streetcar line that ran between Benson and Omaha. Using the typical eight column page with strictly one-column decked heads, the little paper cost one dollar a year. An ear on page one admonished Bensonites to "Be a Booster--Not a Knocker!"

Makeup on the inside pages was a little more daring than many papers of that era. Many cuts and line drawings were used to illustrate new mechanical gimmicks, ads and serial stories that ran each week. The inside pages may have been boiler plate insides, as they dealt with no local news and Omaha was at that time the home of the Western Newspaper Union, which printed boiler plate insides for some 300 newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Benson Times, Masthead, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Sorenson, History of Omaha, (Omaha, 1923) p. 263.

Standing columns and ads generally ran in the same position each week. One regular column up to the beginning of World War I was "News from the Fatherland--German Empire Happenings."

The Times' plant also did a good deal of job printing under Editor-Publisher Raber. A house ad appeared January 5, 1907, advertising the merits of the Times Printing Service.

The Benson Times  
Prints  
Sale Bills  
Just as Neat and Cheap as  
You can get them elsewhere.  
We also give a complimentary  
notice in the Times to all  
persons giving us their sale  
Bill orders.<sup>1</sup>

Circulation of the Times quickly rose and on February 2, 1907, this statement appeared with the masthead on page four to make sure everyone knew.

We wish it clearly understood that the circulation of the Times is twice as large as that of all Omaha papers combined in Benson and its immediate vicinity. In making this broad and sweeping assertion we know whereof we speak. Therefore, if you have anything to advertise, do it through your own home paper and you will get results. It is the home paper that is interested in your welfare and success. It is the home paper that is your friend, first last and always. The Times caters to neither foreign nor mail order houses. It's the friend of the home merchant.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Benson Times, January 5, 1907, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Benson Times, February 2, 1907, p. 4.

Circulation, another masthead statement claimed "is never below 1,030 a week, special editions 1,200 to 3,000. Our circulation list is open to advertisers. This is a courtesy not extended by any other local newspaper in Douglas County, the most populous county in Nebraska, with Omaha as the county seat."<sup>1</sup>

July 1, 1908, Raber sold the Times to A. C. Thomas. He continued as editor for a short time and then was replaced by W. H. Tindell. Thomas established the Times Publishing Company and incorporated December 22, 1908. At the time, the paper had three officers, three stockholders and five employees. In addition, the paper claimed, "we have a society editor and a baseball editor in Benson and correspondents in Irvington, Bennington, Elk City, Valley, Waterloo, Elkhorn, Millard, McArdleville, Grammercy Park, Florence, Fairview, Dundee, Pleasant Valley, De Bolt and Little Denmark."<sup>2</sup>

With his vast group of correspondents, Thomas changed the name of the paper to the Douglas County Times and moved the printing plant to 320 South 19th in downtown Omaha. The name change lasted for four issues, from October 31, 1908, to November 28, 1908. Then it returned to the Times and remained that way until 1958.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Benson Times, February 9, 1907, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Benson Times, Masthead, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Douglas County Times, October 31, 1908, p. 1.

August 26, 1911, the Times again changed hands. E. M. Jacobberger, vice-president of the Times Publishing Company, purchased it--only to resell it to George Lawson, January 11, 1915. In January of 1919, Benson was officially annexed by the city of Omaha. Fearing the Times might be forced out, as had the Advertiser, Lawson sold out to the Norman and Burkett Publishing Company on October 7, 1921. At the time of the sale, Miss Ada Stiger was serving as editor and Charles O. Anderson as manager.<sup>1</sup>

At the time they purchased the paper, William Norman bought out his partner, Burkett, and continued as the sole publisher of the Times.

November 1, 1938, Norman followed the example being set by the Sun and the News. The Times dropped its one dollar charge and became free circulation. The reaction was swift in coming. January 6, 1939, the Times suspended publication.<sup>2</sup>

After a break of eleven years, the Times was refounded by Norman as a tabloid on June 9, 1950. Retiring in 1955, Norman sold his holdings to Milt Brueggman, who after experiencing financial difficulties, sold to David Blacker as the Sun chain began to take shape.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Benson Times, October 7, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Benson Times, January 6, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Paul N. Williams, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

Dwayne Brown, now chief photographer for the Sun and the first editor of the Benson Times under Blacker, recalled the sale.

Dave had been trying to buy the paper for weeks. It didn't look like he was going to get it so he told me to go on vacation. I left on Saturday. He called me on Tuesday morning and said he had bought the paper and that I had until Wednesday noon to get an issue out. A day and a half!

An old gal had been editing the paper until then. I had tried to get a job there before Dave hired me. When Dave bought the paper, I went up to the old Benson office, walked in and introduced myself and told her the paper had been sold. She looked up from her old roll-top desk and said, 'OH.' Then she picked up her purse and walked out. That's the last we ever saw of her!<sup>1</sup>

Even with only a day and a half to get the first issue out, February 3, 1955, the paper still ran twenty-four pages. Brown's first editorial had a folksy ring to it and introduced Benson to the "new Times."

Howdy, Folks!

This week an old neighbor, the Times, comes to you in new form, a new look, a new suit of clothes, a completely new newspaper.

During the past week--you might say--we've polished our shoes, tossed on our coat, with a twinkle in our eye, taken up the quest for news about Benson, about you. We'll admit it's been a rather hectic week, getting acquainted and all that sort of thing, but its been fun, too. We've liked the people we've met and the places we've seen.

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<sup>1</sup>Dwayne Brown, in an interview with William H. Boyer, January 5, 1968.

With this issue, Mr. David Blacker, no newcomer to the Benson and North Omaha communities, becomes publisher of the Times. His news career began on the North Omaha Booster in 1923. For the past 20 years he has published the South Omaha Sun and the Dundee News. Along with the Times, this week, Mr. Blacker becomes publisher of the Booster.

As it has been in neighboring Dundee and South Omaha, it remains our purpose to publish weekly, good community newspapers for Benson and North Omaha, devoted to the best interests and progress of their respective people.<sup>1</sup>

A letter from one of Blacker's old friends, Morris E. Jacobs of Bozell and Jacobs National Advertising Agency, also appeared in that first issue.

Dear Dave,

I am emotionally stirred as I address you as 'publisher of the North Omaha Booster and the Benson Times.' I remember distinctly the day you called on me--many years ago--to sell me advertising in the North Omaha Booster and Benson Times. It was your first day on the job--and even then you sensed the importance of selling not only space but what the paper stood for in North Omaha and Benson.

You should be enjoying a real thrill. . . coming 'back home' again, as publisher of the newspaper where you had such a humble start. This is the story of America. . .this is the reason why our country is the finest in the world. I hope that free enterprise and individual initiative shall always be encouraged to make secure such opportunities for advancement.

Do you realize, Dave, that was more than 30 years ago. . .when, hat in your hand, you meekly walked into my office to extoll the virtues and the values of the North Omaha Booster and Benson

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<sup>1</sup>Benson Times, February 3, 1955, p. 2.

Times? For some reason or another, and we were much younger and less experienced then, something you said stuck in my mind. You said to me something like this; 'A community, through its newspaper, is given an opportunity to express its personality; to give expression to its feelings; to make a contribution to the well being of its citizens. A neighborhood should not be denied this same opportunity.'

I have watched with professional interest and great pride your development and progress with the South Omaha Sun and Dundee News. I know it is needless for me to tell you how both of them have measured up to that objective you expressed me so well so many years ago. Both have made fine contributions to the growth and prosperity of the areas served. I am confident you will do likewise with the North Omaha Booster and Benson Times.

Most fortunate you are to take over the publishing of the North Omaha Booster and Benson Times. Fortunate also are the citizens of North Omaha and Benson!

You are a fine citizen and worthy of the success you have had. With kindest personal regards,

(signed) Morris E. Jacobs,  
President, Bozell and Jacobs National Advertising Agency<sup>1</sup>

With those words of praise, Blacker went to work. The Times continued to average at least twenty-four pages and by 1958 was running thirty-six to forty pages regularly.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

CHAPTER V  
NORTH OMAHA BOOSTER

William Norman, Blacker's old boss, was no newcomer to the Omaha community newspapering field when he bought the Benson Times in 1921. Six years earlier, in late 1915, he and a partner, Bryan Burkett, had founded the North Omaha Booster, a paper devoted "to the business and social interests of North Omaha." Published weekly by the Norman-Burkett Printing Company, the paper appeared on Fridays and ran four pages. Burkett served as editor and Norman as associate editor.

News gathering for the Booster was simple. A note on page two instructed readers to "leave all news items at your nearest drug store before 5 p.m. on Tuesdays." More than half of the paper, including half of page one, was advertising. Cost was \$1.50 a year, by mail.<sup>1</sup>

In its early years, the Booster was printed by the Western Newspaper Union of Omaha, who stated they printed 5,000 copies each week. The Booster claimed "20,000 enthusiastic readers."<sup>2</sup>

By the time Norman bought the Benson Times, the Booster was running about twelve pages and Norman was seeking to establish a newspaper chain of his own. It barely got off the ground.

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<sup>1</sup>North Omaha Booster, January 21, 1916, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

In 1920, Norman and Burkett Printing Company began publication of the Benson Leader. It suspended publication three years after they purchased the Times. In 1921, after a three week contest to select a name, they founded the Mid-City Guide. It died in 1922.<sup>1</sup>

A house ad in the April 1, 1921, edition of the Booster listed the Guide, the Leader, the Times and the Booster and claimed a combined circulation of more than 22,500 and that "they circulate in Omaha's most progressive residential sections." Main offices of the chain were located at 2404 Ames Avenue in North Omaha. The Benson office was at 5916 Military Avenue.<sup>2</sup>

Circulation areas for the papers were:

North Omaha Booster--Lake Street to the north boundary of Florence and from 14th Street to 45th Street.

Mid-City Guide--California Street to Maple Street and 16th Street to 33rd Street.

Benson Times--within the limits of the Village of Benson.

Benson Leader--by mail within Benson and to all farm district homes receiving mail through the Benson post office.<sup>3</sup>

By the time the Norman holdings passed Dave Blacker's hands, only the Booster and the reborn Times were left.

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<sup>1</sup>North Omaha Booster, April 1, 1921, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>North Omaha Booster, April 1, 1921, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

With all four papers safely in the Blacker camp and the city of Omaha blanketed, Blacker began to set about establishing the four-way arrangements that would tie them together. He began with the name. Blacker Printing Company became the Omaha Community Newspapers and a full-time managing editor and a news editor were hired to coordinate all four papers.

The name changed again in 1958 when the Sun newspaper chain was born. This notice appeared in all papers on October 30, 1958.

Effective next week, the name of the Benson Times will be changed to the Benson Sun.

At the same time, the Omaha Community Newspapers will become the Sun Newspapers of Omaha.

Thus, in the future, the Benson Times, the Dundee and West Omaha News, and the North Omaha Booster and the South Omaha Sun will share a common last name. But, as in any family, each member will remain individualistic.

The editorial content of the Benson Sun is strengthened immeasurably by the successful operation of all four Sun Newspapers.

To further advance each newspaper in its own neighborhood and to enable all four to become an even bigger voice in affairs of the entire community, the name change was made, placing all four under the Sun banner.

Changes in logo types of all three newspapers will be made next week.

Behind each issue of the Benson Sun will be the 'four way' staff of the Sun Newspapers, continuing their coverage of governmental, political and other city-wide news of interest and concern to all Omaha residents.

The Sun Newspapers also will carry many special features and columns made possible because of the alliance among the four publications.

No single hometown neighborhood newspaper, operating alone, could approach either the quality or quantity of journalism made possible by the relationship of the Benson Sun with its three sister publications.

The Benson Sun will, as always, be primarily concerned with news about you, your neighborhood, school, church and other organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Editorial staff at the time of the change were Bill Drake, managing editor; Phil Gurney, News editor; Arlene Hrbek, Benson editor; Dwayne Brown, Dundee editor; James Trobouth, North editor; and Ralph Bradley, South editor.

So the Sun chain was formed.

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<sup>1</sup>Benson Sun, October 30, 1958, p. 1.

CHAPTER VI  
WITH THE SUN AT HIS BACK

With his newspaper enterprise firmly established, Dave Blacker began to acquire a second reputation--as a driving force in the fields of charity, health and welfare.

Paul Williams recalled this second side of the rising publisher.

A number of people told me of Dave's leadership as a fund raiser. He was not just a persuasive talker, they explained. He always sought to give the donor a feeling and understanding of the purpose of his gift. Dave's own donations always set an example.<sup>1</sup>

"There are a lot of people in Omaha who feel better today because Dave Blacker explained to them why they should give generously of their substance," another acquaintance recounted.<sup>2</sup>

Remembered by some as a dynamo and by others as a basically shy man, Blacker was a combination of both. He shunned presidencies and committee chairmanships. As a result, much of his civic work went unheralded. He did, however, added Williams, attain something of the stature of a senior statesman in charity circles. Phil Vogt, Douglas County Welfare director during the 1950's, recalls Dave Blacker like this:

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, "Dave Blacker," p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

"I knew him as a friend, confidant and trusted adviser. He was particularly helpful when the situation was discouraging and seemed hopeless."<sup>1</sup>

Another who had worked with him on many fund drives added, "He was a masterful salesman. He was so eloquent and forceful in his dealings with people."<sup>2</sup>

Blacker's list of charity activities was long and varied, from that first editorial campaign for a football stadium, to helping assemble the governing board for the South Omaha Boy's Club and amending federal regulations to allow for proper recreational facilities in housing for the aged.

