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THE BOOTH NEWSPAPERS LANSING BUREAU: AN INTERPRETIVE
HISTORY, 1928 TO 1986

Michigan State University

PH.D. 1986

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THE BOOTH NEWSPAPERS LANSING BUREAU:
AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY, 1928 TO 1986

By
William Edward Cote

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English
Program in American Studies

1986

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ABSTRACT

THE BOOTH NEWSPAPERS LANSING BUREAU: AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY, 1928 TO 1986

By

William Edward Cote´

The Booth Newspapers, Inc., a group of eight daily newspapers in outstate Michigan, has maintained correspondents at the State Capitol in Lansing for more than half a century. From its earliest days, Booth established a reputation of having knowledgeable, experienced, aggressive correspondents covering politics and state government. It also has had the reputation for being a relatively independent State Capitol bureau, even though it is part of a newspaper chain.

The research and historical issue involved for this study is whether the Booth Lansing Bureau truly has been as able and independent as its reputation and, if so, why. Has it been a matter of resources, personalities, philosophies, or other factors? The question is significant because so many readers must rely on the newspapers of chains such as Booth for an understanding of how their state government is affecting them.

Several methods of analysis were used. Hundreds of articles were examined, in original clippings or on microfilm or microfiche. Original bureau and corporate letters, memos and expense account records were studied in

historical collections. Dozens of individuals were interviewed, among them present or former Booth Bureau members, other correspondents, legislators, lobbyists and governors.

Among the major findings of the study is that the Booth Newspapers Bureau generally has fit its reputation. Most Booth correspondents served for years, building their experience and expertise. The bureau also, indeed, has had a high degree of independence. These factors were found to be partly a result of the philosophy of the organization's founder and partly the result of the leadership and long tenures of bureau chiefs.

This decades-long pattern is changing, with more Booth correspondents now staying shorter periods and with more staffers coming from outside the Booth organization. The independence of the bureau also has changed somewhat since the purchase of the Booth company by the Newhouse chain. Dramatic technological changes, too, are expanding the bureau's habits and flexibility. Whether the changes are all beneficial is analyzed. Recommendations are made on how the best of the old and new in personnel trends might be used to greatest effect.

Dedicated to:

My parents,
Maybelle and Mervin Cote,
who had faith I might
amount to something someday;
and to my uncle,
Marvin T. Crosthwaite,
who would have liked to write
something such as this
for the sheer fun of it.

.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons gave generously of their time, papers and thoughts to make this work possible. It is impossible to cite all of them, but each of those noted in the Bibliography has my thanks. In addition, my mother, Maybelle Cote, served as a copy editor and general reader and my brother, Donald M. Cote, did yeoman service in helping me get to out-of-town research locations and in using his talent as a draftsman on the map in the Appendix. Among professional writers, Gail Light scrutinized most chapters before I had to send them on to the other skilled professional writers and editors on my Guidance Committee.

Present and former members of the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau were amazingly cooperative and generous with their time and records, without ever asking how they might be portrayed in the final product. That especially applies to the current bureau chief, Ed Petykiewicz, and office manager, Carol Cruz, and the two former chiefs, William C. Kulsea and Robert H. Longstaff.

Thanks also are due to the librarians of several of the Booth papers who repeatedly helped track down a stray story or

date and suggested other sources. The librarians include Diane Wheeler Buist, the Grand Rapids Press; David Larzelere, the Flint Journal; and Lee Watrous, the Saginaw News.

Donald W. Gardner, a former Detroit Times correspondent, must be thanked for permission to use his marvelous photograph of Guy W. Jenkins that appears in the Appendix. Finally, thanks are due to the instructors in the Michigan State University School of Journalism, the Department of English, and the Department of History who encouraged and counseled me through the many months of graduate study and dissertation work.

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INTRODUCTION

Newspaper chains tend to be almost invisible to most readers at most times. Even readers who are aware that their newspaper is part of a chain usually think only of its nameplate, not the small type under it that discloses the chain name. Something similar can be said about state government. Many citizens are aware of what the federal government or their city council is doing, but what is happening in Lansing may be obscure.

Both situations are unfortunate. In 1984, the 155 newspaper chains nationwide included 68 percent of all dailies and 78 percent of total daily circulation.¹ Moreover, much of what is happening in state capitals affects readers more significantly than do decisions made in Washington, D.C., or even in their own local governments. State capitals are where decisions are made to raise state sales and income taxes, regulate utility rates, care for the newborn, help the elderly, regulate funeral homes and daycare centers, issue birth and death certificates and handle a multitude of other things under state control.

The Booth Newspapers, Inc., fits the picture of a chain that

¹American Newspaper Publishers Association, Facts About Newspapers '85 (Washington, D.C.: American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1985), p. 21.

supplies much of the information its readers may get about state government. The eight Booth papers together have a circulation of about 604,000, making them Michigan's largest newspaper organization after Gannett Co. Inc. (now owners of the Detroit News and four other dailies in Michigan) and the Detroit Free Press. They are grouped in a horseshoe shape throughout southern Lower Michigan, including most of the largest outstate cities. In all but one of the central Booth counties the Booth paper is the only daily published there and in all eight counties it is the dominant paper in circulation and advertising.

In short, readers of a Booth paper are likely to have to depend on it for details of news at several levels, including state government. Radio and television stations cover those areas, too, but even broadcast journalists often acknowledge that time and technical constraints make it impossible for for them to provide more than a headline service for most public-affairs stories.

That situation has become even more important in recent years because of the growth in Michigan's state government. A full-time Legislature competes with a large governor's office for political power, and even with sharp budget cuts forced by the state's severe recession during the early 1980s, the state² bureaucracy still numbers 56,000 employees.

It is useful, then, to study how the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau functioned from its start in 1928, what its correspondents were trying to do, and how well they succeeded. A search of the literature confirmed that there has been no historical study of the Booth Bureau nor, for that matter, of Michigan's Capitol Press Corps in general. Looking elsewhere in the nation, the literature also is meager. Most studies are attempts to grasp the workings of an entire press corps in a particular state, to sample various state capitols for a composite nationwide snapshot of state-government coverage, or to determine how a topic is covered in a number of papers.

One of the earliest studies of an individual state press corps was a 1952 assessment, "Oregon Legislative Reporting: The Newsman and Their Methods," which probed the circular relationship of press, public and elected officials. Among the conclusions by author John F. Valleau was that while legislators and lobbyists no doubt succeeded in influencing reporters' viewpoints, the reporters' influence on the lawmakers was more striking.³ Further, Valleau contended that the reporters were perhaps too representative of their readers, leading to a bland, noncritical look at legislators and their products.

job losses election exaggeration," Lansing State Journal, 23 March 1986, p. 1E.

³ John F. Valleau, "Oregon Legislative Reporting: The Newsman and Their Methods," Journalism Quarterly 29 (Spring 1952): 158-170.

Different patterns emerged in a 1967 study of legislative coverage in New York, a state more closely resembling Michigan's composition than Oregon. Reporter Paul Hoffman declared in this article, "The neglected statehouse," that "State governments are the stepchildren of American politics, and of American journalism."⁴ He argued that Albany's distance (100 miles) from the major metropolitan area (New York City) and the short periods of time spent covering legislative sessions were the chief obstacles to adequate coverage of state lawmaking.

Because the New York Legislature was in session only a few months a year at that time, it did not pay a publisher or broadcaster to maintain a full staff in Albany the year-round, Hoffman observed. Even the august New York Times, which then fielded about 30 Washington correspondents, had only three or four reporters in Albany during legislative sessions, and in off-seasons sometimes left the state capitol coverage to one stringer.

The problem, Hoffman asserted, was not from a lack of talent or energy of those correspondents who did cover Albany. Most of the reporters, he said, were skilled and hard-working, with ten-hour days standard and fourteen to fifteen-hour days not uncommon. Hoffman ventured that although his experiences and observations concerned Albany, he believed his conclusions might apply equally in, for

⁴Paul Hoffman, "The Neglected Statehouse," Columbia Journalism Review 6 (Summer 1967): 21-24.

example, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire or Nevada.⁵

In another Columbia Journalism Review article, "What's wrong with statehouse coverage," Thomas B. Littlewood tried five years later to measure whether the type of situation exemplified in New York was a nationwide pattern.⁶ The national picture was similar, concluded Littlewood, a Chicago Sun Times Washington Bureau correspondent who had covered the Illinois capitol in Springfield for ten years. In addition to analyzing data and interviewing reporters, Littlewood sent questionnaires to a cross-section of state legislators throughout the nation. Included were thirty-nine younger lawmakers in thirty-two states who, whether liberal or conservative, were reputed to be problem-solvers anxious to make the system work.

All but the larger newspapers and broadcasting stations get most legislative news from the Associated Press and United Press International, but Littlefield said he found their state capitol bureaus "disgracefully understaffed." He went on: "It is not realistic to expect penetrating, balanced coverage of a legislature from an overworked, undermanned bureau buried in an avalanche of new and

⁵The press corps situation in Lansing in 1967 was somewhat better in terms of manpower than in Albany. In addition to the two wire services' Lansing staffs, Booth maintained four year-round correspondents, the Detroit News, three, and the Detroit Free Press, two. The Albany reporters' working hours, though, certainly were typical of those in Lansing at that time.

⁶Thomas B. Littlewood, "What's wrong with statehouse coverage," Columbia Journalism Review 10 (March-April 1972): 39-45.

overnight leads." The legislators queried judged the wires to be doing an adequate job only on routine news.

Television had become an important factor in state coverage by 1972, but Littlewood declared that, "rather than breaking their own stories, TV reporters generally are content with hallway interviews based on something they read in the morning papers." Only nine of the thirty-nine legislators surveyed said radio and TV reports in their states were nearly adequate. Among Littlewood's suggestions on how to improve the situation, he urged publishers to "assign more reporters, give them time to think clearly, and enough time or space and display to impress the reader with the importance of the subject."

A 1976 study of the Colorado statehouse put a twist on the usual evaluations of legislators and legislatures by reporters, instead asking correspondents to judge and rank other correspondents. The study concluded that the Colorado reporters most respected specific, deep knowledge of experts on the legislative beat, rather than specific journalism-textbook attributes such as education, curiosity or a "nose for news."⁷

The number and types of dissertations written by doctoral candidates generally reflect the interest in, and direction of, research in a particular field. Here, too, state

⁷Russell E. Shain and John D. Mitchell, "How Reporters Judge Reporters: A Colorado Statehouse Study," Journalism Quarterly 53 (Spring 1976): 122-123.

government in general and the press coverage of it in particular, are little examined for either journalism history or current reportorial analysis. The emphasis, again, is on national or sometimes local journalistic coverage of politics and government. A search of doctoral dissertation abstracts in journalism and the mass media for an eleven-year period, from 1975 through mid-1985, found no entries on any statehouse press corps, much less on a particular news organization in a particular state.

