

His wedding didn't deter new editor

Tenure in Farmington rewarding experience

MIKE KILEY is the only editor Farmington Enterprise publisher Jim Tagg ever hired who was given a vacation within the first month of hire.

Tagg needed an editor, but Kiley held firm in negotiations for the wedding-honeymoon-vacation he had planned with Phyl. The two alliances he made that month in the spring of 1953 were good ones.

"Of my 40 years in community newspaper work, the 12 years I spent in Farmington were good years as well as educational and productive ones for me," Kiley said.

Kiley's career started as a printer's devil in Standish. It extended across the big cities in Europe, writing for the U.S. Army. But when decision time came after his service tour of duty, the small-town boy at heart returned to find his niche in Michigan.

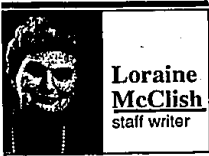
"Tagg taught me what real community newspapering was all about," said Kiley, now the semiretired owner of the Munising News in the Upper Peninsula.

"Tagg was truly dedicated to keeping Farmington a community with its own identity and personality."

Tagg sold the paper to Russ Strickland in 1957. Kiley stayed on as editor, then moved up to general manager and assistant to the publisher under Strickland.

IN 1964, Strickland added the Plymouth Mail to his holdings. Then Strickland, Bill Silger and Bob Silbar joined to establish Intercity Press, and the Farmington Enterprise began offset printing. After that, it was Kiley's job to oversee all operations of the Enterprise, the Mail and Intercity Press in Novi.

When Kiley arrived here in 1953, Farmington was a typical small town of the midwest, with apple orchards, open spaces, peace and



Loraine McClish
staff writer

quiet. Yet it was giving evidence of the rapid changes that were to come.

"Residential subdivisions were popping up everywhere, and with them the need for zoning changes, drainage problems, water problems and kids, kids and more kids."

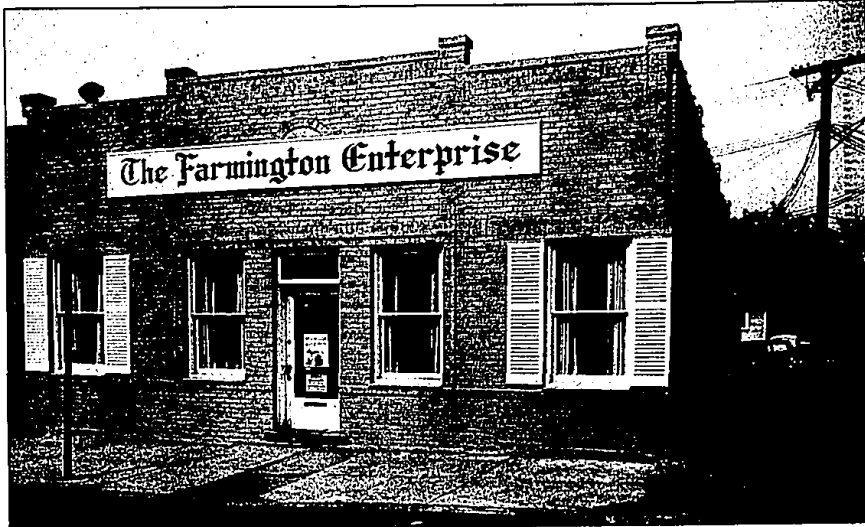
"The school board was one of our news beats, and it seemed that most of our time and stories dealt with the need for more millage and where to put the next grade school or high school," Kiley said.

"Shopping centers started popping up, too."

"I remember the first on Grand River and Orchard Lake Road and how the downtown merchants tried to fight it," he said. "Others were to follow, at 10 Mile and Orchard Lake; Farmington Road and 12 Mile. The whole countryside was disappearing, replaced with houses and commercial buildings."

THEN CAME the apartment building boom. Kiley wrote about the first building, a small one on the north side of Grand River, near the old LaSalle Winery at Orchard Lake Road. And the controversy over the next one on Grand River, which had to be built on stilts because it was in a flood plain.

But the proposed apartment construction he remembers best was the one "we nearly laughed in the face of the builder at, for thinking he could ever build and rent out as many as 500-600 apartments way



The Farmington Enterprise in 1963, shortly after it was remodeled. The building, built on Farmington Road in downtown Farmington in 1926, now houses Jerry's Books.

out there in the country."