"Whenever Dave got involved in a project, he would become intensely and emotionally involved," remembered Williams.<sup>3</sup> At Blacker's funeral, years later, Rabbi Myer S. Kripke described the publisher this way.

To try to count the causes and interest to which David Blacker turned his attention would be useless, for they were endless. To each he gave signal service.

His loves were very many. They began with home and family, where he considered himself blessed in special measure. He was the child of an enlightened and pious family, where each of many children learned the give and take of love and life. These rich natural insights he carried into his own blessed family life of later years.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Williams, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

Jewish tradition was one of the real lights of his life. From it he acquired both his zest for life, sparked with optimism and hopefulness, and his unending concern for the causes of mankind. He pursued justice in the abstract and demanded it in the concrete.

His heart was full of sympathy for the oppressed, the downtrodden and the deprived where they were. His love for people was as old as history and as wide as the world. And those who worked with him in the innumerable causes he served knew that his hand was as generous as his heart.

He loved Omaha and he loved America. He loved his work. It was not merely a means of earning a living but a sacred task of giving the people the truth as he saw it.<sup>1</sup>

Williams described his boss in much the same way.

Dave had a tremendous sympathy for the Negro or anyone else in a minority position. He not only permitted but encouraged the staff to go out looking for the little man's story, for the human side of the broad political and social trends. Sometimes there views weren't too popular--or were at least a little ahead of their time--but this didn't bother Dave.

'As long as we're doing our job honestly,' he'd say, 'and as long as we're doing our best to tell the truth--and as long as we're giving our opponents a chance to give their views, too,--we'll have the respect of our readers.'

Most of all, in editorial policy, Dave pushed, pulled, commanded and induced a great emphasis on education and communication. It was partly due to the fact that he himself had never finished high school. It was even more due to his conception of the world his grandchildren were growing up to.

He saw a world in which both intellectual ability and intrapersonal relationships are going

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Myer S. Kripke, "Funeral Oration," Sun Newspapers, April 15, 1965, p. 30.

to be tremendously important. Dave always wanted our news and editorial columns to reflect the best possible thinking for the future.<sup>1</sup>

Blacker always was very concerned, both as a publisher and a father, about the type of world his children and grandchildren would grow up in. The father of three children, Jeanne, the eldest, Barbara and H. Martin, he was a dedicated family man. Jeanne described him as follows:

He was the kind of a guy that was never too busy to talk with us and help us. He was always very interested in our education and was never more pleased than when we wrote him from school to get his advice on some problem. His heart was always open--not just to us but to anyone and everyone. People came to him and he took their problems to heart, too. He got through to everyone. He had a great feeling and love for humanity.

The same was true with his grandchildren--he was always so wrapped up in us and our children. He would write us long letters telling us how concerned he was or how proud he was of what we were doing. Often he would quote scripture or parables from Jewish tradition to help make his point. Our Dad loved us very much.<sup>2</sup>

A loving and tender father and a very religious man, Blacker had another side that was seen by those who worked with and for him--that of a hard-nosed publisher, determined to build a great newspaper chain. Bill Drake, the Sun's first managing editor and now editor-publisher of the Pacifica, Calif., Tribune, recalled this side of the man.

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, "Dave Blacker," p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Jeanne Blacker Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, June 4, 1968.

I can quite candidly state now that I would have been--and was privately--much harsher in my thoughts and comments on Dave Blacker in 1959 when I left Omaha than I am today. I have gone through nearly nine years of the realities of business-publishing.

I used to scream, figuratively, about space. I got on my newsroom soapbox at the drop of an advertiser's request or complaint. Now I realize that I was super sensitive about having Dave Blacker take the first step toward compromising his newsroom, and Dave was sensitive about letting that Drake guy jeopardize the profitable throwaway newspaper business he'd built with his own hands by a crazy editorial or a snippy story. We crossed swords more than once and it was a gradual movement away from publishing an overabundance of 'puff' stories to a point where our standards had, I think, reached a respectable level. The point I'm making, or trying to, is that Dave had all the dreams, the instinct and a compulsive desire to build real newspapers. But it was a hell of a battle for him to get away from the concept of publishing only good news, or eliminating the bad news when it gored somebody's ox. He was flexible though, and I'm sure we put him through some painful moments.

In those early years, though, Blacker did demand his pounds of flesh, special stories and coverage and emphasis that didn't exactly fit Drake's long-range news plan. Drake, however, learned how to handle the situation.

I have learned to stride past these dilemmas by telling MY staff that stories about advertisers, new stores, etc., can and must be regarded as NEWS--handled objectively, but colorfully because business is fascinating to readers, too. I think this was what Dave was trying to say, but the only way he knew to publicize an advertiser, or a cause, was in a somewhat heavy-handed fashion that came out as too much.

There were times when Blacker the publisher could be as sharp-tongued as Drake the managing editor, too.

He was quick to criticize, sometimes I felt unfairly and in blanket fashion. At the same time, he praised, and I really enjoyed seeing Dave bask in the small triumphs we had in those early days as people began to react to what we were doing. He had strong ideas, spoke well and cogently, but apparently could not reduce his thoughts to the editorial form. I don't recall him ever writing anything for publication, although he had many ideas to offer.

But even Drake eventually fell, to a certain extent, under the persuasive character and the spirit that was Dave Blacker.

He was a man of vision, no question; he could have gone on printing throwaways and spared himself many problems and had a comfortable life. But this didn't satisfy him. It was his willingness to go ahead that really created the Sun newspapers, although at times after the process started, it did seem as if we were dragging him kicking and screaming past some crossroads. He was generally regarded as a tough man to work for and various friends in Omaha warned me firmly against going into business with him. He had had a record of dismissing precipitately some of his earlier employees.

The early days of the Blacker-Drake association were free and easy and made for a free-wheeling atmosphere in the bustling Sun newsroom. Dave Blacker quickly fell into the role of the publisher-who-likes-to-pop-in-anytime-and-expects-everything-to-be-perfect, and often did. His managing editor quickly became the perfectionist that Blacker demanded.

Maybe this was in part due to the fact that I loved what I was doing and worked ungodly hours. I remember well the haggles with the back shop over special treatment we wanted for layouts and news ideas. Great guys, but they were used to relegating news to free time periods.

Stan Lipsey was a great source of strength, a buffer with Dave, a good friend, and an understanding fellow worker. I really enjoyed working with him and disliked leaving the association. The ad guys, I recall, were hard working fellows who either won their way into Dave's heart if they had it, by his measuring stick, or quickly fell by the wayside, if they didn't. Businessman Dave could be cruel, or so it seemed to me; again, I recognize part of what I thought was harsh treatment as part of the unhappy side of running a profitable and surviving business.<sup>1</sup>

So, as Bill Drake was to note later, Dave Blacker was a strange mixture--a tender father, a warm, generous man and a hard-nosed, unrelenting businessman. But, strange as it was, the combination worked and Blacker Printing and the Sun Newspapers grew and became financially secure.

The "financially secure" part of that growth was a thing of constant concern for Dave Blacker. Discussing the finances of the early Sun, Bill Drake commented:

I know the transition costs were a matter of great concern and there was a steady drumfire of caution about overtime and other costs. Generally, however, there was a sense of security, although not affluence. Dave and Stan, however, were firm in their grasp of how much space could at any time be devoted to news matter, often to our anguish. I would say the company was solid, if frugal, and in light of later knowledge of the fragile financial status of the newspaper business, the concern and economy were justified.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from William Drake, Editor-Publisher of Pacifica, Calif. Tribune, May 21, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Additional financial information on either the early papers or the present-day operation is unavailable, due to lost records and present management policy.

Following World War II, as the growth curve began to swing upward, Blacker turned the Jewish Press, his first paper, over to the Jewish Federation and founded another. While never destined to carry the Sun flag, this new paper was to have a very elite audience.

In 1948, the Strategic Air Command headquarters had moved to Offutt Air Base, hardly a rocket blast from the Sun building. With the war over, a big problem for SAC was getting and keeping the best people. Morale was the key factor. The Air Force felt having a base newspaper would help sandbag the sagging morale.

Impressed, Blacker felt it was his patriotic duty to help the Air Force. He agreed to publish the unofficial base paper, the Air Pulse. Within a dozen years, it was rated the top paper in the entire Air Force and Blacker was asked to take over the Lincoln, Nebr., Air Base paper, the Jet Scoop, also, which he did.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

CHAPTER VII  
SOUTH OMAHA SUNDAY SUN

The ghost of the ill-fated Omaha Post continued to haunt Dave Blacker's mind for more than twenty years. In early 1958, he decided he would have a go at it again--only using a little different approach.

The new member of the Omaha Community Newspapers would be a tabloid extension of the South Omaha Sun, to be published on Sundays--the Sunday Sun. The Sunday edition would be circulated only in the South Omaha Sun circulation area, which would give it a circulation of between 20,000 and 25,000. Initial planning called for the paper to be free circulation, as were the other papers, although all five papers would move to a paid circulation program before the end of 1958.

Ralph Bradley, who was editing the South paper, would assume editorial responsibility for the Sunday edition. Mrs. Rosemary Splittgerber, a former reporter for the Salt Lake Telegram, Salt Lake City, Utah, was hired as associate editor.<sup>1</sup>

Official announcement of the Sunday edition came in the June 12, 1958, edition of the South Omaha Sun.

The South Omaha Sun will become a semi-weekly paper in July with the publication of

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<sup>1</sup>South Omaha Sun, June 12, 1958, p. 1.

a new Sunday edition.

The expansion program, a reversal of the national trend among newspapers, will in no way affect the publication of the Sun on Thursday. It will be the first major newspaper change in Omaha in many years.

Publisher David Blacker today announced the first issue of the South Omaha Sunday Sun will be published July 6 by Omaha Community Newspapers.

Blacker said the new Sunday Sun will 'be devoted to South Omaha and the people who help make it one of the vital forces in the Omaha metropolitan area.'

The Sunday Sun will be delivered by carrier boys to front doors in South Omaha every Sunday morning as the present edition of the Sun is and will continue to be on Thursday.

Heavy emphasis will be placed on South Omaha general news and on women's news and family news.

Ralph Bradley, editor of the Sun, will assume editorship of both publications and additional key personnel who will work in the editorial departments of the semi-weekly paper will be announced shortly.

'We must grow ourselves to keep pace with the community we serve,' Bradley said. 'The Sunday Sun is necessary to give the people of the South Omaha community the information they want and should have.'

Society news and special features will be keyed to the South Omaha theme. Several new and different features are planned.

One added feature of the Sunday Sun will be a complete television section, including a comprehensive log of the three Omaha stations.

Twice-weekly publication in South Omaha will make possible an expanded coverage of activities and 'news about people' in one of Omaha's oldest and biggest sections of town.

In addition to thorough South Omaha community news and highlights of general Omaha news, The Sunday Sun will offer an editorial page, columnists and other features, including nationally syndicated material.

South Omahas will find complete information about stores, shops, and services available in the community for early part of the week shopping.

The Sunday Sun will be in tabloid form but with a new 'flag' or nameplate, to identify it from its Thursday sister publication.<sup>1</sup>

As the first publication date drew near, other staff members and features of the new paper were firmed up. Mrs. Mary Wilson would be woman's editor and Joe Francis would handle the advertising. New features would include "On the Sunnyside," a column authored by Bradley which would later move to the Benson Sun, "On the Contrary," a Miles Greenleaf-type column by managing editor Bill Drake, "Viewing Omaha," by Phil Gurney, and a large number of syndicated cartoons and how-to-do-it columns.

Volume one, number one, appeared July 6, 1958, right on schedule. It ran twenty-eight pages. The other four papers were averaging about fifty-six pages. Reader reaction was good. One Omaha city councilman said, "The only thing wrong with the Sunday Sun is that it isn't delivered all over Omaha."<sup>2</sup>

Sticking tightly to the theme of South Omaha and its people, new features began appearing. A column about South

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>South Omaha Sunday Sun, July 13, 1958, p. 1.

Omaha workers was begun, as well as a question and answer column about South Omaha problems.

Content and reader reaction did not seem to make the difference, though. The Sunday Sun was to be nothing more than a flash in the pan, outliving the Post by only a couple of months.

A lack of advertising signed the death warrant. The Sunday Sun dropped from twenty-eight to twenty pages and when the last edition, number twenty-five, came on December 28, 1958, it was only sixteen pages.

A small box on page one served notice of suspension.

Sun Newspapers of Omaha regretfully announces suspension of publication of the Sunday Sun, effective with this issue.

Most of the features you have enjoyed in this newspaper, including the television program listings, will be found in the regular Thursday edition of the South Omaha Sun.