For example, a 1975 dissertation by a University of Wisconsin doctoral candidate analyzed how selected national columnists viewed the 1972 presidential election.⁸ A 1975 University of Michigan dissertation explored the impact by the mass media on political learning of Toledo, Ohio, residents. The study concluded the mass media had considerable power to "activate" political learning on local and national issues, but that the journalistic spotlight often shifted too quickly to other issues before readers and viewers could gain an in-depth understanding of complex matters.⁹

It might be suspected that doctoral candidates at Michigan State University especially would be stimulated to explore what was happening or had happened in covering the

⁸Joan Orr Steck, "Press Commentary and the 1972 Presidential Election: An Analysis of Selected Columnists" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980).

⁹Philip Palmgreen, "Mass Communication and Political Knowledge" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1975).

State Capitol--only five miles away from campus--but that was not the case. One MSU student, Mary Allienne Hamilton, wrote an excellent journalism-related dissertation in the university's American Studies Program, but it concerned J.W. Gitt, publisher of a widely known little Pennsylvania newspaper, The Gazette And Daily, not a Michigan topic.¹⁰

Two unpublished master's theses also explored the influences on and by legislative reporters in two states, Iowa (1971) and Washington (1966), both concentrating mainly on influences from newsrooms rather than the institutions covered.¹¹

As valuable as those studies may be, until early 1984 there was very little in scholarly publications or professional journals about Michigan's press corps. The one mention devoted to Michigan--although not in a scholarly report--was in a 1973 Columbia Journalism Review article, telling how the press corps had fought off a state Senate attempt to put reporters behind glass "cages" while covering floor sessions.¹²

¹⁰Mary Allienne Hamilton, "A Progressive Publisher and the Cold War: J. W. Gitt and The Gazette And Daily, York, Pennsylvania, 1946-1956" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1980).

¹¹See Carol Hilton, "Reporting the Legislature: A Study of Newsmen and Their Sources" (master's thesis, University of Washington, 1966); and Hillard Torgerson, "The Correlates of Reporter Performance and Influence: A Study of 1971 Iowa Legislative Reporters" (master's thesis, Iowa State University 1974).

¹²Robert Berg, "'Caging' newsmen in Michigan," Columbia Journalism Review 11 (March-April 1973): 58.

The lack of attention to Lansing changed in 1983 when Frederick Fico, then a new assistant professor of journalism at Michigan State University, conducted a study of the Lansing press corps, resulting in a series of scholarly articles based on the research. Fico did a content analysis of 401 stories written by sixty-seven reporters working for eleven newspapers during the early weeks of the 1983 legislative session.

Fico's 1983 study was entirely content analysis. In 1984 he conducted a survey and a second content analysis. The content analysis explored by name and type the sources used by the full-time statehouse correspondents, local reporters and students in a special reporting program at MSU. Among the newspapers in the study were two Booth publications, the Flint Journal and the Grand Rapids Press. Stories by three Booth Lansing Bureau members were among the articles analyzed, although the small size of individual newspapers' samples prevented any data from being projected about the Booth operation in particular.

One of Fico's articles, "Search for the Statehouse Spokesman: Coverage of the Governor and Lawmakers," relied on the 1983 content analysis. The analysis concluded that the governor not only set the agenda for the Legislature, but of the Lansing press corps as well.¹³ That is not

¹³Frederick Fico, "Search for the Statehouse Spokesman: Coverage of the Governor and Lawmakers," Journalism Quarterly 62 (Spring 1985): 74-80, 94.

surprising in itself. The old saying notes that "the governor (or president) proposes and the legislature (or Congress) disposes." In this case, the governor, newly elected Democrat James W. Blanchard, was himself reacting to a multibillion-dollar state-budget deficit he inherited. The situation, however, does underscore the difficulty a press corps, state or national, has in going beyond and behind anything but the obvious pressing issues.

Fico found significant correlations between overall political activity and news visibility of lawmakers, but could not find significant correlations between political effectiveness and news visibility for the Michigan senators or representatives. Putting it another way, the sound and fury coming from particular legislators did not necessarily reflect how well they were doing their jobs.

Another Fico article, "News Coverage of Part-time and Full-time Legislatures," compared Indiana and Michigan's press corps.¹⁴ The Michigan correspondents, with the full-time legislature, tended to dig deeper in their portrayals of legislative life, using more sources and interviews than did their Indiana counterparts, the analysis found. "Whatever benefits a full-time legislature may have for governance," Fico said, "it seems to have a major, beneficial influence on the quality of information about governmental activities transmitted to citizens by the

¹⁴Frederick Fico, "News Coverage of Part-time and Full-time Legislatures," Newspaper Research Journal 6 (Fall 1984): 49-57.

press."

A corollary study by a graduate student who assisted Fico in the Michigan survey focused on the work of a group of advanced Michigan State University journalism students who covered State Capitol stories for a group of professional newspapers, including eight of those in the overall survey. The chief aim was to test whether the students, supervised by instructors who had covered State Capitol and local government beats themselves, could answer the traditional complaints of editors that journalism students are not adequately trained for the "real world." The study concluded that the students compared closely with the full-time statehouse reporters in several respects, even providing more analysis on average than the full-time correspondents.¹⁵

Aside from those studies, the literature on Michigan's State Capitol press corps is slight in general and invisible on the Booth Bureau in particular. Perhaps the only other published writing that might pertain to the Booth Bureau--and even that indirectly--appears in Arthur Pound's The Only Thing Worth Finding, the 1964 biography of George Gough Booth, founder of Booth Newspapers, Inc. In a section on George Booth's previously unpublished writings about the press, Pound notes some references to Washington

¹⁵William E. Cote, "J-Students Get Real-World Taste in Capital News Service" (manuscript, Michigan State University School of Journalism, 1984).

correspondents and sums up the founder's feelings in a way that might have been intended to apply to Lansing as well: "To him [Booth], it appeared that writers marooned in political centers developed a distorted sense of the relative importance of their observations."¹⁶

The field thus appears wide open for an interpretive history that delves specifically into the evolution of one of the prominent members of those "marooned" and "stepchild" state press corps--the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau. It will be seen that it was necessary to gather information from the original sources, in this case meaning not only documents such as clippings and letters but also in interviews with a number of the people who lived through the periods described. The written information included the personal correspondence of the Booth Newspapers' corporate founder, George Booth, and of the correspondence and expense accounts of Guy Hugh Jenkins, the first designated chief of the Lansing Bureau. The correspondence of both men was studied at the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Collection. The interviews--including current and former Booth Bureau chiefs, lobbyists, former governors and other political observers--were tape recorded unless an interviewee preferred otherwise or, as in two cases, a former governor had to be interviewed by phone (one was

¹⁶Pound, Arthur. The Only Thing Worth Finding. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964.

elderly and ill and the other was leaving the state on a long trip).

Research Challenges

Some of the research challenges in this study are traditional in journalism. Even though journalists point out that their work can be considered history on the fly, they often do a poor job of preserving that history in comprehensive, logical ways. That particularly applies to the Booth Lansing Bureau because it is not part of a single well-organized newspaper with its own "morgue" and librarian. For about thirty-five years, 1930 to 1970, the bureau "files" consisted mainly of clippings pasted in bound hard-cover books. (Clippings from the first five years of the bureau were not retained.) The stories were arranged chronologically, and a reader had to have at least a general idea of the date to locate a particular story. There was no subject index.

Starting in 1970, the bureau began filing clippings by name and subject in regular library-style file cabinets. Stories and pages in the old clipping books were falling apart with age, so in 1975 the bureau donated the books to the State of Michigan Library (now called the Library of Michigan). In return for the donation, the state library put all the pages on microfiche and made the collection available to any researchers. The old books were given to some non-Booth researchers who saved some of the volumes,

but eventually discarded most of the crumbling, molding books. Then-Bureau Chief Bill Kulsea did retain the separate clipbooks that were kept on the "Political Gossip" and "Weekly Politics" weekend columns by him and his predecessor, Guy Jenkins.

It had been hoped that the microfiche pages in the state library would be a valuable resource in studying the early days of the bureau. Unfortunately, their use turned out to be severely restricted because the library did not indicate on each file envelope the dates of the particular clippings included. It was necessary to pick a film almost at random, put it under a magnifying reader to see what dates were on the clippings and then guess how far ahead or behind a desired story might be. The collection also was labeled only as "Booth Newspaper [sic] Scrapbooks," giving little indication to uncertain researchers that the material actually was from the clip files of the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau, not some general collection of memorabilia about the parent corporation. The state library did have a most useful microfilmed set of copies of the Booth flagship Grand Rapids Press, even including some of the predecessor papers that eventually were consolidated.

Otherwise, one of the most useful "files" was a forgotten large envelope stuck away in the bottom of an unused cabinet in the bureau office next to the central computer. A reporter had collected the clippings about the

era of Governor George Romney for his own use and had not bothered to take the envelope when he left the bureau.

The bureau also now has shifted to a computerized story file. Using a video-display terminal, it is easy to find the text of a story by name "slug" or subject. Few actual copies of clippings are kept, however, so it is difficult to determine exactly what paper used a particular story without laboriously cross-checking separate "manual logs" that are not kept within the computer system. The logs do indicate which paper used which story and on what page. Even the logs, however, do not indicate the headlines or placements of stories on pages. Without all of such information, it is impossible to precisely check what actually was presented to readers and in what format.

The biggest problem in using the present bureau filing system may be that only the office manager knows all the ways a story can be found or classified. Reporters always have been at the mercy of their librarians in that regard, and that has not changed under the computer system. Librarians at several Booth papers filled in some of the gaps for this study. In addition, the Grand Rapids Press librarian was able, through documents in her private file, to reconcile conflicting dates given in the biography of George W. Booth on formation of the Grand Rapids paper in the 1880s.

Whatever the sources of information, an aim of this study is to tell the historical story of the Booth Lansing

Bureau as much as possible in the words of, and through the eyes of, those who were there. They were, after all, writers or political observers themselves. This writer will try to interpret the importance of what has happened at the bureau and what could happen, but those sources first deserve the chance to speak themselves.