The proposed complex was Independence Green Apartments.

"I had to drive out Grand River to get to Intercity Press, and I liked making the trip, seeing the horses running free, the orchards, the open space," Kiley said.

"Then one day, Tom Duke, a builder and the township supervisor, came to our office in the basement of the Enterprise and spread out his plans for Independence Green. How he bubbled over the exact replica he had of Independence Hall tower. And how silly we thought he was to ever think anybody, much less 500, were

going to live out on those farms on Grand River and Halsted.

"When those apartments started filling up, he sold Independence Green and retired to Charlevoix and Florida."

KILEY REMEMBERS that sports were always big news in Farmington.

He recorded the first Little League Football turnout of 150 youngsters and how fortunate the fledgling players were to have Russ Thomas of the Detroit Lions, now the general manager, as a resident helping get the league under way.

He remembers a hot dispute over using public school buses for youngsters who attended Our Lady of Sorrows School. And he remembers another hot dispute in removing an old box factory, which manufactured wooden pellets during World War II, from the downtown area to make way for the construction of Downtown Farmington Center.

He remembers the Enterprise as one of the leading forces in priming merchants and residents to launch the first Farmington Founders Festival.

Credit for that, he says, goes to Don Stewart, advertising manager

for the Enterprise, and the Farmington Elks, who prepared an ox roast and brought dignitaries from Detroit in stagecoaches to the Botsford Inn for the occasion.

Most of all, he remembers the long debates, the heated arguments and the unusually long meetings that took place in the old Township Hall at the corner of Grand River and Farmington Road, now the Masonic Temple.

"We had the honor of covering them all, and I'll never forget them," Kiley said. "Having a part of seeing Farmington grow from a small town into a suburb is not something a news person ever forgets."

Want ads were her sales beat



Audrey Roof
Enterprise classified sales

AUDREY ROOF was known as "the classified ad lady" to those who walked into the Farmington Enterprise office in the mid '60s.

"I remember when one of our customers called to make a change in their ad after deadline — something unthinkable now — and I would run to the back shop and tell Vic Piddy I had a change," she said. "He would sputter, but he'd always do it, which was a lot of work for him resetting all those little metal slugs before we went to offset printing."

Roof said she billed "all of those ads as myself, and I would always rush to get the first paper off the pile to make sure all of those ads were printed correctly."

"We weren't departmentalized or specialized or sophisticated," she said. "If one of us weren't there for any reason, it was just a matter of course that the rest of us answered the phone, counted the papers, delivered the papers, just pitched in and helped with whatever had to be done."

ROOF ALSO remembers the Farmington Enterprise office as a gathering place, reminiscent of the gatherings about the old pot-belly stove.

"People would come in to bring news, then stay and gossip, ask us about a rumor they heard, talk about what was going on in town," she said.

While it was the office where she learned the current news, it was the basement where she learned Farmington history.

"I spent a lot of after hours in that basement with scrapbooks and scrapbooks of the old newspapers," she said. "Going through those books gave me a wonderful sense of the history of the town where I lived and worked."

Roof was transferred to Livonia when the Enterprise merged with Observer Newspapers in 1965. She is now a retail advertising representative for the Observer & Eccentric.

She wrote about her neighbors

KATHIE KEEL BROWN's first job, at age 13, was writing a column she called "Around the Circle in Staman Acres" for the Farmington Enterprise.

She remembers deer, pheasant, woodchuck and opossum roaming through her backyard, of riding horses over open fields, of walking a very long mile to Our Lady of Sorrows High School, of building forts and playing baseball in vacant lots.

But most of all, she remembers gathering news for her column 30 years ago.

"Each week, I would call all the neighbors in my subdivision and chat about vacations, birthdays, illnesses, births, deaths, special occasions, meetings and any other occurrences that might be of interest," she said.

"I would compose my work of art. My mother would type it out for her old manual Olivetti. I would then proudly take my copy to the Enterprise office on Farmington Road and anxiously await the arrival of our next newspaper."

SHE WAS paid 35 cents for each column inch printed.

That wasn't much, even then, but it was an introduction to the world of business and journalism for a young



Kathie Keel Brown
Enterprise correspondent

teenager. The experience served her well in her careers as a library director and as an automation specialist when writing newsletters and documentation.

Keel Brown still lives in Staman Acres, in her husband's childhood home, which is next door to her childhood home.