Publisher David Blacker explained that although surveys showed the Sunday Sun was widely accepted by and popular among subscribers, the advertising support given the publication did not make practical its continued existence at this time.

Blacker expressed the hope that sometime in the future, the Sunday Sun might be resumed.

Suspension of the Sunday Sun in no way affects the regular Thursday edition of the South Omaha Sun nor other weekly newspapers published by the Sun Newspapers of Omaha.

All subscribers who have paid in advance for the Sunday Sun will automatically have their subscriptions extended for the Thursday edition of the South Omaha Sun, which has served the community for nearly sixty years.

Mail subscriptions to the Sun will become \$2.50 a year.<sup>1</sup>

That suspension was the end of a dream for Blacker. He would never again have another opportunity to move into the semi-weekly or daily field. His other four publications, however, continued to grow in strength and popularity as the Sun Newspapers entered a period of transition that would see them become true newspapers.

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<sup>1</sup>South Omaha Sunday Sun, December 28, 1958, p. 1.

CHAPTER VIII  
A PAPER IN TRANSITION

The hammer had fallen and the chain was forged. Some links were stronger than others, but with the exception of the Sarpy County Sun, founded in 1964, all were there. Now it remained for the metal to be tempered.

The purchase of the Benson and North papers marked the beginning of an era of transition that saw the chain become a group of responsible newspapers, rather than free-circulation shoppers. This was Dave Blacker's dream. In 1956, he took the first step to make that dream become reality. He hired Bill Drake as the first Sun or Omaha Community Newspapers, as they were still called, managing editor.

Drake was a veteran midwestern journalist, having served thirteen years as a wire service reporter, bureau manager and business representative for United Press (now United Press International). Like many journalist, Drake had long yearned to have his own newspaper. Looking around, he was attracted to Blacker's Dundee News, which he thought had a good deal of potential in Omaha.

"Eventually," recalls Drake, "I visited Dave Blacker just on a hunch that something might develop. We had numerous conversations, as I recall, inspired by the coincidental fact that he aspired to improve his newspapers and make them 'respectable.' For both of us it was a long way between a

casual idea and actually putting it into practice."<sup>1</sup>

The result of that casual idea and the numerous conversations was that in the spring of 1956, Drake moved into a cubby hole in the back room with a desk jammed up against a Scan-o-graver and became the first managing editor. It was a big move for both Blacker and Drake.

Drake recalled the move.

For me it meant leaving a fairly assured career with UP. For Dave it meant a move into an uncharted area involving money and some risk to what was an established profitable business, albeit, not anything in which he could have any pride. Dave Blacker, whatever else he was, was a very proud man and with good reason.

Above all, Dave yearned to be a real publisher. He disagreed rather violently at times with World-Herald viewpoints and felt the city deserved another voice of the world. He also saw quite accurately, it is obvious now, that there was a market for 'another voice,' an area in which I was truly not entirely competent to judge. I had grave doubts that we could ever lure downtown department stores, big advertisers--groceries, etc., into 'those little papers.' Initially, I was inclined to discount much of what Dave would 'dream about' out loud with me. I wasn't sure he was really cut out to be a true publisher. I remember describing him as one who was 'not really a newspaperman but one who had succeeded in the newspaper business.'

In retrospect, I guess that I happened along just at the right time to put into some kind of form a way to do what Dave Blacker was dreaming about rather vaguely. It wasn't the only way it could have been accomplished. And in the end, it wasn't really so unusual; the main thing was we stuck at it, made some mistakes, and finally through a series of experiments and compromises, established the Suns as newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from William Drake, May 21, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Assisting Drake in the early years of transition was another veteran newsman, Phil Gurney. A native of Council Bluffs, Iowa, Gurney joined the staff as news editor in the spring of 1958. Prior to joining the Sun, Gurney had been with the Council Bluffs Non-Pariel and the Des Moines Register and Tribune. Working together, Drake and Gurney established the course the papers would take as they moved into the news field. Outlining that course, Drake said:

My concept, basically, was a magazine approach and while Time Magazine was an ambitious model, this was our dream-goal in format. I recognized the futility of spot-news competition in any sense. Our big problem was in getting people to take us seriously. 'Oh, that's that little paper,' people said. 'Are YOU working there now?'

There were many problems of production--the news department had never had ANY priority of any kind before and late-breaking news was viewed with alarm. The problem of suddenly offering a sort of a summary of what was happening at City Hall, and the Courthouse, as well as the neighborhoods, was tremendous. We had the problem of fencing off what we thought was 'our news' and just ignoring the rest. It was a problem drawing that line. Probably, the easiest way to attract attention would have been to be sensational, argumentative and controversial. We didn't do too well in this area, although in a quiet sort of a way we called spades spades. One big problem I never could accept--but had to--was the lag between deadline and actual throw-on-the-porch time. It was a rough one, but I've since learned that no paper can do everything every week.<sup>1</sup>

Reader reaction to the new approach was one of polite surprise at first. "I never read anything but the ads" or "I

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

wish you wouldn't throw that damn thing on my porch" changed gradually to "Hey, you've got a pretty good paper there."

Bill Drake added:

It was rewarding to be there for the transition and get the genuine reaction (as opposed to well-meaning friends) and to see Dave get it. I never had any illusions that we were causing World-Herald executives to tear their hair, at that stage of the game, but we did evolve to the point that politicians courted us, people wanted to get news into the paper, and, most important, people started paying cash for the papers, which was a joy.<sup>1</sup>

News editor Phil Gurney, now Director of Development for the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, continued:

Those were the exciting, dramatic years of the Sun. We had a hell of a good team in those days and we were putting out a good newspaper. There was lots of enthusiasm in those early years. It was a real challenge. We all wanted to put out a quality product, including Dave. At the same time, I think we made a better paper out of the World-Herald, too.<sup>2</sup>

As the news concept developed under the watchful eyes of Drake and Gurney, a feeling of purpose developed in the staff. "We began to feel we had to fill a role and a need which the daily paper did not, in many ways," Drake explained.

Perhaps our purpose was too much a reaction to the World-Herald, at first. But the need I felt was for a community paper, deeply concerned and involved in the various areas, much in the manner of any good weekly newspaper

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Phil Gurney, in an interview with William Boyer, June 3, 1968.

and its relationship to its hometown. We were all a little excited about bringing this role to a big city and fascinated when it seemed to catch on.<sup>1</sup>

The gathering of the clans under the Sun flag in 1958 was the signal that Drake and the Sun papers were ready to assume the responsibilities of real newspapers. This marked the beginning of the news approach and of the closely-knit, interlocking editorial operation that characterizes the Sun of today.

The "four-way" system, as the editorial operation came to be known, was Drake's brainchild. Allowing each editor to cover his separate neighborhood, Drake reasoned that a certain amount of news would be of interest to all neighborhoods and should be run in all papers. This was a new wrinkle--city-wide coverage was unheard of in the Sun. Seeing the vast possibilities city-wide coverage offered, Drake went to work.

There were vast complications involved in the four-way concept, getting all four papers published with some news for all, some individually-tailored news for each, and we had to build a staff, not entirely from scratch but almost.<sup>2</sup>

The first four-way staff had Drake covering city government, Ralph Bradley on county government, Dwayne Brown on

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from William Drake, May 21, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

photography and Gurney doing general four-way writing, as well as editing and laying out the four-way or center section.

At first the Center Section, which now runs from twenty to thirty pages, was only two facing pages in the middle of the paper. Those two pages were called Crossroads and consisted primarily of government news. A short time later, a television guide was added to the Crossroads pages, as well as some syndicated features and sports news. This was the parent of today's Center Section.

Drake also began the first solid attempts at depth reporting, a thing later to become a Sun trademark. The first attempt was the Crossroads government pages. He also created a weekly personality feature called "Omaha Picture Window." The first "Picture Window" offering was on November 6, 1958. It was entitled, "Hometown Journalism: The Story Behind the Sun Newspapers." This feature later became the cover story of the Center Section, known as the Page 1-A.

"Drake was a real whirlwind," commented Paul Williams. "The amount he wrote for the papers each week was sagging!"<sup>1</sup>

"Drake was also an education for Dave Blacker," added Phil Gurney. "Drake was a good newsman and could see the news potential of the Sun papers. I'm sure they argued long

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

and hard about the size of the news hole and what went and what didn't."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time Drake was centralizing and building the news staff, Stan Lipsey took over direction of the business and advertising staffs. Emil Vohoska became director of the newly-formed four-way advertising staff.

Individual advertising personnel were assigned to each paper to design ads for customers and lay out the ad dummies each week. The ad men included George Georgeff, Dundee; Bert Williams, North; Stu Sturtz, Benson; and Joe Francis and Earl Katz, South. Classified advertising people were also placed in each of the Sun's three offices--the main plant at 4808 South 25th in South Omaha, 6111 Military in Benson-North Omaha, and 16th and Douglas, downtown Omaha, where Blacker had moved his office. A listing of advertising rates is included in Appendix B.

While Drake and Lipsey were busily trying to ride herd on this new four-barrel combination, Dave Blacker was quietly preparing to take the biggest step since he had purchased the South Omaha Sun twenty years earlier.

November 6, 1958, as the papers adopted the Sun flag, the North and South papers ceased free circulation. A page one story the week before had announced the long-discussed decision.

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<sup>1</sup>Phil Gurney, in an interview with William H. Boyer, June 3, 1968.

This issue of the South Omaha Sun is the last to be regularly distributed on a free circulation basis.

When your carrier boy brings the Sunday Sun to your home Sunday, he will be 'in business' for himself.

Effective November 1, the two weekly editions of the Sun will be delivered for 10 cents a week. Carriers, who have been building their routes for the past few weeks, will receive five cents from each 10 cents paid by subscribers.

Seven more carrier boys were inducted this week into the Sun's 'Silver Dollar Club,' symbolic of having obtained subscriptions from 80 per cent of the families on their routes. Each new member is awarded five silver dollars.<sup>1</sup>

The November 6th issue carried a bright red, five column color spot at the top of page one with "Pay Your Carrier Boy Ten Cents This Week" stamped across it in black. The use of the red and some yellow spot color on a Pepsi-Cola ad in the same issue marked the first time spot color had been used by the Sun papers, also.

A story run that same week recorded the enthusiastic response by Omaha business and civic leaders to the paid circulation plan. South Omahans, the article claimed, "generally indicated enthusiasm for the new paid subscription program. They expressed the belief that the program will enable the long service record of the Sun to South Omaha to be sustained and improved."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>South Omaha Sun, November 6, 1958, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

City Councilman Al Veys commented, "The South Omaha Sun's paid circulation program is an important step in its role of 'another voice' in the city. The Sun has been an important factor in our community life and I'm pleased with its growth."<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the conversion, the South paper had 190 carriers--33 were members of the "Silver Dollar Club." One boy had even signed 96 per cent of his route.<sup>2</sup>

"While it is true that the paid circulation story began in the fall of 1958," Paul Williams reported, "Dave Blacker's personal program for development of the papers goes back some years. It was a dream that began twenty or more years ago. The change to paid circulation was a definite step in that development that brought in more income, made it possible to acquire top syndicated features, more staff, and more stature."<sup>3</sup>

A year later, the Benson and Dundee papers went to paid subscription. The Sun literally held its collective breath.

The conversion was successful--amazingly so. Assistant publisher Stan Lipsey, after spending time in Chicago studying circulation methods, engineered the physical aspects of the change. The papers retained 70 per cent coverage. In some areas, such as the core of South Omaha, it rose as high as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Williams, in a personal letter to Prof. J. W. Schwartz, Iowa State University, April 6, 1964.

ninety-six per cent. The readers wanted and were willing to pay for a good newspaper. By fall of 1959, the growth curve had begun to soar. Estimated circulation was 38,000 and rising.<sup>1</sup>

All was not well in the Sun shop, though. Bill Drake was mad--mad enough to quit, which he did late in 1959.

Recalling the parting of the ways, Drake said,

I left the Sun to go west and buy my own newspaper, somewhat reluctantly and uncertainly because I did think we had something going. We negotiated at some length about what was the original understanding that after we proved we could make papers out of them, I would have an opportunity to buy an interest. Of course, there are complexities involved in buying into a family-owned enterprise. Actually, when the time came, Dave found it impossible to really turn loose and actually sell out right an interest in his business. He offered me other incentives, even stock ownership on the basis that it would revert to him or could be called by him under certain conditions.

It became so involved that it appeared hopeless. Again, having gone through somewhat the same problems--as the owner dealing with hopeful employee-investors--I have mellowed with the passage of time. In 1959, I was disappointed and felt let down but I'm sure Dave persisted in his belief that he was being generous. It was the only time we ever really failed to compromise a difference and it wound up in a separation.<sup>2</sup>

with Drake headed for California and eventual ownership of the Pacifica Tribune, the managing editor's slot was open. Phil Gurney asked for and got the job.

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<sup>1</sup>Stan Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from William Drake, May 21, 1968.

Dave Blacker continued to look quietly for a managing editor and in early 1960, he hired Jerry Leibman, a former college journalism professor.