###

CHAPTER I

THE BOOTH NEWSPAPERS

The Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau has had the reputation during its fifty-seven years of being an unusual, even elite, state capitol bureau. Correspondents of most other newspaper and wire service bureaus have complained over the years that they are overworked, underpaid and over-controlled. Booth, by contrast, has the tradition of working its correspondents hard, but also of paying them comparatively well and giving them a measure of freedom in what they cover and write--conditions that are the envy of other correspondents. This is a history of the Booth Lansing Bureau, but many of the factors that have molded the Booth Bureau developed from the the peculiar conditions and personalities in and around the Capitol press corps and state government generally. The bureau also is a reflection of the unusual people, events and structure that shaped the Booth Newspapers, Inc. company itself. It is helpful, then, to understand the parent's history, character traits and territory before delving into the cureau's life.

The Booth Homeland

It is difficult to generalize about a state as big, as populous and as diverse as Michigan, but some features

important for this study can be noted. One factor is that Michigan residents tend to see themselves as being in one of three regions: the Detroit area (usually considered to include the three metropolitan urban counties around the city of Detroit); "outstate" Michigan, which is everything else in the Lower Peninsula; or the sparsely populated Upper Peninsula. Most of the outstate population, industrial base and political power is concentrated south of an imaginary line anchored by Muskegon on the West coast and Bay City on the East coast. That region, excluding the Detroit area, contains about 51 percent of the state's population.¹

Situated at eight strategic outstate locations are the Booth newspapers: The Ann Arbor News, Bay City Times, Flint Journal, Grand Rapids Press, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Kalamazoo Gazette, Muskegon Chronicle, and Saginaw News. (See Appendix A.) The central cities and the areas they serve are highly varied in their geography, types of residents and businesses, and political compositions. The most populous Booth city is Grand Rapids, Michigan's second largest city and home of the first and flagship Booth paper, the Grand Rapids Press. This area was settled by Dutch Protestants seeking religious freedom, and their thrifty, conservative ways still mark an area that now includes many racial, ethnic and religious groups. Grand Rapids has a more

¹Michigan Department of Management and Budget, Population Projections for Michigan to the Year 2010: Summary Report (Lansing: 1985), pp. 3, 13.

balanced economy than that of many other Michigan areas because of a varied business and industrial base that covers pursuits ranging from office furniture, traditional furniture, and a General Motors plant to the Amway Corporation.

Flint, home of the Flint Journal, the second largest Booth paper, is dramatically different. A heavy-industry town, Flint is well known for Buick and other GM plants and for the bloody auto union organizing battles of the 1930s that made the area second only to Detroit in its ties to the United Auto Workers union and to the Democratic party. The recent national recession generated a depression in auto-dependent Flint, with the community at times having the highest unemployment rate in the entire nation.² In spite of its heavy-industry foundation, Flint also is a city proud of its education opportunities and facilities. A community college was endowed by W.S. Ballenger and C.S. Mott, both holders of valuable patents sold to the early General Motors Corp. in exchange for large blocks of GM stock.

Ann Arbor, just 55 miles south of Flint, also is a one-industry town, but that industry happens to be education. The University of Michigan claims Ann Arbor itself and Eastern Michigan University is just a few miles east in Ypsilanti. Research parks and other high-tech businesses,

²Flint's unemployment rate hit 23 percent near the depths of Michigan's recession. See Dale Buss, "Of All the Places Hurt by the Slump, Flint, Mich. Seems Hurt the Most," Wall Street Journal, 30 April 1982, p. 27.

prompted by nearness to university facilities and experts, dot the area. In addition, though, a Ford plant in Ypsilanti and the famous Willow Run GM plant nearby give the area a larger blue-collar population and tone than is sometimes realized by those familiar only with the academic features.

Jackson, to the west of Ann Arbor, is like a small Flint in its dependency on auto-related equipment plants. The city's central location on main routes between Chicago and Detroit once made Jackson noted as a railway junction. The rail decline, foreign auto competition and the movements of plants to cheaper-labor states have left Jackson gasping for economic air in more recent years. Until recent years, it was considered a safe Republican area and still lays claim to the title of the birthplace of the GOP at an 1854 national convention.

Kalamazoo, still further west, is the home of Western Michigan University and private colleges that together give it a campus atmosphere. There is diversity, though, in the form of paper mills, pharmaceutical operations such as the Upjohn Co. and industrial firms such as a large GM plant.

The three other Booth cities, Muskegon, Saginaw and Bay City, are similar in their mixed reliance on water, agriculture, industry and recreation, and in being gateways to the northern tourist areas. Muskegon, the largest city on the western coast of Lake Michigan, was famous as the "Lumber Queen of the World" in the late 1800s. Today,

industrial plants vie with fishing and recreational boating enterprises and agricultural marketing as chief economic mainstays for Muskegon. Saginaw, known for its large wholesaling and agricultural marketing operations, is the center of Michigan's sugar beet and bean industry. Bay City is noted for its ship building and sugar-beet processing, as well as for manufacturing of railroad cranes, power shovels and electrical auto parts. Its busy downtown is one of the few central-city cores in medium-sized Michigan cities that is still intact and thriving.

The Booth Papers

The story of how the papers in those eight cities became part of Booth is intertwined with the history of two well known publishing families--Booth and Scripps--and their best known property, the Detroit News. The central figure is George Gough Booth, organizer and first board chairman of Booth Newspapers. Born in Toronto of a British father and Canadian mother, he was not a "journalist" in the sense of someone who made his living writing or editing news. His talent was as a publishing entrepreneur who saw and seized opportunity. (A biography of his life, The Only Thing Worth Finding, refers in the title to his comment about opportunity.) After a variety of business ventures, he bought the equipment of a liquidated foundry and built up a successful metal-fabricating firm. He then married Helen Warren Scripps, daughter of James E. Scripps,

founder of the Detroit News.³

As a boy, George helped fold and deliver a new Ontario newspaper, the St. Catharines Star, that his father, Henry, started but had to close. George otherwise was not involved in publishing until his father-in-law convinced him in 1888 to sell the profitable iron business and take over as business manager of the Detroit News. James Scripps sought Booth's help partly because of the Scripps family preference to involve their own, by blood and marriage, in their businesses and partly to help James better fend off his own brothers and other relatives during their frequent business disagreements.

Booth did well with the News, but his salary (\$40 a week at first) was far from what he had envisioned and he also pined to have his own business. Booth looked about him in Michigan and fixed his eyes on Grand Rapids. He had traveled frequently outstate in trying to boost the News' circulation, and he had noted that Grand Rapids was outside the major influence of the Detroit and Chicago papers. A well-managed paper, he reasoned, could do well there if some of the competitors were removed. Scripps approved of the idea, although he did not offer his son-in-law any financial aid. On September 9, 1892, Booth bought an interest in the Morning Press in Grand Rapids. After buying out his brother-in-law, E. B. Whitcomb, who had joined him a little

³Ellen Scripps Booth, nicknamed "Nellie," was wealthy in her own right as a heiress to the Scripps' fortune. Shy and retiring, she let her husband take the public lead in the many philanthropic activities in which they both contributed much time and money, especially the Cranbrook Foundation. See, for example, Roland W. Nash, "Ellen Scripps Booth," in Notable American Women, ed. Edward T. James (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University

later as a partner, Booth gradually took over full control of the paper and bought out the competing Evening Leader on December 26, 1892. He consolidated the papers at once-- briefly publishing them as the Evening Press and Leader-- doubled advertising rates, and introduced the four-page Evening Press on January 11, 1893. The name was changed to The Grand Rapids Press in 1913.⁴ The Press, his biographer noted, "soon became one of the handsomest small-city newspapers in the country and a notable revenue producer."⁵

In 1903 Booth, James E. Scripps and a few associates acquired the Bay City Times. Booth bought Scripps' holding when the latter died in 1906. George, his brother, Ralph, and associate Charles M. Greenway next took over papers in four more cities: Jackson (1905), Muskegon (1907), Saginaw (1910) and Flint (1911).⁶ The brothers worked so closely together that they Press, 1971), pp. 203, 204.

⁴Dates cited in the founding of the Grand Rapids Press are from the History File in the personal files of Grand Rapids Press Librarian Diane Wheeler Buist.

⁵Arthur Pound, The Only Thing Worth Finding (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964), p. 213. (Dates cited by Pound in the founding of the Grand Rapids Press are incorrect.)

⁶Ralph Harman Booth was an active leader in the Booth family's publishing ventures and no doubt would have done more if he had not died suddenly in 1931 at the age of 59. He was publisher of the Chicago Journal, main owner of Booth papers in Jackson and Saginaw before the Booth group was formally organized, and first president of Booth Newspapers. He almost pulled off a coup that would have changed the history of Detroit journalism: He was well into dealings for purchase of the Detroit Free Press when more conservative businessmen heard of the plan and rushed to persuade owner William E. Quinby to sell to them instead in late 1904. See Pound, The Only Thing Worth Finding, pp. 183, 225.

finally decided to formally consolidate as the Booth Publishing Company on October 12, 1914, officially starting the chain. Purchases of the new company soon after included an additional paper in Jackson (1918), which was merged into the Citizen Patriot, and the dailies in Ann Arbor (1919) and Kalamazoo (1922).

The Booth company's aim was to become the dominant and, as soon as possible, the sole daily in each Booth town. The financial advantage of having monopoly papers was obvious and a contrast to the journalism warfare waged among the several Detroit dailies. George Booth never denied monopoly was profitable, but he also talked about a sense of community responsibility that likened monopoly papers to something akin to public utilities--without, he stressed, government controls. He elaborated on this point some 50 years after going into publishing:

Elimination of competition puts an end to the miserable wrangling that once characterized so many newspapers. It assures a community a steadiness of purpose on the part of the publisher; poise in the presentation of news and opinion; greater efficiency in operation; reduction of expenses; more complete service to the advertiser at a lowered unit cost. It tends also to reduce contention in the community. On the other hand, the paper which is fortunate enough to occupy a field alone, where once it had competition, must beware of smugness; of being too well satisfied, of employing its strength unjustly; of becoming greedy; of being biased or partisan. There are times when the most independent paper must take a firm stand, but it should be on a well reasoned basis.⁷

⁷Pound, The Only Thing Worth Finding, p. 221.