When Staman Acres Civic Association hosted its annual picnic last summer, she brought along a scrapbook filled with her old columns.

"It was a real treat for the remaining old-timers to relive those bygone times and reminisce about neighbors and events of yesteryear," she said.

"And it was nice that our newer neighbors could have a taste of how we were when life wasn't so hectic and all my beautiful memories were the happenings of the day."

He guides papers to doorsteps

FRED WRIGHT was working for the Detroit Times in the mid '30s when he was asked to help beef up the Farmington Enterprise's circulation.

At the time, the Enterprise had 5,800 mail subscribers.

He took on the part-time job by promoting twice-a-year circulation drives with young area boys who were hired only for door-to-door solicitation. During each drive, the young salesmen would bring back the names of 500-600 new subscribers.

In 1964, Wright switched jobs to become the Enterprise's new full-time circulation manager. The circulation was up to 6,500 by then. He stopped mail delivery completely and established home delivery by carrier boys.

Wright uses the words "carrier boys" because at the time, that's what they were. "We hired our first girl carriers in 1971," he said.

Today, 25 percent of our carriers are girls."

Wright remembers that "those 6,500 papers on the press run would all fit into one station wagon, once a week. We published on Wednesdays. Today, we use two 22-foot vans."

IN 1966, when Philip Power bought the Enterprise, the



Fred Wright
Enterprise circulation manager

circulation had risen to 10,000 and Wright was named circulation director. A job he still holds for all of the 12 papers in the Observer & Eccentric chain.

Wright remembers when the Enterprise heralded its "new look" as it switched to offset printing. And he remembers when it boasted "pictures as clear as the original photographs" and "the ability to print anything that can be reprographed."

He remembers the switch in the paper's name that for a time would be the Farmington Enterprise & Observer.

And he remembers a celebration of National Newsboy Day when the Observer Newspapers saluted its 1,941 carriers in 1959. Kim Jaska, who delivered the Farmington Enterprise & Observer, took the title, "Carrier of the Year."

'I would compose my work of art. My mother would type it out on her old manual Olivetti. I would then proudly take my copy to the Enterprise office on Farmington Road and anxiously await the arrival of our next newspaper.'

— Kathie Keel Brown
former columnist



Jeanne Beck
Enterprise classified ad taker

Ad taker helped to do it all around office

JEANNE BECK enjoyed sitting by the open window of the Farmington Enterprise's front office and talking to passersby.

"Then we put in a window air-conditioner that hung out over the alley. Because it was too small to take care of the office, it would ice up, and we took turns climbing on the editor's desk to chop the stuff off," she said.

"When the city fathers told us we had to take it down because it was projecting out too far in the alley, we went back to opening the windows and talking to people who walked by. It was more fun that way."

Beck began her job as classified ad-taker in spring 1963. "I took the

ads over the phone, helped to assemble the ads on the page, proofread the ads, billed the ads, collected the ads, waited on walk-in customers, swept the floor and did whatever was needed."

"We called it teamwork," she said. Beck remembers when the Metropolitan National Bank of Farmington opened and the Enterprise's retail salesman sold an ad that included an actual ledger.

"This was a real bank abet," she said. "After the paper was printed, the back shop was filled with every employee and any relative available to glue those darn sheets onto the newspaper with rubber cement. By the time we finished, every one of us was hawking from sniffing glue."

BECK REMEMBERS publishing day when Vic Howard would get the old letterhead press pumping out the papers.

"It was a noisy, but nice sound," she said. "If there was a web break, you heard a loud 'dam' from Vic, and then deathly silence. Nobody said a word or went into the backshop until you heard the old press pumping out the papers again."

When the old press was sold, half of the back wall of the building had to be knocked down to get it out of the building. "It was kind of sad to see it go," Beck said.

Along with the old press went the pigs, the ingots of lead that had to be

melted over an electric burner to make the metal type.

Beck said she learned the hard way never to help anyone put a new pig on the linotype hooks. "Vic Howard was replacing a pig on a hot hook. I reached over to help him by holding the hooks and scared my whole hand. That was not the time for teamwork," she said.

What she also learned was how to put a newspaper together, from the blank piece of newsprint to the day it was published. "I'm grateful that I had that opportunity," she said.

Beck is now business service manager for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She has lived in Farmington for 32 years.