Leibman was a good writer--but not an editor or the firebrand that Blacker thought he was getting. After seven months, he called Leibman in and fired him. The papers reverted to Gurney, who rehired Leibman as a writer. "Dave even let Jerry keep his severance pay," Gurney said and smiled.<sup>1</sup>

When Dave gave the papers back to me, it was without the title of managing editor. He said we'd work something out and I knew he was looking for another boy. I didn't really worry about it.

The top newsman in the city was Paul Williams, at the time. Word was out that he was disenchanted with the World-Herald (Williams was assistant city editor) and so Dave went to talk to him. Nobody thought Paul would come. Dave had a reputation as a hard guy to work for. Permanance was not a keypoint of employment at the Sun.

Anyway, one Tuesday night Paul called and asked if he could come down and watch us make up the papers since he would be taking over in a few days. It came as a quite a shock--no one knew. Not even me. But this was the way Dave worked and it ceased to surprise me.<sup>2</sup>

Gurney returned to his job as News Editor until the spring of 1961, when he left to take his present position at Joslyn Art Museum. "At a certain point," he explained, "you

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<sup>1</sup>Phil Gurney, in an interview with William H. Boyer, June 3, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

look at the job and say, 'Is this where I want to stay the rest of my life?' You need a feeling of security. This was something we didn't have at the Sun. There was always an uneasiness there. So I moved over to Joslyn."<sup>1</sup>

While managing editors were playing musical chairs, a new figure was slowly beginning to dominate the scene.

Dave Blacker's health was failing. He was suffering from a cardiovascular condition that caused frequent pain and occasional dizziness. This forced him to retire to the sidelines and concentrate on long-range planning while the day-to-day operation was taken over by his son-in-law and assistant publisher, Stanford Lipsey.

Lipsey was no raw, last minute recruit. He had been a Sun man since 1950, shortly after his marriage to Blacker's daughter, Jeanne. A native of Omaha, he received his B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1948 and worked for two years in public relations before joining the Sun.

Shortly after joining the advertising staff, he was called to active duty in the Air Force during the Korean Crisis. Promoted to technical sergeant, he became non-commissioned officer in charge of the public information office at Offutt Air Base and edited the base paper--Blacker's Air Pulse.

In 1952, he returned to edit the South Omaha Sun. In 1955, he was named assistant publisher. Five years later,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

when Dave Blacker was forced to loosen the reins, it was an experienced hand that took up the slack.

Another experienced hand moved in during March of 1960 to finish the job Bill Drake had started. For the next six years, the masthead would carry two names--the publisher's and Paul N. Williams. . .Managing Editor.

CHAPTER IX  
WILLIAMS--HIS ERA

Paul Williams sat comfortably behind an uncluttered desk in his carpeted-but-not-overly-plush office at the Leo. A. Daly Company, an ever-present cigarette in his hand. It was a far cry from the glassed-in cubby hole with its desk hidden under reams of copy and proofs that the vibrant newsman had occupied for six years as managing editor of the Sun.

A native of Kansas, Williams started newspapering in 1941 as copy boy for the Topeka State-Journal. After serving two and one-half years in World War II, he joined the news staff of the Omaha World-Herald in 1946. While in the daily field, he was a Time-Life stringer and sold numerous free-lance pieces to various national magazines. When he left the Herald to become managing editor of the Sun in 1960, he was assistant city editor.

Now, as director of communications for the international architectural firm, he was trying to evaluate the newspapers he had once charted the editorial course for. Finally, he said, "there is no objective way to answer how good a paper is. The measure must come from the readers and advertisers."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps unknowingly, he had hit on the support that he was responsible for creating. During the six years he was a

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

part of the Sun team, circulation had risen more than 10,000 to reach a plateau of 50,000. Now the little papers were reaching more than 200,000 Omahans. It had been a fast six years, driven faster by the whirlwind with the pica stick in his hip pocket that was Williams.

The team was small in 1960 when the new managing editor first sat behind that cluttered desk. Writing to a friend shortly before he left the Sun, Williams described the beginnings.

In March of 1960, Dave Blacker hired me to build a professional staff. From a seven-man staff, we have built to thirteen full-timers and have developed a reputation for deep and outspoken reporting of local--very local--problems, customs and mores. The staff includes three full-time women (one a J.C. Penney--University of Missouri prizewinner for outstanding women's reporting) covering a full range, not just society stuff. It is an unconventional group of mixed backgrounds and viewpoints, and in regular staff meetings we try to stir up new ideas.

Every week, to begin with, we are committed to two major pieces; the Sun Special, which deals with a situation or issue, and the Page 1-A profile, which deals with a personality. We also have our two-page Crossroads report on city-county government, the arts page, sports pages, two editorial pages, a picture page, teen pages and loads of neighborhood news pieces.

We make a rather lively point of the Sun's role in moving the World-Herald. The W-H copied our TV section; the W-H copied our teen scene; the W-H bought away our top editorial cartoonists; the W-H copied our Arts pages; I claim, but can't prove factually, that the W-H got to covering the local racial story only because the Sun dared to go out and report the problem.

It's a scramble, of course, to stay ahead on these things. With the World-Herald coming out every day, and with them outnumbering us about 8 to 1 in the newsroom, we have to anticipate, plan ahead, shift our forces from week to week, and, most interesting of all, find things to talk about that the World-Herald hasn't touched or doesn't recognize as a story.

There is a good deal of evidence that our kind of journalism is succeeding in a number of metropolitan areas where daily papers have become virtual monopolies. But let me emphasize on distinction:

Most of the success stories are in suburban papers, which have a little advantage in that the metro daily simply can't cover their neighborhood in detail.

The Sun Newspapers are urban. We compete within the city limits of Omaha for the most part. Perhaps fifteen per cent of our circulation (which, not at all incidentally, is 50,000 ABC) is on the fringes of Omaha; the rest is in the city and we are doing our stuff literally under the noses of the big daily.

Very few papers that I know are operating this way. And this, I think, is the significance of the Sun story. It can be done.<sup>1</sup>

But in 1960, Williams still had to prove it could be done. His full-time news staff was seven strong. The advertising staff included another seven, in addition to Blacker, who still kept his hand in. News editor was Phil Gurney, Dwayne Brown edited the Dundee edition, Ralph Bradley had the South, Leon Satterfield handled the Benson and Jerry Clauson took the North. Carl Uhlarick, veteran United Press and KFAB radio newsman and former news director for KFAB radio, covered

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in a letter to Rick Friedman, executive editor of Editor and Publisher, November 29, 1965.

the county-city government beat and Jerry Leibman was a general all-around legman. There was no copy desk.

Uhlarick's hiring in 1959 had been a major part of Bill Drake's expansion plan. Drake discussed the addition in an issue of Sun Spots, the paper's short-lived house organ.

Carl's job will include the bulk of the Crossroads. He will also try for page one stories for all papers and/or for individual papers. He will pass along tips and story ideas from city hall, the courthouse, MUD, OPPD, etc., to individual editors to be dug out by them. And in some cases, he'll be able to run down and check out things for individual editors.

The new setup is not designed to keep any editor out of city hall. All are free to originate their own stories anywhere. The advantage of having a full-time man on duty is obvious. Carl also will contribute editorials and work with me and with all of you to strengthen and define our editorial position.

I will be freer to manage, edit and to carry out the many plans we have and the ones we will devise. Under the new arrangement, Phil and Carl and I will carry almost all of the four-way work, leaving each editor to concentrate fully on his or her own area and own paper. Our goal is not necessarily more copy, not quantity, but quality.<sup>1</sup>

As with his predecessor, it wasn't long before Williams went recruiting. The first addition was Jim Donnelly, a salty newsman whom the World-Herald had bid good-bye. He became the first desk man. "Before Donnelly, explained Williams, "everyone wrote their own heads and edited their own copy.

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<sup>1</sup>Vill Drake, Sun Spots, Vol. 1, No. 9, p. 1.

Occasionally that made for real wild situations."<sup>1</sup>

Donnelly remained with the Sun until 1966, becoming one of its outstanding reporters and later going to write for Associated Press out of Omaha.

Taking on a Grand Central Station atmosphere, desks switched rapidly in the newsroom after that. Satterfield left to teach at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Clauson headed for greener pastures in California as Bill Drake had done. Rosemary Madison, a free-lance writer and Omaha teacher, joined the staff on a part-time basis and later became full-time. Writing a witty commentary on almost everything, "Rosemary's Irrelevancies," and later editing the award-winning arts pages, she was to become one of the paper's most popular writers.

Marge Brodrick joined the staff and took over responsibility for a television guide. Geri Stratman began handling the increasing society news for the Benson, North and Dundee papers. Others came and went as the staff grew and Williams began to place emphasis on news and balance.

Changes were not slow in coming. His second week there, Williams began the Arts page, under the editorship of Gurney. "After its initial appearance," Williams said, "we felt it was very successful." General content dealt with cultural events and Omahans involved in the performing arts. Gurney

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in an interview with William Boyer, November 26, 1967.

was later named Outstanding Omaha Journalist of the Year for his work on the page by The Omaha Press Club.<sup>1</sup>

Emphasizing good depth reporting, the Sun special helped expand the growing variety of editorial content in the fall of 1960. Dealing in depth with a city-wide problem or situation, the Special began to take a comprehensive look at the city of Omaha, its people and its government. It was this type of weekly reporting that would make city business and political leaders turn to watch the rapidly rising Sun.

Another item high on Williams' priority list was the strengthening of syndicated material. In the first year or so he added "twelve or thirteen top-flight syndicated features," including Walter Lippman, Leonard Lyons, Dan Dowling, Bill Mauldin, Drew Pearson, Red Smith, Ralph McGill, Ann Landers, Dr. Molner and some NEA sports features. Later additions included Haynie, Conrad, Fischetti, a gardening feature, "Helen Help Us," and a local cartoonist.<sup>2</sup>

"Having a local cartoonist is one of our real strengths," explained Lipsey. "It's one thing for a cartoonist to sit at home and draw the president or members of congress. It's something else for the Sun's cartoonist to lampoon the mayor of members of the city council. It takes a lot more backbone when he knows he may have to face them the next day. It

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

has brought another facet to the Sun as a second voice for the people of Omaha."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the people of Omaha, someone else was beginning to take notice of the "second voice." That was the "first voice," the World-Herald. The Sun's editorial page, boasting three Pulitzer Prize cartoonists, was becoming a thing to reckon with. The Herald did just that. When it came time to renew contracts on the syndicated cartoonists, the Herald outbid the Sun. A Sun page one editorial on April 9, 1964, explained the situation to the readers.

We Congratulate the World-Herald. . .

Remembering the old maxim, 'Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,' we are flattered indeed.

We are sorry to report that after the issue of April 23, we will no longer be able to bring our readers the cartoons of Bill Mauldin, Herblock and Dan Dowling, nor the advice column of Ann Landers.

The reason is that the World-Herald saw fit to buy not one or two, but all three of our editorial page cartoons, plus our top personal columnist. This is not hard for a large paper to do; it can simply outbid the weekly paper.

We can't help feeling sad about it. We started using Herblock's cartoons five years ago, in a day when publication of such liberal viewpoints was not very fashionable in Omaha. As the Sun grew and gained reader support, we added Mauldin and Dowling. Thus we were able to offer with pride a panel of artists who had won four Pulitzer Prizes and five Sigma Delta Chi

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<sup>1</sup>Stan Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, January 6, 1968.

awards for editorial cartooning.

We were also able to build a professional staff to bring depth reporting and a variety of ideas and expressions to Omaha--to provide another voice for the city.

Now we are losing the cartoonists. However, we can assure our faithful readers that we will not lose our individuality nor our fervor. These cannot be bought for money. What we may lack in 'name' features, we promise to make up in reporting--with sincerity and insight, with dignity and honesty.<sup>1</sup>

In October 19 1962, while Williams was busily expanding his staff and the papers' content, Dave Blacker took the step that would make or break the rising Sun. The paper became a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation. The first Audit Bureau of Circulation audit listed the circulation at 50,000, according to Lipsey.<sup>2</sup>

Williams added:

I admired Dave very much when he went ABC. It took guts. There are a lot of ways to pad circulation--with big press runs and then stuffing papers down sewers and stuff, but Dave never went for that. He wanted to be honest with everybody--he would live or die with ABC.

Relatively few weeklies face ABC. The good ones do. About 90 per cent don't. I thought we came close to being one of the real top ranked weeklies in the country.<sup>3</sup>

On October 3, 1963, subscription rates rose again--to ten cents a week.

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<sup>1</sup>South Omaha Sun, April 9, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Stan Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, January 6, 1968.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Williams, press release, October 17, 1963.

Two weeks after the rate increase, Williams wrote in a press release to trade media, "The Sun Newspapers of Omaha have completed what they believe is the most successful price increase program in the metro-suburban field."<sup>1</sup>

An Audit Bureau of Circulation audit two weeks before the change showed circulation at 55,224. As of October 17, 1963, the net loss in circulation was 2,037, or about 3.7 per cent.