Ironically, the only time Booth Newspapers got into potential antitrust trouble was when the group tried to keep, not fold, a new venture in a county where it already owned the stronger paper. In March of 1962 Booth purchased the flagging Ypsilanti Press while the much bigger Ann Arbor News dominated the Washtenaw County field a few miles west. Rather than consolidate the papers, Booth maintained separate facilities and staffs, even after a fire of suspicious origin ruined the old Press plant and forced a move to new quarters. Just four years later, however, the U.S. Department of Justice began informally investigating Booth's ownership of both papers to see whether it violated antitrust laws. The probe began after a group of Ypsilanti residents complained to the federal officials when Booth dropped home delivery of the Ann Arbor News in the Ypsilanti Press circulation area. The complainants apparently were readers who felt themselves professionally or socially attuned to the U-M-Ann Arbor area, but who lived in Ypsilanti, where property taxes were lower. A new Booth chairman, who was not as anxious as his predecessor to keep the Ypsilanti Press, also happened to take office at this point. At any rate, Booth sold the Ypsilanti paper in 1968 to another Michigan chain, which in turn sold it later to a Texas chain. Booth thus went back to its stable of eight papers, as it still is today.

The Unwritten Constitution

Both readers and staffs of chain papers are affected by how the owners and executives of the group manage their properties and exert their control. It is common in many newspaper chains to have centralized business controls and policies and for the same editorial policies to apply to each paper.⁸ Booth practice, however, is different and goes back to George Booth's philosophy on how to run a chain paper from afar, in this case from Booth corporate headquarters in Detroit:

Never in the history of the Booth Newspapers has an order been issued to the editor of any publication in the group from the head office. When the editors and managers of the several papers meet in Detroit, they meet as does a cabinet, to confer, counsel, and advise; but autonomy is complete, and when they return to their papers, they go with freedom, responsibility, and authority. Their obedience is not to administrative orders, or the conclusions of conferences, but to the unwritten constitution of the group which requires, as a fundamental, that they shall give independent, honest, unprejudiced service to their communities. Errors in judgment are inevitable; they are forgivable because they are honest and human; only incompetence, insincerity, and dishonesty are not.

I can't see how the proprietors of a chain of newspapers can direct those papers at long distance and at the same time render to the several communities that . . . service to which they are entitled. . . . It is absolutely essential to the success of a newspaper chain that

⁸The Hearst papers, including the old Detroit Times, were perhaps the best known example of a chain that, at its peak, ran the same editorials and whose owner prompted the same tone in certain news stories. An example of what might be called consensus-chain policy was the Scripps-Howard group, whose editors gathered periodically to decide such matters of national policy as whom to editorially support for President of the United States.

headquarters keep hands off.⁹

To carry out that "unwritten constitution," Booth and his successors for many years adopted a management structure unusual in the newspaper world. Rather than having one publisher or editor-in-chief in charge of all operations of a paper, two co-equal executives were selected. One, the manager, was in charge of all business-related units, including advertising, circulation, composing and printing. The other, the editor, was in charge of all news operations. As a practical matter, one executive at a paper might have more internal clout at a particular time than the other one, based on seniority or personality, but there was no groupwide pattern.

The dual management structure persisted throughout George Booth's tenure and for years after his death in 1949 at the age of 84. The arrangement was modified in 1973 to the extent that two regional "directors" were inaugurated who each had overall responsibilities for four Booth papers, although that system was dropped after a few years.

By 1974, the group served 32 Michigan counties with 34 percent of the state's population, and Chairman Gordon Craig said the firm ruled out purchase of any additional Michigan papers because of potential antitrust complications.¹⁰ The group did diversify by going outside Michigan for the first

⁹Pound, The Only Thing Worth Finding, p. 238.

time, buying a television station in Terre Haute, Indiana, and Parade Magazine, the nation's largest Sunday supplement. Purchase of the Indiana station was the Booth Newspapers first venture into broadcasting, although members of the Booth family also controlled Booth American Co., a separate radio and cable television corporation founded in 1939 by John Lord Booth, the son of Ralph H. Booth and nephew of George G. Booth.

Booth bought a chain of suburban Cleveland weekly newspapers in early 1976 and was probing further possible acquisitions, including a paper in Encino, California, when in 1976 the group found itself the acquisition target of a very wealthy shooter: New York publisher Samuel I. Newhouse. George Booth and Samuel Newhouse might have liked each other. At least, they would have understood much about each other. Newhouse was born of poor Russian immigrant parents in New York's lower East Side. He was an office boy at 12, a publisher at 16, and a lawyer at 21. He got his newspaper start when an attorney for whom he was working took over a failing New Jersey newspaper in payment of legal fees. Newhouse was supposed to run the property just long enough to liquidate it. Instead, he soon turned it into a profitable business. That was characteristic of Newhouse's ability to see an opportunity in a sick or dying newspaper and make it healthy.

¹⁰"Booth Executives See Extended Growth," Muskegon Chronicle, 2 May 1974.

From 1932 to 1936 Newhouse, through companies owned by him and his two sons, gradually acquired twenty-two newspapers in fourteen cities from coast to coast--including well-known papers in Syracuse, Portland, St. Louis, New Orleans and Cleveland--plus five magazines, six television stations, four radio stations and twenty cable TV systems. As with George Booth, Samuel Newhouse was known for demanding a profitable bottom line, but otherwise generally letting his editors and local business managers adopt their own editorial policies and practices. Newhouse once explained his local-control philosophy this way:

I'm not trying to save the world. Number One in our operation is whether our editor produces a product that the reader continues to prefer. Once we have that kind of product and a good reaction from the reader, then there's no trouble getting advertising.¹¹

That does not quite have the community-service ring sounded in George Booth's statements on local autonomy, but the effect on the local editor and reader may be much the same.

It was the Booth effort to diversify, combined with a scattering of stock among Booth stockholders, that gave Newhouse an acquisition lever. Unlike some Newhouse purchases, the Booth papers were financially healthy and Booth stock was paying steady if unspectacular dividends. The stock, however, gradually had spread out over the years through bequests to Booth relatives and occasionally to the

¹¹Dan Rottenberg, "The Wealth of Newsfolks," The Quill, December 1982, pp. 7-8.

public on the over-the-counter market. Many of the newer stockholders did not hold jobs in the firm and were more interested in higher dividends than in maintaining family control. A big, new block of outside stockholders was created with the purchase of Parade Magazine from Whitcom Communications Corp., a New York firm that traded Parade for 17 percent of Booth's stock and three seats on the Booth board of directors.

The Whitcom stockholders, even though they controlled the biggest block of Booth stock, were not satisfied with what they perceived as Booth's conservative ways, and sold their shares to Newhouse.

Then, in what George Booth might have considered the unkindest cut of all, Newhouse bought the 8 percent interest held by the Cranbrook Educational Community the Booth founder had conceived and created.¹² Obviously, gratitude and family ties no longer were as important to the dissident stockholders as the opportunity to make a faster dollar for themselves or the educational institutions they managed. What might have made George Booth the most unhappy with the

¹²The Cranbrook Educational Community (formerly known as the Cranbrook Foundation) is a complex of six private schools and museums in Boomfield Hills, Mich. For years Cranbrook was the largest Booth Newspapers stockholder and was one of the largest stockholders in the Evening News Association, publisher of the Detroit News. See Pound, The Only Thing Worth Finding, chaps. 16-27; Barry Rohan and Allan Sloan, "Quiet Booth Empire Loses Its Serenity as Dissidents Talk Sale," Detroit Free Press, 5 September 1976, pp. 13A, 18A.

Cranbrook move was that its directors sold out too cheaply. Newhouse got the Cranbrook holdings for \$26.83 a share, adjusted for a recent stock split, while later sellers to Newhouse got as much as \$47 a share. Eventually, the biggest remaining opponent of the sale to Newhouse was John Lord Booth. But after arrangements for a "friendly" takeover by the Times Mirror Co. of Los Angeles collapsed, he sold his stock to Newhouse for, according to family members, about \$37 million. Newhouse took control of Booth in late 1976, although keeping the Booth corporate name for the Michigan newspaper properties. The purchase, at \$305 million, was the highest sale ever in the American newspaper industry.¹³

History repeated itself nine years later when the Evening News Association, to fend off a hostile takeover attempt from two Hollywood producers, sold the Detroit News and the other ENA properties to the Gannett Co. Inc.¹⁴

There was considerable speculation, tinged with some fear, within Booth in 1976 that Newhouse would make wholesale changes in the types of people and autonomous traditions that had characterized Booth for so long. Indeed, major changes in people and structure were made--but not at

¹³See, for example, Edwin and Michael Emery, The Press And America, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), p. 682; Jim Norman, "Newhouse bid on Booth papers wins," Jackson Citizen Patriot, 28 October 1976, pp. 1, 2.; Bernie Shellum and Michael Wagner, "Scripps, Booth business ties date to 1800s," Detroit Free Press, 17 February 1985, p. 4D.

¹⁴Ancella Livers, "Gannett and ENA agree to merger," Lansing State Journal, 30 August 1985, p. 1.

Newhouse's orders. The only change the Newhouse executives directed when they first toured the Booth provinces after the sale was to adopt some different bookkeeping methods to correspond more closely with the Newhouse system. The big changes came when some previous Booth executives stepped down and the presidency was awarded in 1978 to Weiner Veit, then editor of the Grand Rapids Press. Veit was a staff writer on the Grand Rapids Herald when Booth bought the morning paper in 1958 and was named Press editor in 1966.

Veit started making changes soon after his appointment. The Booth corporate headquarters, which had been moved from Detroit to an industrial-park office in Ann Arbor some years earlier, was moved this time to the Grand Rapids Press building. Veit gave up his editorship of the paper. New, young editors and business people began being promoted. The unusual co-equal manager/editor structure was gradually modified throughout the group. As of now, only two papers, Grand Rapids and Jackson, have the old dual-authority structure. In Kalamazoo, the publisher is the former editor. In Muskegon, the editor also is publisher. In the remaining four papers, the manager has been replaced by a publisher from the business side, with the editor now holding a secondary rank.

The Newhouse-Veit stamp on Booth already was marked when Samuel Newhouse died August 29, 1979, at the age of 88, the same age as George Booth had been when he died thirty years earlier.¹⁵ Samuel's brothers and sons carried on the

business. The Quill magazine, in a survey of America's richest publishers in late 1982, listed the Newhouse family first in the grouping of "fabulously wealthy" owners having net worths of \$1 billion to \$2 billion.¹⁶ By this time and soon thereafter, major changes also were being made in the Booth Lansing Bureau.

