

# Longtime Observer employee loyal, hardworking

BY MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER

For the 350-plus workers of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, maintenance supervisor Herb Allen always had a smile and a friendly greeting for those arriving for work.

Herb Allen, a Plymouth Township resident and longtime O&E employee, died Thursday morning of a massive heart attack suffered shortly after he arrived at the Livonia plant around 7 a.m. He was 66 years old.

He is remembered by friends and colleagues as a loyal, caring, hardworking man who never turned down a request for help.

"Herb oversaw the creation of this building back in 1969," recalled Jim Jimmerson, production manager. "He did everything — the plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling, carpentry work."

Jimmerson worked with Mr. Allen since 1964. "He taught me how to run offset presses," Jimmerson said. "He always loved the newspaper and printing."

"He always did what needed to be done to get this paper out. It was common for him to stop in on Sunday morning and check his building. His daily routine was to walk the building to see if everything was OK. He would take on any project that was asked of him. I don't think I ever saw him mad at anybody, and I never saw him without a smile."

Born in Becc, Ky., Mr. Allen moved to Wilton with his family as a young man. He married Joyce 46 years ago and settled in Plymouth Township to raise two sons and a daughter.

He began his newspaper career as a pressman at the old Plym-

outh Mail on Aug. 20, 1961. The Plymouth Mail was purchased by Philip Power in June 1966 to become part of what was then ONI (Observer Newspapers Inc.).

Allen's career was interrupted for a two-year stint in the U.S. Army, from January 1957 until his honorable discharge at rank of private first class in January 1954. At Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., he studied engineering and carpentry. He was also stationed in Alaska while in the service, and received medals for National Defense Service and Good Conduct.

"His temperament was amazing," said Jimmerson. "He never liked friction. He was so special. I don't know of anyone more dedicated to his job."

"He never liked the spotlight. He was kind of shy in that respect. For him, he was just doing what needed to be done."

Steve Kalder, assistant press supervisor, and a longtime colleague, described Mr. Allen as "humble and hardworking. He took his job to heart, and he never asked for anything. The man had so much knowledge about how a building runs. He was just an encyclopedia on building maintenance. He ran his department fair and would never turn down a request for help. There were 18 workers under Herb's direct control."

"When they broke ground for this building, he was involved in the planning, design, layout, heating and cooling. He had a hand in everything," Kalder said.

Mr. Allen rarely took sick leave and was always eager to learn something new.

"He was always there for everybody else, but he was a private person," Kalder said. "He never

told us if he was hurting. He would still show up and work hard."

Another co-worker, Roger Owens, recalled how Mr. Allen would quietly go about collecting toys for needy children every Christmas season.

"He is going to be missed by a lot of people," Owens said.

"He was one of a kind. He lived and breathed the O&E and with him a big part of our history is gone," said Richard Agnias, president of Suburban Communications Corp., the company which owns the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Bob Juscino, who worked with Mr. Allen the past 13 years, called him "the most caring and concerned man I ever worked with. He always had time to sit down



Herb Allen

See EMPLOYEE, 8A

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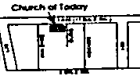
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