"How much of the 3.7 per cent loss was solely due to the price increase is debatable," Williams wrote. "Issuance of new collection cards, which coincided with the increase, usually brings a one-half to one per cent 'shakeout' of cancelled subscribers or move-outs whom the boys have been carrying."<sup>2</sup>

Publisher Blacker was pleased also. He said:

We like to believe that this excellent response to a necessary price increase resulted from the standing our papers enjoy in their communities. We have sought to give our subscribers not only a detailed neighborhood coverage, but significant depth reporting, strong editorials and warm, human personality profiles. The figures indicate that people want and are willing to pay a reasonable rate for a community newspaper that tries to not only meet but exceed their needs.<sup>3</sup>

Preparations for the price increase included a series of house ads beginning in June of 1963 using the theme--Bright

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Paper--The Sun.

The Sun circulation department, following long-standing policy, offered no special prices, premiums or other inducements to keep or get customers. The bulk of the work was done by some 700 carrier boys. Circulation supervisors contacted each boy individually. In addition, supervisors sent letters to parents of each boy explaining what the raise meant to them. (The boy would get four cents a copy under the new price.) A theater party and a series of promotion bulletins and sales cards were used to generate interest among the boys. Extra bonuses were also declared for boys who held their customers or scored increases.

Discussing the price change a year later, Williams raised the loss figure a little. "As expected, we lost almost exactly 10 per cent of the circulation. We turned the corner on the circulation loss about mid-March (of 1964) and are now gaining about 150 a week (April of 1964)."<sup>1</sup>

The fifth paper to boast the Sun flag joined the family in 1964. This was the Sarpy County edition, going to rural and suburban areas south and southwest of Omaha. Basically, the Sarpy paper was a remake or a sub-edition of the South paper.

"This was a late developing area. Circulation possibilities didn't develop there until 1964," explained Williams.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in a letter to Prof. J. W. Schwartz, April 6, 1964.

"It was a fairly noble experiment, considering there was no advertising base in the area. We felt, however, that we could tailor a paper for the growing suburbia. It was fairly successful, circulation-wise."<sup>1</sup>

Circulation of the Sarpy edition was 3,037 and rising as of August 16, 1965.<sup>2</sup>

With the prices raised, the Sun flag securely flying over southwest Omaha, content and staff solidified and circulation growing, Williams took time out to look closely at what the Sun had become and where it was going. In a letter to his friend Rick Friedman, he described how it was and what he looked for.

1) We now cover about 150 square miles with our four papers (plus one sub-edition).

2) We are putting more and more emphasis on reporting stories that affect the entire region, but breaking them down and localizing for what we call the 'neighborhoods' or sub-communities that our four papers cover. For instance: a report on FHA 'open-occupancy' regulations--we write a single story, make inserts high in the story giving pertinent statistics on new homes affected in the South Omaha area or West Omaha area, etc. I've shuffled a couple of staff people and will be doing more over the next several weeks to do this type of thing more effectively.

3) The 'types' of stories to which we give this treatment are basically government,

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Sarpy County Sun, ABC circulation statement, August 16, 1965.

educational and sociological stories affecting all of our neighborhoods.

4) In an average week at this time of year we'll have about 50 'four-way' pages that run in all of our papers. Then we will have, say, 46 local pages for South; 38 for Dundee; 30 for Benson; 22 for North, all depending on ad and news volume. On the average, slightly more than half of our pages are four-way.

5) Our current net paid circulation is approximately 50,600, ABC.

6) All but about 1,500 of our circulation is by carrier boy; we have 700 boys. This is a problem area, because we get relatively young boys who have not carried papers before; we have to train them.

We, incidentally, are not suburban. Most of our circulation area is the Omaha municipal government area, which expands frequently. We have five very small suburban towns which are covered as parts of our South and West Omaha editions. We are continually concerned about the direction of growth of Omaha, and I personally expect that within 10 to 20 years, we will have a continuous megalopolis stretching along the 60 miles of interstate highway connecting Omaha and Lincoln. I hope that we are alert enough and imaginative enough to fit into the communications picture of such a metropolitan complex. We have, for instance, tried a couple of approaches and will continue to work toward some regular coverage from Lincoln, the state capitol, especially during the legislative sessions.

The problem, and it is a tough one, is for the weekly to keep its local identity and its common touch. It can do a great service to its readers by handling the regional, metropolitan and state-wide stories--but in localized, effect-on-the-neighborhood terms. We are still feeling our way, and as I say, gradually reorganizing our staff to do this better.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in a letter to Rich Friedman, April 17, 1964.

One of Williams' major problems during the period of reorganization and building was that there had never been a clearly written statement of paper philosophy and policy. In a general way, Williams described the Sun's editorial policy as an effort to "bring large problems into local focus, to report how our people live, and to try to stimulate more creative approaches to urban-surburban life."<sup>1</sup>

As it became more obvious that a written statement of policy was needed, Williams drafted two policy outlines, the first, a short, three-page outline, listed a five point editorial policy.

1) Report in detail on community life, with special emphasis on neighborhood organizations and interests--special, educational, religious and commercial.

2) With careful selectivity, anticipate and report on city-wide and area-wide situations, problems, phenomena and people that affect their respective neighborhoods.

3) With particular emphasis on the interests and values of neighborhood life, to comment editorially on topics that concern their readers.

4) To maintain a position of independence from special interest, and to view each news and editorial decision from the standpoint of their readers as good citizens.

5) As good citizens, to participate in their community life insofar as their resources permit.

We are trying to give our readers a sense of identity and direction in a fast-changing world.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in a letter to Frederic Hemphill, Brookings, S.D., March 10, 1965.

The neighborhoods they grew up in have changed radically if they haven't disappeared entirely. The values that guided their parents have changed. The conceptions of human potential have altered radically. The roles of government and of private and public social agencies have been revolutionized. The power balance of world politics has been overturned. The means and pace of travel and communication have taken quantum jumps. In this sea of change, we are trying to help our readers answer these questions for themselves:

---Who am I?

---Where am I?

---Why am I here and where am I going?

We are not philosophers and logicians for the centuries, however. We are simply trying to answer these questions for people who are living here and now in Omaha, Nebr., trying to find good homes and schools, good lives, good relationships with their neighbors.

The most meaningful way we can do these things is by reporting life as it is. This does not mean that we accept our life and our fate uncritically. We endeavor to make comparisons, to draw out the best ideas, to define goals that are worth seeking, to advocate change that will benefit the group without damaging individual dignity.

But we must report things the way they are. From knowledge of the present situation, our readers and their chosen leaders can progress to better things.<sup>1</sup>

From this brief outline, Williams developed a comprehensive set of editorial and staff guidelines for the Sun. In addition to editorial policy and the paper's goals, the outline included an organizational breakdown of coverage for the four-way staff and an individual evaluation of each staff

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, editorial policy outline, undated.

member. Elaborating on the original short policy outline, Williams stated the editorial policy that the papers still follow.

The Sun is a single organization striving to present significant, balanced news, information and opinion to the Omaha metropolitan area. It publishes five editions designed to fit particular interests of traditional communities in the area.

Its primary philosophy is to publish the best weekly newspaper possible, with faith in the proposition that if the editorial content is good, the readers will support the paper.

Its purpose is not to take indiscriminating snapshots, but to paint an expert picture of how its people live. It endeavors to strip away extraneous detail and fog, to concentrate on the primary subject, and to place elements of the picture in perspective and focus.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, Williams developed a set of goals for the papers to strive for.

We strive to write for the wage-earner as well as the executive, the c-minus student in college as well as his lettered professor, the hotel bus boy as well as the diner whose table he clears. We aspire to establish meaningful communication among all the diverse elements of the community. We also assume that the wage-earner, the C student, and the bus boy aspire to better things; we want to give them some of the understanding stimulation that will make better things possible.

We do not cleave to a single political party line. In our editorial comment--and only there--we offer our opinion on the best way for Omaha and Omahans to achieve their goals. We try to recommend solutions rather than simply bemoaning situations.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, "Policy, Goals and Guidelines for the Sun," January 10, 1964.

We seek for the Omaha area best in administration of public affairs. This implies efficiency, coordination and communication among various levels and subdivisions of government. It does not imply either expansion or reduction of governmental services. It does imply a continuous search for definition and understanding of public problems, and for solutions. We assume that public employees are no more or less fallible or infallible than other people. We want to protect the interests of the public, but we do not want to harrass the public employee with suspicions, rumors, or second guesses.

We strive for scope and responsibility in our reporting. We would rather miss a story than go into it half-cocked, or worse, inaccurately. We want our readers to know, when they read a story in the Sun, that it has been checked; that contentions of all parties to an argument have been sought out; that no fact or claim is assumed to be simply true because it has been reported elsewhere; that our story represents the best efforts of professional news personnel to bring the reader information he would seek for his own judgments and decisions.

We seek to provide a major forum for discussion through our columnists, our Speicals, and our news coverage. We want all reasonable viewpoints to be heard. In our editorial comments, we want to avoid taking a doctrinaire position and then seeking rationalization for it in news coverage or interpretation.

We seek not just a good life, but a full life for our readers. We believe in the perfectibility of man. We want our area's residents to have the creature comforts, security, happiness--but we also want to stimulate them to creativity, freedom of intellect, discovery of understanding rather than acceptance of formulas. We want to offer them literature, art, music, drama, practical philosophy that can enrich their understanding of themselves and their world.

We seek for the Omaha area a strong and viable economy which provides opportunity as well as susistence. We want to encourage our business community to use its brains as well as its material resources to improve the whole fabric of life, and hence to improve its own stability.

And we seek an understanding and outgoing relationship between Omaha and the rest of Nebraska, the United States, and the whole world. We want to help Omahans understand their role, their potential value to the farmer, to the national body politic, the educational establishment, the minorities at home and the majorities abroad who are also seeking their own freedom and identity.<sup>1</sup>

Williams also outlined a general overhaul of the papers' makeup, getting away from the traditional rules of newspaper design. "I think we should try to forget every 'traditional' newspaper rule and makeup pattern," he wrote Publisher Blacker. "We should re-think for an entirely revised format to give our readers something better and brighter for their dime."<sup>2</sup>

The first step in his proposed plan to do something about the "cluttered" appearance of the papers was to abandon the inverted pyramid advertising format and go to a rectangular pattern, stacking ads in units of full columns or multiples, so that "the news hole on a given page is also in full column units--averaging three columns of ads and two columns of editorial matter per page."<sup>3</sup>

The per page ratio of news to advertising was true for the whole paper, as the Sun generally aimed for a ratio of 60 per cent advertising to 40 per cent news. Actually, the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Williams, in a letter to Stan Lipsey, November 1, 1963.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

average was about 55 per cent ads to 45 per cent news.

Other recommendations included the designing of new flags and the redesigning of all standing heads to give them some common theme or unifying factor. He also wanted more white space around headlines and suggested setting the eight point body copy on a ten point slug to increase the amount of white space. This, he noted, would result in the loss of about eleven per cent of available news space but would provide a much airier appearance consistent with the Sun's no-column-rules design. A copy of the Sun Style Book is included in Appendix C.<sup>1</sup>

The key to the whole plan for redesigning the papers was to be a survey by a trained survey firm to discover what the readers wanted. Changes in makeup came about slowly, however, and it was not until another managing editor took over that most of Williams' ideas took final form on the printed page.

Williams' ideas on makeup and design were pretty well outlined in a note to all editors.

As a matter of policy, I want to stick to good-sized and bold-faced headlines on page 1, and more effort to get a balance of material on the page.

A good page 1 should contain:

--A top story that is solid news, not a club program or school announcement.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

--A strong two column, three column or larger picture, selected primarily for quality and eye appeal.

--A good feature about people: people succeeding, people in trouble, people laughing, people crying.

--On the opposite end of the page from the large picture, a smaller or similar-sized one, which doesn't need to be a smash picture but should be able to stand judgment for artistic quality.

--If at all possible, one item, usually short, that is just funny. BALANCE, both visual and in content, is important. When you dummy your page 1, consider that aspect. If you find it lacking, shuffle some of your inside forward stuff with page 1 stuff to see if you can improve.

TYPOGRAPHICALLY, I want to see us using bigger and brighter headlines on page 1.<sup>1</sup>

With Paul Williams riding herd on nearly every aspect of the Sun papers, the little chain continued to grow. By 1967, it would grow to become the sixth largest general paid circulation weekly in the country. Dave Blacker's dream of a city-wide second voice for the city of Omaha had come true.

But his moment of triumph was brief.

Sunday, April 11, 1965, a dark cloud settled on the Sun's South Omaha print shop and the Sun mourned. Dave Blacker was dead.

Williams, his friend and able managing editor, wrote the obituary.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, in a note to all Sun editors, undated.

After a man dies, people who knew him begin to compare recollections. The similarities in their comparisons are always interesting--but not nearly so much as the differences.

And it is the differences, picked up in a series of interviews with intimates, that tell me the story of David Blacker, publisher of the Sun Newspapers and the man I've worked for these past five years.

The differences emphasize the range of Dave Blacker's mind and the force of his persuasive personality of thousands of people over the years in which he became a public figure.

'I think of him first and foremost as a family man,' one close friend recalled.