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¹⁵For example, see "Publishing giant Newhouse dies; owned Journal," Flint Journal, 30 October 1979, pp. A-1, A-4; "Publisher Newhouse Dies at 84," New York Times, 30 October 1979, p. 1.

¹⁶Rottenberg, The Quill, p. 9.

CHAPTER II

FORMATION OF THE BOOTH NEWSPAPERS LANSING BUREAU

Once upon a time early springtime breezes would waft through the windows of the Michigan State Capitol and tell legislators it was time to go home. The lawmakers had, after all, been in session three months or so. That, they reckoned, was long enough to adopt a state budget and do the few other legislative duties necessary to hold Michigan together until they reconvened in two more years. More important things now awaited them at home: plowing fields for planting, getting back to the store on Main Street, or meeting with clients at the law office. Most legislators could earn much more at home than the \$3 per session day they got in Lansing.

That was the situation in the spring of 1928, as it had been in the previous years the Legislature had met since World War I ended. Times were good. President Calvin Coolidge had announced he did not want another term, and Herbert Hoover was the apparent frontrunner to replace him for the Republican nomination, while Al Smith was leading the pack for the Democratic nomination. In Michigan, Alex Grosebeck was governor and seeking another term in the 1928 general elections.

About 10 reporters were covering the 1928 legislative session. Only the wire services maintained a year-round Lansing staff. Most of the major Michigan newspapers sent correspondents there only during the brief legislative session and on a spot basis other times. Radio was becoming very popular as entertainment, but not yet as a news medium and there was no radio news coverage of the State Capitol. There was not much point, either, in reporters hanging around Lansing to cover the governor. Grosebeck was seldom in the capital, spending most of his time at his Detroit home.

Booth Newspapers editors and their executives decided by 1928 that it was time to become more efficient in covering the Legislature. Booth had acquired its eighth paper six years earlier, and it did not make much economic or news sense for each paper to send a man to cover the legislative session. Judging by the recollections of some retired Booth employees many years later and by news stories in the papers, Fred A. Grimes of the Grand Rapids Press was the first correspondent assigned regularly to cover Lansing for all eight papers during legislative sessions. It has been accepted generally that 1928 was the time the Capitol coverage began with one reporter for all group papers, but letters in the personal correspondence file of Booth founder George G. Booth show that Grimes actually was covering for his own Grand Rapids paper and perhaps others at least as early as 1926. A letter from Grimes with a downtown Lansing

office address was dated May 12, 1926, and sent to Edmund W. Booth, George's brother and editor of the Grand Rapids Press. Grimes' letter briefed E.W. Booth on the progress of a highway program proposed by Governor Groesbeck. A letter dated a day later was sent by E.W. Booth to his brother in Detroit. It confirms not only that Grimes was on the Capitol job then, but that even at that early stage in Capitol coverage some concerns apparently had been raised about how to cover Lansing:

No one knows better than yourself about correspondents, etc. , that it is almost impossible for them to write in a perfectly impersonal and non-biased style. Grimes is a hard-working, earnest representative, and though he has his faults, I am satisfied that he is loyal to our interests and in the main is doing fine work. Every day I telephone him, sometimes I must correct him, but taken by and large he is a most valuable man for our papers.¹

E.W. Booth's use of the plural "papers" indicates that Grimes probably was covering for the whole group, at least at times. The editor's comments that he supervised Grimes every day by phone also indicates the company had not yet adopted the policy of affording their chief Lansing correspondent an independent status and executive ranking. It thus may well have been 1928 or later before the new policy was in effect.

Using the Grand Rapids Press as the yardstick, Grimes' first "pieces" in his capacity of Booth correspondent

¹Edmund W. Booth to George G. Booth, 13 May 1926, Correspondence, 1924-1926, George Gough Booth Collection, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

appeared January 7, 1928. A Page 1 bylined story with a Lansing dateline was headlined "State-Bell Peace Truce Hits Bump," telling of a state attempt to get Michigan Bell Telephone Co. to cut certain rates. Another Page 1 story that day simply carried the byline "Staff Correspondent," but apparently was by Grimes because no other bylines from Lansing were noted over the following weeks. That story was headed "Conservation Body Establishes Game Division." A few pages away in the same edition was a column with the overall head "Political Gossip," telling, among other things, of plans by Michigan farm leaders to participate in national political efforts. This column was the granddaddy of a long line of Booth weekly columns that continued, under the later name of "Weekly Politics," until 1983."² The topics in that first column--utilities, conservation and agricultural politicking--remain the stuff of heavy news coverage from Lansing.

Grimes' stories of that week did get to other Booth papers. For example, the Bay City Times of January 8, 1928, carried the same "Political Gossip" column and two other Lansing Bureau stories, although without bylines on any of the three pieces. One of the regular Lansing stories reported that the governor was being urged to seek more money for additional facilities rather than continue allegedly liberal parole and pardon policies to relieve

²Fred A. Grimes, Grand Rapids Press, 7 January 1928, pp. 1, 8.

prison overcrowding.³ Some things change little.

Grimes continued his periodic Lansing coverage during legislative sessions and on occasional other events through 1929, but the news situation changed drastically after the Stock Market crashed in late 1929. The 1930 Legislature worked long months to try to find ways to feed, house, and clothe homeless and jobless people. Factories and businesses were closing every day. Whether or not they liked governmental interventions, the state lawmakers had to find ways they, as well as the national government, could meet the growing devastation of the Depression.

The Booth papers, too, saw that something more was needed to cover state government, and in 1930 a 43-year-old Saginaw News reporter named Guy Hugh Jenkins was sent to Lansing to establish a fulltime State Capitol bureau. Lansing phone books record a listing for "Booth Publishing Co." as far back as 1928, but the office apparently was not staffed year-round until 1930. Jenkins already had been covering occasional Lansing stories for his own paper and the whole group as far back as 1927 and he seemed ready for the new task. Jenkins was born in Saginaw and was a letter-winning athlete in high school football and track. After graduation, he began work at the Saginaw News, with one brief interruption to sell trucks. While at the News, he

³"Fights Liberal Parole Policy," Bay City Times, 5 January 1928, p. 1.

covered all news beats, including the often gory world of police stories. As tough as he seemed, a colleague recalled Jenkins was queasy at the sight of blood and once fainted when his arm was cut during some office horseplay.⁴

Fortunately for readers and taxpayers, and unfortunately for crooked or lazy politicians, Jenkins was not queasy at the sight of political blood spilled by his pen. That became obvious when he arrived in Lansing full-time in 1930. It was the start of a twenty-seven-year Lansing career that made Jenkins one of the best known, most powerful and most feared journalists in the state. Jenkins could intimidate by appearance alone. He stood 6 feet-2 inches tall and weighed 180 to 190 pounds. He had long, wavy hair that usually was tossed. His pale brown eyes watered easily behind thick-lensed spectacles. At the end of a busy day his face looked like "smashed pewter," to use the description of William C. Kulsea, the man who was to succeed Jenkins.⁵ Even in normal conversation, his voice was booming and gruff. His secretary was asked once why she let Jenkins yell at her so much. "Oh, he's not yelling at me," she

⁴Edward W. Miller, "Journalistic Giant, Guy Jenkins, Dies," Saginaw News, 5 May 1957, p. 1.

⁵Interview with William C. Kulsea, Okemos, Michigan, 2 February 1985.

explained. "That's his normal voice!"⁶ He rolled his own cigarettes, using one hand and a bag of Bull Durham "makin's." When he peered at someone while rolling a smoke, it was not always clear to the uncomfortable recipient whether Jenkins had something special in mind or was just naturally squinting. Jenkins probably liked to leave such doubt.

But while Jenkins could outyell and outstare politicians, his reputation and power did not flow chiefly from his personality. Colorful characters and big egos are a debased currency in Lansing, encompassing both politicians and those who cover them. His influence did not stem, either, from a high literary quality of writing. In fact, "Guy couldn't write a penny's worth," Kulsea said. "Editors at our papers frequently rewrote his stuff, not to change the story, but just to clean it up." It was what he put in his stories, and his contacts and sources, that made Jenkins such a great reporter, Kulsea said. "I never learned what an infinitive is, so why blame me when I split one or two," Jenkins alibied.⁷

⁶Interview with Virginia Barker, East Lansing, Michigan, 24 June 1985.

⁷In addition to the previously cited interview with William C. Kulsea, other references to him will include an unpublished copyrighted manuscript, "Michigan Mischief . . . Wit, Wisdom, Whimsy at the Statehouse," and to excerpts of it printed as a group of articles in the Bay City Times, 8 January 1984, pp. 1B-3B. The instant reference is to the manuscript, p. 4.

Typical Jenkins stories hit hard, analyzed, named names, and told readers when he thought their tax money was being ill spent or stolen. For example, for years Jenkins wrote a monthly story about senators who used office telephones for private calls. The overcharges never amounted to more than fifteen or twenty dollars. Colleagues asked why Jenkins bothered with such petty stuff, and Jenkins answered: "The penny-ante stuff isn't important. It's the message the chiselers get. If they know somebody is watching them pick up a dishonest buck or two, they won't go for the big chisel."⁸

Although Jenkins' writing was not literary, his written and verbal comments could be pungent. Kulsea wrote down some of the advice he heard Jenkins give to budding politicians. Among the quotes:

- Don't make long speeches. Remember the Lord's Prayer contains 56 words.
- When you reach the top in politics you are idolized, and resented.
- Politics is not for the timid. Have you thought what running for public office may do to your family? Are they behind you? Is there a risk you may lose them?
- It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you place the blame.
- The best politicians are the ones who find out what the people want and tell them to do it.
- Winners and losers in politics make interesting newspaper stories, but losers make bad news.¹⁹

⁸Kulsea, manuscript, p. 5.

⁹Kulsea, manuscript, p. 2.