'He was so interested in Jewish history and tradition,' said another.

'His primary interest was the people around him, the people who make up Omaha,' said another.

'He was basically quite shy and reserved,' a former employee said.

I had my own opinion, which didn't quite tally with any of the others. David Blacker wanted a world and a society in which the dignity of the individual was recognized and upheld above all. He was too wise and experienced to expect the goal to be reached--but he still thought it was worth trying for.

Regardless of those analysis one accepts, the fact remains that David Blacker was a remarkable and complex man. Neither he nor any other person who achieves a great deal can be written about in objective terms. . .<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Kripke gave final tribute to Blacker in the closing words of his funeral oration. "To all of us he gave an example of the human spirit at its best, vital, alert, throbbing

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Williams, "David Blacker," p. 1.

with life, and reaching out toward freedom and goodness, toward peace and truth."<sup>1</sup>

With thousands of Omahans and journalists across the country, the Sun paused to mourn the passing of its founder-- paused, but did not stagger. The operation he had built was no longer a tottering infant. When he left the newsroom for the final time, there was hardly a tremor. Stan Lipsey, the 37-year old assistant publisher, took over full control and the Sun hardly paused for breath.

The whirlwind pace continued. Editors and reporters came and went with amazing speed as the news team expanded into new areas. Some young, some older and more experienced, they included Charles R. Hein, Bob Guthrie, Gretchen Reeder, Anne McConney, Sandra Lyster, Pete Citron, Richard E. Wilbur, John Pfeiffenberger, Jim Gember, Ray Hansen, Warren Franke, Eldon Miller and many others.

By the end of 1965, Paul Williams was getting restless. Again time was ripe for a change. For six years he had ridden herd on the mushrooming Sun as it ceased being a whisper and truly became that "second voice." Understandably, he was tired. February 24, 1966, after giving the Sun time to find a replacement, he resigned and moved to his present position at the Daly firm.

That same day, an experienced Sun man eased into the managing editor's chair at the still-cluttered desk.

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Myer S. Kripke, "Funeral Oration," p. 30.

## CHAPTER X

## CHARLES R. HEIN. . .MANAGING EDITOR

Charles R. "Charlie" Hein, present Sun managing editor and the man who replaced Paul Williams, is a big, comfortable-looking individual. A former Lincoln, Nebr., newsman, he is equipped with an earnest, unquenchable enthusiasm that bubbles to the top when he talks shop.

Hein began his career with the Sun as a desk man and reporter for the Dundee and South papers on January 15, 1963. In 1965, he took over the South paper when the irrepressible Donnelly moved over to the four-way staff.

With the change of command in 1966, the Sun caught its collective breath--then the accelerator hit the floor again. But this time on a new track.

Williams had spent six years developing and polishing editorial content. Hein decided to turn his guns on display, makeup and design. "After all," he said, "we're a tabloid--we ought to look like a tabloid!"<sup>1</sup>

September 15, 1966, the first noticeable steps in the face-lifting took place. The move was from a vertical to a horizontal design. Page one was remade, using much white space, a single large picture and wide measure type. "In terms of circulation, the results were very positive,"<sup>2</sup> reported Hein.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Hein, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 25, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Hein held most of his fire until June of 1967, though. Then he pulled Bob Guthrie of the South desk to help redesign the paper's interior. Ad man Pete Drake and Publisher Lipsey joined them and the team was complete. The Sun would redesign along a "magazine concept."

"We were convinced that display was equally as important as headlines, pictures and story content," explained Hein. "Of course, white space is the critical factor in any changes one makes. What we were planning to do was not very conventional--but then, who need convention?"<sup>1</sup>

Purpose of the changes, he continued, was an effort to gain consistency, open up the pages and increase readability. "Thinking in terms of display, we wanted to give John A. Subscriber a full paper--one that he could READ--for ten cents."<sup>2</sup>

In this era of competing media, we must do everything we can to invite the reader's attention. Look at it this way--the grocery store has 45 brands of breakfast food on the shelf. All are packaged so you can't avoid looking at them. Each one says 'Pick me up and take me home.' The same is true with a newspaper. Unless we package our product attractively, make it easy to read, we'll lose to the other media. Of course, like the breakfast food, it must be worth eating. There must be something in it. We feel a paper must be complete, known for its enterprise, scholarship and intellectual reliability.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Using these as criteria, the immediate goals were "more display, more wide measure type, elimination of column rules and cutoffs, better use of art, less froth and more substance-- a more concentrated effort to forsake the immediacy of the news for its relevance to the lives of the people who read the Sun."

The four troubleshooters soon found that you can't re-design a newspaper without many problems. Hein explained,

With the use of planned white space and wide measure type, you plan to concede eight per cent of your editorial content. This forces you to write to fit, as well as write and edit tighter. It also requires more desk help, people with a working knowledge of type and design. You must plan farther in advance, as a magazine plans. Each week, you must know where you're going and how you plan to get there. Your floor man spends more time making up. Linotypes have to be converted to wide measure. New bases must be cut for art and ads. The composing room must adapt to a whole new system. On the whole, it's more expensive.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, changes were being made in other areas--advertising and photography.

In advertising, the use of the modular advertising theory was being experimented with. Rather than just selling the advertiser an ad, you sold him a certain size ad, to be placed in a certain position in the paper. Under this system, pages could be laid out days in advance and the advertising made to fit the requirements of the editoria layout.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

The first experiment came April 13, 1967, with the publication of a special South Omaha Centennial section. The project was 80 per cent successful. "We haven't done well overall, yet, though" added Hein. "The idea hasn't come as far as we would like. It's difficult to sell and execute. We are using it in our Center Section and pursuing it in other parts of the paper."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing escaped the motivation of change and photography came next. The Sun had come a long way from the days when the only pictures were one column mug shots and a few national news service shots. Pictures were now a regular part of relating the news to the readers. The only thing that hadn't changed were the cameras. The beloved 4x5 graphic, the old familiar press camera with all its unhandy bulk, was still supreme ruler. In March of 1967, the staff met and photography was discussed. The result was the falling of the axe on the 4x5, a short trial for twin-lense 2½'s and then a final move to Nikormat 35 millimeter.

Discussing photography and the new approach, Hein commented,

The response from the staff was excellent. They had no difficulty in handling 35 mill--only trouble in thinking it. The old practice was to go out and get two 4x5 shots and that was it. Many were the standard still shot of four or five people around a table holding a pot of flowers.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

Now we're using a good deal of action shots--trying to eliminate the standard still shot. We have a long way to go but there is no question that it was the right move.<sup>1</sup>

Combining all the new ideas, adding a new flag, new logos and a new type face or two, the new Sun began to appear in the early fall of '67. The reaction was not what the managing editor expected.

"The initial reaction was indecisive," reported Hein, "both inside and outside the organization. Of course, the reader should not be expected to recognize the changes--they should come slowly. I think it's worth it, however."<sup>2</sup>

But this is a time for change and the Sun is far from finished. Even as this paper is being written, plans for redesigning the editorial, club notes and picture pages are receiving final approval. Plans for going entirely to wide measure type eighteen picas (three inches) are being discussed. With these changes, the transition to magazine format will be complete.

Charle Hein offers another reason for the series of swift changes. "It's simple. Things move fast today. We must be on the move and ahead to keep from falling behind."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER XI

## BRIGHT PAPER. . .THE SUN

Today the Sun shines into nearly every Omaha home.

It has two newsrooms, one in the Benson-North Omaha area, and the South Omaha newsroom-print shop. Seven hundred and fifty boys carry the paper to all parts of the city. Many are mailed out. It is a far cry from the 1935 operation, struggling to stay alive. It has become a significant force in the formation of public opinion in the city of Omaha.

"There is little question that within the last few years, the Sun papers have assumed a very significant responsibility in providing the news that allows democracy to work, and providing an independent editorial policy. I am much impressed with the performance and potential of the Sun papers," said A. L. Sorensen, Mayor of Omaha.<sup>1</sup>

The governor of Nebraska, Norbert T. Tieman, was even stronger in his comments.

I have always found the Sun to be objective in its reporting and often far more comprehensive in its coverage of a question than its competing major newspaper. The Sun plays a major role in filling voids which are either inadvertently or deliberately created by its major competitor. In addition, it can play a role in special feature and in-depth reporting that is also unique.

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<sup>1</sup>A. V. Sorensen, in a letter to William H. Boyer, January 23, 1968.

I am sure that you know that the World-Herald adopts a very narrow, and often ultra-conservative, attitude on many issues. Furthermore, the Herald frequently editorializes on the front page, and infrequently permits both sides of an issue to be discussed within its pages.<sup>1</sup>

"We have a two-fold mission, as I see it," outlined Publisher Lipsey. "One is in the communities we serve and the other in the city of Omaha. We are the second voice of Omaha."<sup>2</sup>

Charlie Hein continued:

The Sun fills a distinct function as opposed to the other media. We work with and fight for the neighborhoods and the people. We pick up their cudgel. We don't stop with just the news. We make events relevant to the people--involve the reader in what is happening in Omaha.

We make sure the minority viewpoint is heard--and with some degree of understanding. We're not gadflies or the community.

We are as useful to the C-minus student as to the Ph.D. who teaches him--to the man who labors eight hours a day as for the area corporation presidents. We also have a good deal to do with women. They are the cause makers, the neighborhood hellers, the keepers of the schools and the eye watching the politicians.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Norbert T. Tieman, in a letter to William H. Boyer, December 11, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Stan Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, November 26, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Charlie Hein, in an interview with William H. Boyer, January 5, 1968.

"A paper is only as good as the combination of the need for or the excuse for its existence and its management and leadership," added Lipsey.

Through the years, he pointed out, the Sun has developed into something unusual for a weekly newspaper. "We are news oriented. We feel there is a direct chain, beginning with news, the paid circulation, readership and advertising, which is the end result of the first three. On that theory, we have more budgetted on news than on advertising. This is not common in the weekly field."<sup>1</sup>

Looking forward to the future, Lipsey has trouble projecting the Sun forward ten years. "Our type of journalism relates people to the ever-shrinking world. I really can't make a meaningful projection." The future, however, does hold among other things, a new home for the Sun, which will place the entire operation under one roof. Presently it is housed in four separate buildings.

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<sup>1</sup>Stan Lipsey, in an interview with William H. Boyer, January 6, 1968.

## CONCLUSION

The story of the Sun Newspapers of Omaha, Inc., has as many phases and facets as the sun, itself. This study has been primarily interested in the editorial and newsroom history. Areas for further study would include the advertising and financial growth of the Sun chain. These areas would pose certain problems, however, as many early records have been lost and present financial records are not immediately available, due to management policy.

The story of the Sun's editorial growth is significant because it represents a segment of newspaper journalism that is only now beginning to be heard in the large metropolitan areas of the country. In many of these areas, the urban-suburban press is still an infant. The Sun represents this type of journalism at maturity. By looking at the growth pattern of the Sun operation, a chart can be drawn for many of the other suburban publishing ventures with ink still wet on their first editions.

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- Benson Sun. October 30, 1958.
- Douglas County Times. October 31, 1908.

Dundee News. October 9, 1936; April 24, 1936; July 7, 1937;  
February 23, 1951.

North Omaha Booster. January 21, 1916; April 1, 1921.

Omaha Post. September 16, 1938; September 23, 1938; November  
4, 1938; December 16, 1938.

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1964; June 12, 1958; April 9, 1964; November  
6, 1958.

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APPENDIX A

**The SUN NEWSPAPERS**  
of Omaha  
**The AIR PULSE**  
Offutt AFB, Nebr.



**Benson Sun**

**North Omaha Sun**

**Dundee-West Sun**

**South Omaha Sun**

**Sarpy County Sun**

Downtown  
Business  
District

Missouri River

Boys Town

CENTER

Millard

LaVista

Papillion

Bellevue



72nd St.

MILITARY AVE.

INTERSTATE 80

MAPLE ST.

52ND ST.

50TH ST.

WESTERN AVE.

DODGE ST.

PACIFIC ST.

CENTER ST.

GROVER

INTERSTATE

HARRISON ST.

84TH ST.

72ND ST.

HI-WAY 78-75

HI-WAY 270

APPENDIX B

OPEN 40" yr. 80" yr. 200" yr. 500" yr. 750" yr. 1000" yr. 2000" yr. 4000" yr. —  
 — 1"13x 5"-13x 10"-13x 20"-13x 40"-13x 80"-13x —  
 — 1"-52x 5"-52x 10"-52x 20"-52x 40"-52x 80"-52x

**INDIVIDUAL  
NEWSPAPERS**

|                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Dundee or<br/>Benson</b> | 2.20 | 2.00 | 1.80 | 1.65 | 1.50 | 1.45 | 1.40 | 1.35 | 1.30 | 1.25 |
| <b>South</b>                | 2.50 | 2.25 | 2.00 | 1.85 | 1.75 | 1.70 | 1.65 | 1.60 | 1.55 | 1.50 |
| <b>North</b>                | 2.10 | 1.90 | 1.70 | 1.55 | 1.45 | 1.40 | 1.35 | 1.30 | 1.25 | 1.20 |
| <b>Air Pulse</b>            | 2.30 | 2.05 | 1.80 | 1.70 | 1.60 | 1.55 | 1.50 | 1.45 | 1.40 | 1.35 |

**2 NEWSPAPER  
COMBINATIONS**

|                      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>D and B</b>       | 2.90 | 2.70 | 2.50 | 2.40 | 2.30 | 2.20 | 2.10 | 2.00 | 1.95 | 1.90 |
| <b>D or B and N</b>  | 2.85 | 2.65 | 2.45 | 2.35 | 2.25 | 2.15 | 2.05 | 1.95 | 1.85 | 1.75 |
| <b>D or B and S</b>  | 3.15 | 2.95 | 2.75 | 2.65 | 2.55 | 2.45 | 2.35 | 2.25 | 2.20 | 2.15 |
| <b>D and N</b>       | 3.10 | 2.90 | 2.70 | 2.60 | 2.50 | 2.40 | 2.30 | 2.20 | 2.10 | 2.00 |
| <b>D and AP</b>      | 3.25 | 3.05 | 2.85 | 2.75 | 2.65 | 2.55 | 2.45 | 2.35 | 2.30 | 2.25 |
| <b>D or B and AP</b> | 3.00 | 2.80 | 2.60 | 2.50 | 2.40 | 2.30 | 2.20 | 2.10 | 2.05 | 2.00 |
| <b>S and AP</b>      | 2.95 | 2.75 | 2.55 | 2.45 | 2.35 | 2.25 | 2.15 | 2.05 | 1.95 | 1.85 |

**3 NEWSPAPER  
COMBINATIONS**

|                                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>D and B and N</b>           | 4.75 | 4.25 | 3.75 | 3.25 | 3.00 | 2.75 | 2.60 | 2.45 | 2.35 | 2.25 |
| <b>D and Any 2 (D-B-N)</b>     | 5.25 | 4.50 | 4.00 | 3.50 | 3.25 | 3.00 | 2.85 | 2.70 | 2.60 | 2.50 |
| <b>S and Any 2 (D-B-N)</b>     | 5.35 | 4.60 | 4.10 | 3.60 | 3.35 | 3.10 | 3.00 | 2.90 | 2.80 | 2.75 |
| <b>D, AP and Any 1 (D-B-N)</b> | 5.60 | 4.85 | 4.35 | 3.85 | 3.60 | 3.35 | 3.25 | 3.15 | 3.05 | 3.00 |

**4 NEWSPAPER  
COMBINATION**

|                               |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>D, B, S and N</b>          | 5.50 | 4.75 | 4.25 | 3.75 | 3.50 | 3.25 | 3.10 | 2.95 | 2.85 | 2.75 |
| <b>D, B, N and AP</b>         | 6.25 | 5.60 | 5.10 | 4.60 | 4.35 | 4.10 | 3.90 | 3.70 | 3.55 | 3.40 |
| <b>D, S and Any 2 (D-B-N)</b> | 6.60 | 5.85 | 5.35 | 4.85 | 4.60 | 4.35 | 4.15 | 3.95 | 3.80 | 3.65 |

**5 NEWSPAPER  
COMBINATION**

|                          |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>D, B, S, N and AP</b> | 7.50 | 6.50 | 5.60 | 5.10 | 4.85 | 4.60 | 4.40 | 4.20 | 4.05 | 3.90 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

**CODE**  
 —Dundee B—Benson  
 —South N—North  
 AP—Air Pulse

**BULK OR FREQUENCY RATE**  
 Bulk Space Rate applies to total inches used in 12 month period. No contract required.  
 Frequency Insertion Rate applies to 13 or 52 consecutive weekly insertions. Contract Required.

**COLOR RATES**  
 One color and Black.  
 Minimum space, full tabloid page.  
 1 paper. \$60 2 papers. \$90 3 papers. \$105  
 4 papers \$120 5 papers \$135  
 Double truck or facing page 50% extra

**POLITICAL RATES**  
 Per Col. Inch. Cash with Order  
 Individual Papers: Open Rate  
 2 Papers—\$4.00  
 3 Papers—\$5.50  
 4 Papers—\$6.60

APPENDIX C

Style Bulletin No. 1  
December 8, 1966

DAYS AND DATES

We DO NOT repeat days and dates, except in two cases-- the Thursday before and the Thursday after our publication. If we print December 8, for instance, we refer to an event that occurred the Thursday before as happening "Thursday, December 1" and to an event that will occur the next Thursday as "will happen Thursday, December 15."

If the event occurs the day of publication, we say "today (Thursday)" or "tonight (Thursday)." It is NOT CORRECT to say "tonight (Thursday) at 7 p.m." "Tonight (Thursday) at 7" IS CORRECT and not repetitive.

We DO NOT use "tomorrow (Friday)" or "yesterday (Wednesday)."

Any event that occurs during the week of publication happened "Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday." We DO NOT include "last," as the verb takes care of that.

Similarly, any event that will occur during the week after publication will happen "Friday, Saturday, etc., through Wednesday," and we do not use "next."

Events occurring before the last publication (Thursday, December 1) happened November 30, November 29, etc.

Events that will occur after our next publication (Thursday, December 15) will happen December 16, December 17, etc.

We ALWAYS spell out the month and NEVER put an "nd" or "th" after the day.

Style Bulletin No. 2  
December 15, 1966

CUTLINES

SUN style basically includes four types of outline:  
Lines with story; lines only; one-column lines, and half-  
column lines.

SLUGGING COPY: When story has art with it, it should  
so indicate in the upper, left corner, underneath the slug  
line. This is done so the printer can get the lines when he  
picks up the type for the story. Failure to slug copy has  
resulted many times in leaving out pictures that were  
scheduled.

For stories with art, slug story sheet as follows:

Guthrie South  
Paunch Manure  
w/2x (or 1x, 3x, etc.) art

If story has more than one cut, indicate how many, so  
printer doesn't miss any. Slug as follows:

Paunch Manure  
w/1x, 3x art

If lines have not been written, slug as follows:

w/art tk ("tk" means "to come.")

Cutlines without stories are slugged "Lines ONLY," so  
the desk knows to write an overline and the printer knows  
not to look for type. For example:

Paunch Manure  
2x lines only

Style Bulletin No. 2

CUTLINES

HALF-COLUMN AND ONE-COLUMN CUTLINES MAY BE WRITTEN ON THE SAME SHEET AS THE STORY. BECAUSE THEY GO TO A DIFFERENT MACHINE, TWO-COLUMN THROUGH FIVE-COLUMN LINES MUST BE ON A SEPARATE SHEET. (If there are more than one multi-column cutlines with a story, they all may go on the same separate sheet.)

The cutlines sheet MUST HAVE THE SAME SLUG As the story and is slugged in the upper, left corner as follows:

Guthrie

South

Dog Interview

w/story

MARKING COPY: Use a full sheet of paper for cutlines of two or more columns. About one-third way from the top, mark as follows:

Set 2 (3, 4, or 5) col. BF Cutlines

If the photo was taken by you or a staff photographer, mark it:

Set 2 col. BF Cutlines SP

The "SP" tells the printer to set a "SUN Photo" agate line.

For half-column and one-column cutlines, start one-third from top of page--above story type and leaving room for head--and mark:

Set  $\frac{1}{2}$  (1) col. BF Cutlines

HALF-COLUMN CUTLINES: These are used on mug shots and, because of space limitations, they use only last names (except for women) and are upper and lower case. All half-column lines are centered. For example:

Smith

Miss Jones

ONE-COLUMN CUTLINES: As with other lines with story, one-column lines should serve as a teaser to the reader. Since one-column cuts almost always are mug shots, try to pick a quote or identifying tag line for the person from the story to use as the second line. One column lines are set on two lines. The first has the last name only (except for women) IN CAPS, and the second begins with ellipses and has the tag line, FOLLOWED BY A PERIOD. For example:

SMITH

. . ."I'm not needed."

MRS. ABBOTT

. . .airs dirty linen.

LINES WITH STORY: These should not repeat basic information from the story. THEY SHOULD NOT REPEAT NAMES OR ADDRESSED FROM STORY. They should act as a teaser for the reader. They are best when brief and eye-catching. Lines

with story start with a capitalized kicker of three or four words, followed by ellipses, followed by A SEPARATE AND DISTINCT THOUGHT. KICKERS SHOULD NOT LEAD INTO THE LINE.

Lines are typed FLUSH LEFT. Unless the first work after the ellipses is a proper name, it IS NOT capitalized. The following are INCORRECT:

LIGHT ON HIS FEET ... is John Jones, rehearsing for school play Friday, etc.

WITH HIS HEAD HIGH ... Mayor Sorensen leaves the conference.

With simple editing, the following are CORRECT:

LIGHT ON HIS FEET ... John Jones rehearses for the school play Friday, etc.

HIS HEAD IS HIGH ... Mayor Sorensen leaves the conference.

LINES ONLY: These should be complete. Lines only start with a few capitalized words, NO ELLIPSES and the rest of the idea. Lines are set FLUSH LEFT. The following is INCORRECT:  
HANDS ON HIPS ... Judy Smith practices cheers for Friday night's game etc.

The following is CORRECT:

HANDS ON HIPS, Judy Smith practices cheers for Friday night's game etc.

INDICATING DIRECTIONS: When more than one person is shown in a photo, we indicate it in copy by putting IN PARENTHESES "(from left)" or indicate positions IN PARENTHESES

Style Bulletin No. 2

CUTLINES

"(left)," "(center)" or "(right)." For example:

HANDS ON HIPS, Judy Smith (left) practices cheers for Friday night's etc.

AT THE STOVE ... preparing for the dance are (from left) Mmes. Jones, Smith, etc.

Unless you do not follow the left-t-right order of the photo, it is only necessary to indicate the person at left. ALL PERSONS SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE NAMED.

In group photos with rows, write as follows:

WINNING MEMBERS of the SUN team are (front, from left) Hein, Lipsey and Vohoska and (back, from left) Reiner, Miller, etc.

NOTES FOR COPY DESK: On overlines for lines only photos, one-column lines should be 18 or 24-point; two-column should be 24-point; three-column should be 24, 30 or 36Fz; four or five should be 36, 42 or 48-point.

Four or five-column lines should be set in 10-point BF type.

If story has odd number of half-column cuts, indent copy 14 lines for one.

Citron

Style Bulletin No. 3  
December 22, 1966

G.I. ITEMS

SLUGGING COPY: For uniformity, we slug all Armed Forces items as GI Jones, GI Smith, etc., no matter what branch of the service they are in.

G.I.s WILL NOT be put on your slug sheet, unless they transfer from one paper to another or unless you MARK THEM "MUST" underneath the slug line.

ABBREVIATIONS: Abbreviate all military ranks before names, EVEN ON SECOND REFERENCE with surname only. Because so many different versions have cropped up, the following list now is SUN style:

|                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ALC (Airman First Class)       | 2nd Lt.*(Second Lieutenant)         |
| Adm. (Admiral)                 | Lt. (j.g.)(Lieutenant Junior Grade) |
| Rear Adm. (Rear Admiral)       | Maj. (Major)                        |
| Vice Adm. (Vice Admiral)       | P.O. (Petty Officer)                |
| Capt. (Captain)                | Chief P.O. (Chief Petty Officer)    |
| Cmdr. (Commander)              | PO1C (Petty Officer First Class)    |
| Col. (Colonel)                 | Pfc. (Private First Class)          |
| Cpl. (Corporal)                | Pvt. (Private)                      |
| L/Cpl. (Lance Corporal)        | Sgt. (Sergeant)                     |
| Ens. (Ensign)                  | G/Sgt. (Gunnery Sergeant)           |
| Gen. (General)                 | M/Sgt. (Master Sergeant)            |
| Brig. Gen. (Brigadier General) | T/Sgt. (Technical Sergeant)         |
| Lt. (Lieutenant)               | Sgt. 1C (Sergeant First Class)      |
| 1st Lt.*(First Lieutenant)     | Sp.1C (Specialist First Class)      |

\*Spell out first and second at the beginning of a sentence.

Any combination of the above requires abbreviations (e.g. Lt. Col., Sgt. Maj.)

DON'T ABBREVIATE: Airman, Airman Basic, Seaman, Seaman Recruit, Seaman Apprentice. Spell out Air Force Base (not AFB) Fort (not Ft.).

Style Bulletin No. 3

G.I. ITEMS

GENERAL INFORMATION: The Army doesn't put commas after dates (e.g. June 1965); WE DO. It should be "June, 1965,". Our style is "Viet Nam"--two words. The use of "U.S. Army," "U.S. Navy," etc., is superfluous. It should be just "Army," "Navy," etc., as we assume they're on our side. Army spells out "Omaha Technical High School;" we simply use "Tech High."

Navy releases are the most confusing, as they contain job designations and rank. We abbreviate the rank, NOT THE DESIGNATION (e.g. Radar Technician 1C; Gunnery Mate 3C).