Some would-be politicians took his advice and some did not. It should be noted, though, that seeking Jenkins' advice also was a way of currying his favor without outright acknowledging it. After all, it would have been unseemly to openly ask him--a reporter--for his backing, but if Jenkins at least did not appear to have strong feelings against a candidacy, so much the better. One example of that was when a 35-year-old ex-soldier from Grand Rapids came to Jenkins in 1948 to ask his advice on seeking a congressional seat. Jenkins said it would be difficult because his opponent had "been in office so long he's become a fixture on the public tit," but that it could be done if the veteran worked door to door and talked about himself, not the incumbent. "And when you win, don't get too big for your britches," Jenkins added. The office seeker, Gerald R. Ford, won that congressional election, several subsequent ones, and in 1974 became the 38th President of the United States.¹⁰

That is not to say that everyone who listened to Jenkins rose to such heights, but it is clear that the Booth Lansing Bureau in the 1930s and 1940s had extraordinary influence. That assessment is clear from several sources. "Legislators throughout the state used to fear what the Booth Bureau did," said Donald Gardner, Detroit Times Lansing correspondent from late 1938 into 1947. "It was

¹⁰Kulsea, manuscript, p. 8.

devastating. Many times it meant victory or defeat to politicians." This was at a time when the Capitol press corps was home to reporters who worked long hours--Gardner recalls 80-90 hours a week as not unusual during certain situations of the late thirties--for low pay. But, Gardner noted: "The Booth Bureau was an elite bureau. The owners were understanding, well off, and paid well."¹¹

Life was different for Booth Bureau reporters. That was true partly because their bosses did leave them alone most of the time and partly because of the competitive situation--or lack of it--that Booth correspondents often enjoyed. The first factor can be traced both to the philosophy, already cited, of founder George G. Booth and to the dispersed impact of eight scattered papers. By contrast, the correspondents of the three Detroit dailies were highly competitive with each other. Street sales of several home editions were crucial to circulation battles of the Detroit papers, and their Lansing reporters were expected to help give them the edge. That has not changed to this day between the remaining two dailies. In addition, each of the Detroit bureaus was tied fairly closely to the news desk or "state desk" back home. How much independence a particular bureau had depended somewhat on the prestige and

¹¹Interview with Donald Gardner, lobbyist, former Detroit Times correspondent, Lansing, Michigan, 6 February 1985.

personality of the bureau chief, but many correspondents felt they were on a short leash. The Capitol wire services, the Associated Press and United Press, were not chained to any particular paper, but in a way had more complex problems because they had to serve dozens of papers of varying interests, sizes and locations. Radio and television competition was not a factor at all in the 1930s and throughout most of the 1940s. The deadline battle thus was a newspaper matter.

The Booth Bureau, by contrast, had no serious home competition in any of the Booth cities, except in Grand Rapids, where the morning Grand Rapids Herald was an aggressive opponent. The only Detroit paper that provided some continuing direct competition was the Detroit Free Press because it was a morning daily and circulated throughout Booth areas. The Times also penetrated outstate Michigan, especially with its popular Sunday-comics edition, but its afternoon state editions were not as timely as the home Booth papers. The Detroit News was the largest of the three Detroit papers in circulation, but concentrated on its home market so heavily that it was not a competitor for Booth. In addition, there was the relationship between the Booth Newspapers and the Detroit News. Contrary to some assumptions over the years, the same company did not own both Booth Newspapers, Inc. and the Evening News Association, publisher of the News. As was noted in the first chapter, however, there certainly were close family

connections, with several Booth family members being officers or large stockholders in both companies.

That special relationship resulted in some practical effects for the Lansing bureaus of both firms. The bureaus shared information sometimes, especially if there were a tip or tidbit that was newsworthy mainly to the other bureau. The Booth and News bureaus also came to be located cheek-by-jowl in connecting offices in the Bank of Lansing Building a block from the Capitol and, for many years, had the same secretary. The secretary most of that time, Virginia Barker, recalls that the bureaus did keep some secrets from each other, which sometimes put her in the middle. She had just started to work for the two organizations in March of 1945 when the News bureau was preparing an exclusive story on the calling of a grand jury to investigate alleged political corruption in the murder of state Senator Warren G. Hooper. "I had to scurry around to help line up background on the grand jury while keeping my lips zippered to the Booth people, who didn't have the story, working just a few yards away," she said. Other times, she added, the situation was reversed and she kept quiet while the Booth people protected a juicy story.¹²

As might be expected, reporters for other Capitol bureaus were not keen on the cooperation between the News and Booth. Roger Lane, a correspondent for the AP and later

¹²Barker, interview.

Free Press bureaus, remembers that he respected Booth and its papers, but that the Detroit aspect caused him headaches: "It was something new to me to encounter a bureau with such a big constituency, and with a resident, strong staff . . . covering for sizable, important towns"13 Jenkins, recalls Lane, was especially a force: "Jenkins was a very formidable man and a power in the news community. . . . He was loud and brash at times, and he seemed interminably to play pitch, and it was a raucous game." (Pitch was a card game played mainly by the press corps at a round table in the House Press Room. The game usually was only for a few quarters, but hundreds of dollars might have been at stake to judge by the intensity, yelling and swearing of the participants.14)

Lane encountered problems with Booth when he was with both the AP and the Free Press, although the problems were different. Booth staffers then and now are told "don't duplicate the wires." The Booth papers, after all, were paying for the AP and UP (later UPI) services, and editors did not see any advantage in paying their own Lansing bureau to do similar coverage. As a practical matter, though, there

¹³Interview with Roger F. Lane, Lansing, Michigan, 10 July, 1985.

¹⁴Press Room old-timers considered it a sign of decadence in the late 1970s when some comparative newcomers started playing pitch for dollars rather than coins. When large sums were at stake, the players often got mean. After a few months of that, the old round table was quietly removed and pitch playing ceased.

always has been some ambiguity over the bureau's role compared with the wire services. The editors did not want duplication, but, on the other hand, if a wire service had a major story that the bureau did not, some editors complained. Other times the bureau would have an exclusive story, but some editors seemingly were not sure whether it was a big story unless the wires also carried it. A pointed example of that was in 1949 when the Booth Bureau had an exclusive story on the paychecks of five high state officers being held up until a court ruled on the validity of a new legislative pay schedule. Four Booth papers ran the exclusive, but seven--including some of the first four--ran a UP version of the piece two days later.¹⁵

The Booth Bureau's usual news strategy was to write stories tailored, preferably, to the specific papers and to give background, analysis, and interpretation that the wires usually would not do. When Lane became chief of the AP bureau he said he dropped a practice that the wire service often had followed of holding good stories for transmission at times that would most benefit the afternoon papers of Booth and the News. The AP catered to the two organizations because they were among the wire service's biggest financial contributors.

¹⁵Guy Jenkins to Mike Gorman, February 1949, Correspondence, 1949, Jenkins Collection, Bentley Library.

"I was not willing to do that," Lane said. That led to his being called into the AP state headquarters in Detroit and then turned over to Detroit News editors who humiliated him publicly in the paper's newsroom for not continuing the special relationship they had enjoyed with the Lansing AP bureau. "But," he said, "I kept on doing what I thought was my AP duty to all our members I was breaking the barrier, I guess." When Lane later became chief of the Free Press bureau he was in the more usual tension between a morning paper and the correspondents for the afternoon Booth papers. Neither bureau liked seeing the other with an advantage of several hours on a story, even though few readers in Booth towns got only the Free Press.

While the special relationship between Booth and the News was fostered partly by the close family ties of their owners, it was also a more general reflection of a Capitol Press Corps atmosphere that has largely evaporated today. It was an era of personal journalism and personal politics. Capitol reporters were members of a small band that worked, drank and socialized together. In the 1930s and 1940s that was especially the case because several of the correspondents--and all but a few legislators and lobbyists--lived in Lansing only while the Legislature was in session. Hotel rooms can be lonely, so it is not surprising that without wives and children around, many of those in and around the Lansing political scene congregated

at the same watering holes and became friendly, if not always friends. Some examples will illustrate the practical effects of such associations on Booth people and operations of those days.

"There was a lot of camaraderie in the press corps then, except between the wires," Kulsea remembered of the 1940s. "After all, we broke bread together a lot. There was sort of pack reporting on the same stories, but not using the same stuff" in everyone's story.¹⁶ Donald W. Gardner, the then-Detroit Times correspondent, acknowledges that even though he and the Booth bureau technically were competitors, "Guy Jenkins was probably my dearest friend." Gardner also was friends with the other two "Boothies," Kulsea and William F. Pyper.¹⁷ The Times reporter also supplemented his salary by occasionally taking photos for the Booth bureau, at \$2 each.

Relationships with lobbyists could be more subtle but important for news-gathering purposes. There was, to cite the

¹⁶Kulsea, interview.

¹⁷William F. Pyper was handsome, debonaire, and a fastidious dresser who enjoyed being around similar people. He did not have Jenkins' instinct of going for the throat, but was a better writer and excelled in doing feature stories and thumbnail sketches. Pyper, who began his career at the Flint Journal, was assigned to the Lansing Bureau in 1936 and reported from there for seven years until entering military service in 1942. After World War II ended, he returned to Booth as a Washington Bureau correspondent and became chief there in 1957. He died July 13, 1972, two months after retirement. See "Retired Bureau Chief W.F. Pyper Dies at 62," Saginaw News, 14 July 1972.

most important relationship in Jenkins' tenure, the situation with Wilfird Francis Xavier John O'Brien Doyle--known simply as W. F. or "Bill" Doyle. After reporting for Upper Peninsula and Wisconsin newspapers, Doyle came to Lansing in January of 1933 following his election as a Republican to a U.P. state Senate seat during the Democratic landslide of 1932. He did not run for a second term because the automobile was destroying the baby-carriage business that had employed him back home and he headed back to Lansing to find fulltime employment. Governor William A. Comstock, a Democrat, got Doyle a job for less than a year in the state Department of Labor and Industry. Doyle then started his own public relations and lobbying business that at one time made him Lansing's undisputed "King of Lobbyists."

Doyle, now 88, tells for the first time how a Booth connection helped him pull off a lobbying coup that illustrates the ways the roles of lobbyists and the press corps could sometimes merge. The story, according to Doyle:

It was 1951. An executive of the Butterfield Theatres chain said the state claimed the company owed \$400,000 in unpaid use tax on the films it showed. Butterfield contended it should not have to pay the levy because the motion pictures it showed were leased, not bought. Could Doyle do something in the Legislature about the tax, now and for the future? Doyle's fee could be whatever he named. Doyle said

he would think it over, but would not promise anything.

After mulling it over for a day or two, Doyle looked at the language of the sales-tax law and came up with what he calls "a very simple amendment"--a phrase that, in the Capitol, is a code term that makes legislators jump for cover and should cause taxpayers to grab for their pocketbooks. The law already contained a brief list of six groups of exemptions from the sales tax. Doyle proposed to add a seventh exemption group in just seven words: "(G) Newspapers, magazines, and copyrighted motion picture films."