Navy ranks for enlisted men go up from Seaman Recruit, Seaman Apprentice, Seaman, Petty Officer Third Class, Petty Officer Second Class, Petty Officer First Class, Chief Petty Officer. If a release lists a man as "Fireman First Class," his job designation is "Fireman;" his rank is "Petty Officer First Class," etc.

Citron

Style Bulletin No. 4  
December 29, 1966

ADDRESSES

GENERAL INFORMATION: The word "street" is understood when giving an address and should be used only to avoid confusion (e.g. "the accident occurred at 32nd avenue and 32nd street.")

When using a full address, the word "avenue, road, etc.," IS ABBREVIATED. 1424 S. 33rd ave. IS CORRECT: 1424 33rd avenue IN INCORRECT.

When using the name of the thoroughfare with no number, SPELL IT OUT. S. 33rd avenue IS CORRECT; S. 33rd. ave. IS INCORRECT.

The directions north, south, east and west ALWAYS ARE ABBREVIATED. N. 33rd IS CORRECT; North 33rd IS INCORRECT.

In East Omaha, Carter Lake and Bellevue, where there are avenues, the correct form with a street number is: "1424 ave. G." Without a street number, it's: "avenue G."

When a direction follows the name, it's: "1424 Briggs rd. W." or "Briggs road W."

The correct spelling of "Highway" is just that, NOT "Hiway." The numbers of highways and routes are numerical (e.g. "Highway 1," Route 3").

When a full address has more than one thoroughfare designation, the first is spelled out and capitalized; the second is abbreviated (e.g. "1424 Pinewood Circle dr.").

The correct form is 1424 C, NOT 1414 "C."

Style Bulletin No. 4

ADDRESSES

Because of a peculiarity in making street signs, the correct spelling is "St. Marys avenue" without the apostrophe.

Addresses after names always are set off in commas.

John Jones, 1424 S. 85th, IS CORRECT. John Jones of 1424 S. 85th IS INCORRECT.

THE ONLY TIME "of" is used is to separate numerals (e.g. "John Jones, 11, of 1424 S. 84th").

APPREVIATIONS: The following is SUN style:

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| ave. (avenue)     | pkwy. (parkway) |
| blvd. (boulevard) | pl. (place)     |
| cir. (circle)     | rd. (road)      |
| ct. (court)       | ter. (terrace)  |
| dr. (drive)       | tr. (trail)     |
| ln. (lane)        |                 |

SPELL OUT crossing and plaza.

USE OF STATES: When the town and state are given, the state is abbreviated. When only the state is given, it is SPELLED OUT. After names of counties, states also ARE ABBREVIATED.

The following is SUN style for abbreviating states:

|        |       |       |       |       |       |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Ala.   | Ida.  | Me.   | N.D.  | R.I.  | Wis.  |
| Ariz.  | Ia.   | Mich. | N.H.  | S.C.  | W.Va. |
| Ark.   | Ill.  | Minn. | N.J.  | S.D.  | Wyo.  |
| Calif. | Ind.  | Miss. | N.M.  | Tenn. |       |
| Colo.  | Kan.  | Mo.   | N.Y.  | Tex.  |       |
| Conn.  | Ky.   | Mont. | O.    | Va.   |       |
| Del.   | La.   | Neb.  | Okla. | Vt.   |       |
| Fla.   | Md.   | Nev.  | Ore.  | Wash. |       |
| Ga.    | Mass. | N.C.  | Pa.   |       |       |

SPELL OUT Alaska, Hawaii and Utah.

Style Bulletin No. 5

ADDRESSES

Do not use the name of a state after a city that is well-known. It's "Des Moines," NOT "Des Moines, Ia."

Citron

Style Bulletin No. 5  
January 5, 1967

CAPITALIZATION

THE BEST RULE TO FOLLOW: "WHEN IN DOUBT, LOWER CASE"

COMMON ERRORS: Whenever possible, titles follow names, are set off in commas and are lower case (Chalres Christiansen, director of parks, recreation and public property.).

CAPITALIZE: The Mayor, the Senator, the Governor  
(on up).

LOWER CASE: The councilman, the public works director  
(on down).

CAPITALIZE: The (City) Council, the (County) Board,  
the Legislature (on up).

LOWER CASE: Any councils or boards in government below  
City Council, including school boards (unless specified as  
Omaha School Board, Health Board, etc.).

CAPITALIZE: Regions (Near North Side, Midwest, West  
Omaha, the South).

LOWER CASE: Directions (east, north, south, west).

CAPITALIZE: Political divisions when completely given  
(Douglas County, the City of Omaha).

LOWER CASE: Partial political divisions (the county,  
the city).

CAPITALIZE: Complete names of University of Nebraska  
(never Nebraska University) and University of Omaha (never  
Omaha University).

LOWER CASE: The university.

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CAPITALIZATION

CAPITALIZE: Complete names of organizations (Women's Guild, Kiwanis Club).

LOWER CASE: All sub-groups in that organization (board of directors, hospitality committee).

CAPITALIZE: The complete and specific names of schools, councils, churches, etc. (Tech High School, Norris Junior High School, Kellom Community Council, Dundee Presbyterian Church).

LOWER CASE: Partial names and groups of names (the councils, Tech and North high schools, Kellom and Northwest community councils, Dundee Presbyterian and Salem Lutheran churches).

CAPITALIZE THE FOLLOWING:

ANIMALS--when the name of their breed is derived from a proper noun (German shepherd, Shetland pony). Also names of pets (without quotation marks).

ATHLETIC TEAMS AND CLUBS.

BUILDINGS (Paxton Hotel, Keeline Building, Clarkson Hospital).

BUSINESS, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS (Chamber of Commerce, Woodmen of the World Insurance Society, South Omaha Kiwanis Club).

CALENDAR PERIODS--days, months, special religious seasons (Lent, Yuletide).

CHURCH ITEMS--all appellations to the Deity, including personal and relative pronouns; sacred writings (Koran, Bible); specific gospels (Gospel of St. Luke, Holy Scripture); Pope; names of all confessions of faith and their adherents (Catholic, Jews, Christianity); names of gods and goddesses (Venus, Zeus).

CITIES, COUNTIES, COUNTRIES (City of Omaha, Douglas County, Union of South Africa).

COLLEGES, SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES (Holy Ghost School, Creighton School of Pharmacy).

COMPANIES, CORPORATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS--follow their official style (Wilson Packing Co., Reuters Agency, Ltd.).

DEGREES--when abbreviated only Ph.D., B.A., M.A.).

DIRECTIONS--only when used to denote physical divisions (East Omaha).

EPITHETS--when referring to specific persons or things (Old Ironsides).

DIVISIONS--real estate or documents (Room 43, Lot 19, No. 7).

DOCUMENTS (Magna Carta, Declaration of Independence).

FIRST WORD AFTER A COLON.

FLAGS (Old Glory, Stars and Stripes, American flag).

FLOWERS, FRUITS, PLANTS--when derived from names of persons or places (American beauty rose, African violet).

Style Bulletin No. 5

CAPITALIZATION

FOREIGN NAMES USING PARTICLES (de, da, dos, von, etc.)-- follow preference of the persons involved.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES--complete names of specific bodies (State Department, Douglas County Board); Congressional committees; government departments (Health Department, Police Department).

HOLIDAYS OR SPECIAL OCCASIONS (Labor Day, Leap Year, Dollar Days).

ISMS (Communism, Fascism).

LEGISLATIVE ACTS (Volstead Act, Civil Rights Bill).

MILITARY DECORATIONS (Bronze Star, Good Conduct Medal).

MILITARY TERMS--specialized groups of military men (Army, Marine Corps, Red Bull Division).

NATIONALITIES AND RACES (Negro, Oriental, Irish, Slavic)-- when referring to a Caucasian, white is lower case.

NICKNAMES OF CITIES, STATES, NATIONS (Cornhusker State, Windy City).

PERSONIFICATIONS (Uncle Sam, Old Man Winter).

PLACES OF OFFICIAL RESIDENCE (White House, Kremlin, Vatican).

POLITICAL PARTIES (Democrats, Republicans).

POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS (Omaha School District, Second Congressional District, Fourth Precinct).

PROPER NOUNS.

QUOTATIONS--first word of a direct or indirect quotation that would make a complete sentence by itself (He said, "Don't do it.").

REGIONS (Midwest, Equator).

SCOUTS (Boy Scout, Girl Scout).

SPORTS EVENTS (Kentucky Derby, Irish Hospital Sweepstakes).

SUN, MOON, EARTH--only when used with other astronomical bodies.

TITLES--when they precede a proper noun (Mayor A.V. Sorensen, Gov. Tiemann); referring to a specific person (Mayor on up); Vice-President and President of the United States; national cabinet-ranking members.

TRADE NAMES (Buick, Sealtest, Band Aid).

DO NOT CAPITALIZE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Adjectives derived from proper nouns that have lost their original meaning (gerrymandered district).
2. Common nouns that originally were proper nouns (plaster of paris, india rubber).
3. Nouns with trade names (Boeing 707 jet).
4. Indefinite use of college, high school, etc. (he goes to college).
5. Names of studies or departments, except languages (Spanish department, social studies).

6. Names of classes (juniors, freshmen).
7. Titles used after names.
8. Points of the compass.
9. The words "ex-" or "former" when they precede titles.
10. Debate questions, except for the first word.
11. Gulf, island, lake, county, district or ward when used singly.
12. Scientific names of plants, birds or animals.
13. False titles before names (movie starlet Susan Saint James).
15. Seasons of the year.
16. Church services (mass, rosary).
17. The words "heaven" and "hell."
18. Degrees when spelled out (master's degree, bachelor of science).
19. Thoroughfare designations (See Style Bulletin No. 4).
20. The word "jr." after a name (John Jones, jr.,) set off in commas.
21. The word "democracy."
22. Time designations (a.m. and p.m.).
23. The words "federal" and "state" (state grant, federal aid).

THE RISING SUN--  
A HISTORY OF THE SUN NEWSPAPERS OF OMAHA, INC.

by

WILLIAM HERBERT BOYER  
B. A., Hastings College, 1967

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Technical Journalism

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Manhattan, Kansas

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South Omaha was the bubbling, spitting melting pot of the Midwest during the first 30 years after its founding in 1883. Mushrooming with the infant packing industry, the melting pot attracted individuals of every stripe and reduced each to the base elements.

Into this free-wheeling atmosphere, as in the mining boom towns of the west, came the pioneer journalist with his hand-press. New publishing ventures appeared and disappeared regularly until the early 1920's when the melting pot began to cool and the surface became solid.

One of the earliest of these newspapers was the South Omaha Daily Sun, a struggling daily which was absorbed by another rising paper in 1901. In 1921, the combination of papers which included the Daily Sun died a quiet death. A year later, however, the Sun flag reappeared in South Omaha.

This was the Omaha Sun, a weekly paper which would eventually become the cornerstone of the Sun Newspapers of Omaha, Inc., a chain of five urban weeklies covering the entire metropolitan Omaha area.

After leading a rather undistinguished career, the paper was purchased in 1935 by David Blacker, a Russian immigrant with the ability to sell himself and his ideas. A year later, Blacker refounded a salty weekly in Omaha's influential Dundee area, the Dundee News, under the editorship of Miles Greenleaf. He also made an unsuccessful foray into the daily field with the Omaha Post, which died very abruptly at the

hands of the Omaha World-Herald.

For the next 25 years, until 1955, Blacker developed the Sun and the News into a very profitable throwaway advertising circular business. At the same time, he developed a reputation as a driving force in the fields of charity and public service.

Blacker's driving ambition was not in the field of throwaway advertising circulars, however. He saw his papers as a source of truth and solid news reporting. In 1955, he took the first steps in the transition. He purchased two other community weeklies in Omaha, the Benson Times and the North Omaha Booster.

Together with his managing editor Bill Drake, news editor Phil Gurney and assistant publisher Stanford Lipsey, they charted the course the chain, now called the Omaha Community Newspapers, would follow as they tried to become "Omaha's second voice."

In 1958, the papers all acquired the same last name as the Sun Newspapers of Omaha were born. Under the direction of Drake and later Paul Williams and Charles R. Hein, the papers were redesigned both physically and in content. The emphasis was placed on good depth reporting--making events relevant to the readers in the local neighborhoods.

Blacker made one more attempt to break out of the weekly mold in 1958, when he made the South Omaha paper a semi-weekly, with editions on Thursday and Sunday. The Sunday

edition lived six months before a lack of advertising forced its suspension.

The papers also began a long-discussed move to paid circulation in 1958. The initial move was to five cents a week and later, in 1963, to ten cents.

The fifth paper of the chain was added in 1964, when Blacker established the Sarpy County Sun, the last link in the chain that would cover all of Omaha and its suburbs. This was the culmination of Blacker's dream but his moment of triumph was short. In 1965, David Blacker died. His passing was mourned by thousands of Omahans and journalists across the country--but it didn't shake the once-struggling newspaper operation he had founded.

Continuing under the direction of Stanford Lipsey, the Sun operation has grown to become the sixth largest general paid circulation weekly in the country. The circulation is 50,000 ABC and annual income exceeds one million dollars. This is the dream David Blacker fought for--today it is the reality that fights for the ideals he stood for.