A senator was persuaded to introduce the bill making the amendment and when a copy of the measure was routinely posted in the Senate Press Room, Guy Jenkins read it and jumped on Doyle for an explanation. "Is this silly thing yours, Doyle?", Jenkins demanded. Doyle acknowledged that it was. Jenkins advised Doyle (in pungent, profane words) to keep his lobbyist hands off anything involving newspapers. The press did not need or want any help from Doyle, thank you. Doyle smiled and asked Jenkins to check out the proposal with Ralph Bastien, Sr., the then-president of Booth.

To Jenkins' surprise, Bastien said the bill was not such a silly thing as Jenkins assumed. The law, Bastien said, had never been clear on whether the newsprint used by newspapers should be taxed. The state had not tried to enforce any such sales-tax levy on newspapers, but it might

happen, Bastien said, if the Legislature did not specifically exempt newspapers. "Why don't you guys all get behind it?", Bastien suggested to Jenkins, presumably meaning the Booth Bureau and the rest of the press corps.

The progress of the bill after that was remarkable, Doyle said: "It sailed through the House. It sailed through the Senate. And I don't think that in the entire thing (legislative process) the word motion-picture films was ever mentioned." In two weeks' time the bill was adopted and sent to the governor, who signed it. Further, state treasury officials said they would consider that the legislation had retroactive intent. That saved Butterfield from the current \$400,000 tax claim.

And what kind of news coverage did the bill get? "Nobody wrote a line that I know of," from Booth or any other bureau, Doyle insists. He never told any reporters other than Jenkins about the background of the bill, but assumed Jenkins urged other correspondents to let the measure alone because it would help the press. "They looked after their newspapers," Doyle observed. Butterfield also looked after Doyle. When the lobbyist told the Butterfield executive that he did not know what fee to charge, Doyle was given a check for \$5,000 and put on a nineteen-year retainer of \$5,000 a year. When the nineteen years passed, Doyle says the company apparently did not notice and continued to pay him for two more years. That made a total of \$110,000 for "a

very simple amendment" to the law. "And it was due to my Booth papers friendship partly," Doyle says. The exemption is still in effect today.¹⁸

Doyle insists that there was nothing improper or unethical about what he or Jenkins did on the bill. To the contrary, he says the matter was "clean as a whistle" and that Jenkins did not then or ever compromise his beliefs. "Jenkins was a close friend of (Governor) Harry Kelly and other top officials," Doyle says, "but if he saw they did something that ought to be in the papers, he wrote it. And they knew it. He was a top ethical newspaperman." Even when Doyle and Jenkins went hunting together, Jenkins insisted on paying for his own meals and other expenses down to the penny so there would never be a question raised, Doyle says.¹⁹

Certainly Booth and other Capitol bureaus did then, and still do, help their papers in matters that go beyond supplying news stories. As "service bureaus," they may give a reporter or editor at a member paper some background data or quotes to go in a local story or editorial, supply the

¹⁸Interview with Wilfird F. "Bill" Doyle, Lansing, Michigan, 6 June 1985.

¹⁹For details of some other Doyle lobbying accomplishments and his retirement after 45 years of rule on a state park commission, see Nancy E. Dunn, "Doyle does more than dabble in state politics," Saginaw News, 13 June 1982, p. E3; and Jeff Mayers, "'King of Mackinac Island' honored at Blanchard party," Lansing State Journal, 5 July 1985.

business office of a paper with some requested data, or help a "visiting fireman" who is in town from one of the papers. A review of Jenkins' correspondence records for the 1930s illustrates the service-bureau concept and helps highlight the unusual and complex relationship the Lansing bureau had with Booth reporters, editors and owners. The letters also reflect that no matter how independent and outspoken Jenkins was, he recognized the need for discretion, consultation, and giving the papers what they wanted. A continuing problem, Jenkins sometimes noted, was that it was not always easy to figure out what the papers wanted or what to do when they wanted different things.

Capitol correspondents may want to write mostly about the important--they believe--political and governmental dramas they see unfolding. Back home in Boothland, though, fishing laws or the Grape Queen may be more immediately alluring to a paper and its readers. For example, an analysis of the available 116 letters sent to Jenkins for 1931-33, shows that while there were 35 letters (30 percent of the total) on government and politics, that subject was second to conservation topics, which accounted for 38 letters (33 percent). A distant third were letters on law and crime, totaling 12 (10.3 percent).²⁰

One cannot, however, always go by the number of letters

²⁰Jenkins Collection, Correspondence, 1931-1933, Bentley Library.

to gauge the importance of a particular topic. There were only two letters during that period about highways, but they concerned a proposed new highway that a powerful Booth editor, Mike Gorman of the Flint Journal, was promoting. The Booth Lansing Bureau wrote many stories during the time about legislative and administrative progress on the issue. The highway, U.S. 23, eventually was built.

For the most part, however, the "fin-and-fur" topics, as correspondents often refer to outdoors news, were an important matter for the bureau. In fact, pheasant hunting was the topic the one time that Jenkins' correspondence reveals he drew heavy fire from a paper. The outdoor editor of the Grand Rapids Press objected so strongly to the tone of a Jenkins story on new hunting regulations that he wrote letters to all the other Booth outdoor editors, urging them to junk the bureau piece or make substantial changes.²¹ That outdoor editor, Ben East, wrote Jenkins frequently at other times, too, not to complain, but simply to ask for a particular story or information. Jenkins apparently satisfied East most of the time.

Booth Lansing correspondents always have gone to lengths to help visiting reporters from the papers, whether that meant simply giving them a typewriter and place to

²¹Ben East to Guy Jenkins, September 22, 1932, Correspondence, 1932, Jenkins Collection, Bentley Library.

work, showing them around the Capitol, lining up an interview, taking them to dinner at a favorite gathering spot, or whatever. In 1935 that "whatever" involved a letter from the Grand Rapids Press agriculture editor, who had gotten a parking ticket while in Lansing to cover a "potato hearing" at the Capitol. The editor enclosed the ticket and asked Jenkins if he would contact the chief of police about it. The editor did not ask Jenkins to "fix" the ticket and, in fact, said "let me know the penalty and I'll send you a check." Exactly what happened in the contact with the police chief is not recorded, but a handwritten note on the letter dated the next day says, "Sent ticket to Geo. Barker. No charge."²²

Booth bureaus have been the envy of other bureaus that were tied to the wishes of a single editor or "desk" at one paper, but Jenkins soon found that freedom also had its price. One of the continuing little, but annoying problems the bureau chief faced throughout his tenure was how to send stories when both houses of the Legislature were in session. Some editors, especially at the larger Booth papers, preferred separate pieces with more details. Others, particularly at the smaller papers, asked for one combined legislative story. Still others said they would just as soon

²²D.L. Runnells to Guy Jenkins, October 1, 1935, Correspondence, 1933-1935, Bentley Library.

let the wires handle almost all usual legislative coverage. That problem continued for years, as shown in a 1947 letter from Jenkins to a Saginaw News editor: "It seems to me that no two editors want the same thing. The differences of opinion among the editors has caused us no end of worrying as to how best serve the eight papers."²³

On the other hand, Jenkins sometimes found it difficult to get clear advice from the editors and corporate office when he did want it. A prime example was in 1935. Jenkins was considering doing a story on reports that a southwestern Michigan politician was engaged in racketeering. Jenkins wrote George Booth, asking Booth's advice on whether to proceed. Booth's reply letter avoided giving a flat yes or no, but did say Booth was "inclined to doubt the fairness of suggesting 'Racketeering' just because the situation suggests that the opportunity exists." On the other hand, Booth said "your letter would make a very interesting news story, if libel laws, etc. permitted its use."²⁴ Jenkins next contacted Flint Journal editor Mike Gorman, telling him what Booth's letter said. Gorman replied by letter: "As for the letter from Mr. Booth, I would think there is latitude to do whatever you think is best. I still believe there is a good story in the situation without reflecting directly on anyone and at the same time performing a worthy public

²³Guy Jenkins to Otto C. Pressprich, May 19, 1947, Correspondence, 1947, Bentley Library.

²⁴George G. Booth to Guy Jenkins, March 21, 1935, Correspondence, 1933-1935, Bentley Library.

service."²⁵ Jenkins, who loathed stories that pussyfooted around or did not name names, decided to let the matter drop for then.

Jenkins had no such reservations when it came to criticizing lawmakers' public utterances. The Senate itself, by formal resolution, declared him "the senator from the 33rd," thus adding an extra senator to the thirty-two under the constitution. The distinction came after he rose by his press desk on the Senate floor to correct a senator who had fouled up facts in a eulogy to a former governor.²⁶ Any reporter today who dared to do such a thing during a Senate floor session would be more likely to be honored by a sergeants-at-arms escort out the door, rather than a resolution.

While Jenkins dropped the one story, he had no compulsions about what he wrote about governors. Libel laws or not, Jenkins considered the governors to be fair game, for good or bad comment. Jenkins became so well known--or notorious, depending on one's point of view--for his attacks on governors that even today that characteristic is still one of the first things cited by those who remember him.

Jenkins could be nice to a governor, as he generally was to

²⁵Mike Gorman to Guy Jenkins, March 23, 1935, Correspondence, 1933-1935, Bentley Library.

²⁶Kulsea, manuscript, p. 6.

Murray D. "Pat" Van Wagoner, Democratic governor in 1941-42. "Jenkins was always fair to me," recalls the former chief executive, who is now 88. Jenkins was so fair, Van Wagoner said, that the reporter once came up to him and said, "Be careful how you answer this question I'm about to ask because I'm going to quote you EXACTLY as you say!" Van Wagoner does not remember now what the issue was, but that warning from a reporter was so unusual that he never forgot it.²⁷

Van Wagoner added, however, that he had few problems with any of the Capitol reporters. That may have been partly because he only served one term, and the state and nation also were engrossed with the start of World War II. Van Wagoner also attributes his good press relations to having an open policy and a press secretary, veteran ex-reporter Raymond Foley, whom the press corps trusted.

Jenkins did not give such kind treatment to the two governors who served right after World War II. One was Kim Sigler, who used as a springboard for the governorship the publicity he drew as a hard-nosed prosecutor for a grand jury that was investigating public corruption. "For some reason, Guy decided that Sigler was a faker," said Bill Kulsea. "Sigler tried to make friends with Guy, but it never

²⁷Interview (by phone) with Murray D. "Pat" VanWagoner, former governor, Birmingham, Michigan, 25 August 1985.

quite came off."²⁸ Jenkins finally placed coverage of Sigler's administration in the hands of Bill Kulsea and let Kulsea report as he saw fit.

Something similar happened in the coverage of G. Mennen Williams, known as "Soapy" from his family's Mennen toiletries fortune, and the Democratic governor between 1949 and 1960. Jenkins' coverage was hostile, nearly everyone then and now agrees. That showed up in regular news stories and especially in the Weekly Politics columns. Jenkins' displeasure extended so far that he boycotted Williams' twice-daily press conferences, which often produced the bulk of what other bureaus reported. No other bureau took such a radical step, but at least two other reporters, for Detroit papers, also unmercifully attacked Williams and his policies. Williams himself seemed to take most of the attacks with amazing calm. Williams' wife, Nancy, was not so unruffled. She believed one of the Detroit reporters, Frank Morris of the Times, to be an "instrument of the devil and told him so," recalls Williams' second press secretary, John Murray.²⁹

²⁸Kulsea, interview.

²⁹Interview with John Murray, East Lansing, Michigan, 12 August 1985. Before becoming Williams' press secretary, Murray had been director of public relations for the Michigan Democratic Party. After Williams' tenure, Murray was an aide to the state highway commissioner. He was appointed a journalism professor at Michigan State University in 1965 and taught there as a specialist in press law until his retirement in December 1984.

literally had an open-door policy for reporters seeking It was not Williams' demeanor or his practices toward the press that sparked such attacks by Jenkins and others. On the contrary, Williams was friendly, gentlemanly, and personal interviews in addition to the twice-daily press conferences. He also had Paul Weber, still widely considered among journalistic observers to be the best press secretary any Michigan governor ever had. A former Detroit Times and UP reporter, Weber was press secretary for 11 of Williams' 12 years in the statehouse.

Williams' sin, as far as his press detractors were concerned, was more of a reaction to what they saw as his ultraliberal, even socialistic, policies. It took a split in Republican ranks and months of hard campaigning to give Williams his first victory in 1948. Some Republican leaders, in fact, disliked their own Republican governor, Sigler, so much that they were willing to see a Democrat, Williams, elected to get rid of Sigler. Williams could then, they anticipated, be defeated easily after one term. Only one daily newspaper, the Marshall Evening Chronicle, editorially backed Williams then. Williams did have a close call in his first re-election bid, in 1950, but after that he was unbeatable for four more terms.

Kulsea recalls that soon after Williams' first-term victory, Booth editors asked Jenkins how he would get along with the new 37-year-old governor. "That's not the point,"

grunted Jenkins. "The question is, how he'll get along with me." Jenkins questioned Williams' alleged drift in government and charged that "Soapy" was rendering Michigan into a welfare state. The feud (even if it was one-way) was the talk of the capital.³⁰

But Williams and Weber did not retaliate in kind against detractors, or the papers they represented, in the press corps. For example, when Jenkins ignored the press conferences, Weber still made sure that the Booth bureau got press releases and other information. One of the few things that did aggravate Weber was when Williams announced a new proposal, reporters often would go to Republicans and use their criticisms as the lead for the first stories about the plan. Details about the proposal itself might not be mentioned until far down in the piece.

Surprisingly, the most prominent Democrat involved in those days who remembers Jenkins and the rest of the press corps fondly is Williams himself. "Guy Jenkins was an Olympian Figure," said Williams, now chief of the Michigan Supreme Court. "Guy worked for an establishment newspaper organization and he was part of the establishment. And I think he was sincere, but he just saw things from a different perspective. I don't recall that I ever had any trouble getting along with him, because he was a professional and, in a sense, I was As a matter of

³⁰Kulsea, manuscript, p. 7.

fact, I had a sort of very friendly feeling about my press corps, even though some of them castigated me."³¹ Perhaps Williams also excused Jenkins somewhat because the Booth chief was the only correspondent who wrote shortly before the 1948 election that the young Democrat had a chance.

Williams did say, in the interview and in a 1961 monograph he wrote soon after leaving the governorship, that he felt the most bitter attacks probably did him more good than harm.³² Kulsea agrees: "Even some friends of Jenkins, and some Booth editors, too, urged him to let up on Soapy. The attacks backfired to some extent, with people thinking Soapy couldn't be THAT bad."³³

Whatever Jenkins' feelings, the attacks by him and correspondents of some other papers did not sink the governor. "The world kept turning as usual," said Lane, the former AP and Free Press reporter. One reason for that rotation was that Williams, while gentlemanly, also was wily. He learned from Weber that while the press might choose to ignore what a governor said, it could not ignore him when he was doing something. It should be

³¹Interview with G. Mennen Williams, Michigan Supreme Court, Lansing, Michigan, 27 August 1985.

³²G. Mennen Williams, A Governor's Notes (Ann Arbor: Institute of Public Administration, the University of Michigan, 1961), pp. 49-54.

³³Kulsea, interview.

remembered, though, that a politician's definition of "doing" is not necessarily the same definition of that word that ordinary people have. It could include something physical, such as turning the first shovelful of dirt for a new hospital wing, or it could be an announcement of state funds to help build that wing or an investigation into why the construction was taking so long. The important thing, from an officeholder's re-election viewpoint, is that the politician be perceived by constituents as taking action.

Williams found that course especially productive when he took his show on the road. The Williams green-and-white bow tie became famous from downtown Detroit streets to Upper Peninsula mines. The Princeton graduate with a Phi Beta Kappa key on his vest campaigned in a dilapidated DeSoto, called square dances, and shook every hand that was not a fist.³⁴ Even newspapers that had editorialized against him usually would cover his appearance and report what he said or did. That held true in the Booth towns, and Williams recalls, "I got friendly coverage on those trips, and even during campaigns it generally was good." That was important, he emphasized, because the Free Press and News were not widely distributed in those outstate areas and the Booth territories "did contain very critical mid-sized Michigan cities."

³⁴Kulsea, "From Soapy to Milliken," Bay City Times, 8 January 1984, p. 1B.

Jenkins, for all his animosity toward Williams' policies, no doubt understood that and realized, anyway, that even he could not stop the governor by himself. Jenkins still could not bring himself to cover Williams in a different way. Instead, Bill Kulsea simply began getting more assignments to cover specific Williams press conferences, out-of-town Democratic conventions and other Williams-related events. An era of colorful personal journalism was starting to draw to a close.

CHAPTER III

JENKINS ERA ENDS, KULSEA ERA BEGINS

Guy Jenkins detested pomp and pompous politicians. Still, he was human and had a sizable ego that demanded an occasional feeding for himself. The University of Michigan honored him twice. He was made an honorary alumnus in 1939 "for his integrity as a reporter, proficient in all aspects of reporting, (and for) wholehearted recognition of the fundamental aims of the University of Michigan."¹

Similarly, when the university wanted to award him an honorary master of arts degree fourteen years later, Jenkins did not reject the gesture. In fact, he loved it. The formal letter inviting him to the ceremony cited "your distinguished career as a journalist occupying a position of unusual responsibilities to the people of this state."² The letter also might have mentioned Jenkins' services to the

¹Edward W. Miller, "Journalistic Giant, Guy Jenkins, Dies," Saginaw News, 5 May 1957, p. 1

²University of Michigan letter to Guy H. Jenkins, 6 June 1951, Correspondence, 1951, Guy H. Jenkins Collection, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

U of M in particular. The Ann Arbor News was always happy to print upbeat stories from its Lansing Bureau about the town's biggest industry. Another Booth paper, the Flint Journal, was engaged in a long and ultimately successful campaign to bring a U of M branch campus to Flint. Jenkins and other bureau staffers served faithfully in reporting the progress toward such goals. Jenkins received the honorary master's degree on June 16, 1951.

Back at the bureau, the changing of the reporting guard was proceeding bit by bit. As mentioned previously, Jenkins was by 1952 giving Bill Kulsea more assignments in covering Williams' press conferences and other related stories. Jenkins did not, however, acknowledge that this represented any general transfer of the gubernatorial beat, unlike the situation a few years earlier when Kulsea was specifically assigned to cover Governor Sigler. Jenkins probably had three reasons for giving Kulsea more of a slice of the executive office beat: Jenkins did not want to cover Williams' press conferences himself; Kulsea was there; and Kulsea was much younger (39 in 1952, while Jenkins was 62). Jenkins had been working 12-and 14-hour days for years. He certainly had earned an opportunity to slow down a little.

It was a fascinating time to be covering Williams. The young governor was preparing to seek a third term, but his survival was still much in doubt. Williams, at age 37, had seized the governor's office in 1948 not only through hard

campaigning, but also due in part to the split in GOP ranks. In 1950 the Republican leaders who had disliked Sigler so much thought that, with Sigler out of the way, they could then defeat the young upstart Democratic governor. It almost happened. Williams beat former Governor Harry Kelly by only 1,154 votes. That election day was the time it was said that God must be Republican because there was a so-called "100 years' rain" in Detroit, discouraging many Democrats from sloshing to the polls, while the weather was dry in GOP outstate strongholds. If it had been an election in Chicago, some wags allowed, the dead would have risen from their graves long enough to vote and wipe out such a piddling majority.

Whatever his margin of victory, Williams was still governor and Bill Kulsea was getting more of the action in covering him. It would be hard to invent a more marked contrast than that between Jenkins and Kulsea. Jenkins was 6 feet 2 inches tall, gruff, and had a conversational voice that approached a bellow. Kulsea is, by stretching, 5 feet 7 inches tall, with a generally amiable personality, and has a voice normally so soft that listeners may have to lean forward to pick it up over the tinkle of icecubes. Both could cuss mightily, but while Jenkins' oaths could light up a whole room, Kulsea's usually buzz around the immediate circle.

Kulsea also had to come much further than Jenkins in getting to Lansing. Kulsea was born in Poland and, at a

little over a year old, came to America with his mother in 1912 to rejoin his father, who had come ahead of them to set up a home. His father died just four years later. His family settled in Jackson, Michigan, where he attended St. Mary's High School and Jackson Junior College. He graduated from Michigan State University's School of Journalism in 1935 and after nine months of editing a Polish-language newspaper in Jackson, started to work at the Jackson Citizen Patriot in 1936, with a weekly starting salary of \$18.50, eventually peaking at \$30.

On January 9, 1939, Kulsea joined the Booth Lansing Bureau. His recollection of that day is vivid:

Jenkins, the tailor-made (cigarette) dangling from his lips, said, "Your salary is forty dollars a week." Newspapermen were the cock of the walk. I would have worked for nothing.

"I'll do the best I can," I said. No word in the dictionary could describe my joy.

"Wouldn't ask a horse to do more," Jenkins observed.

Jenkins also told Kulsea to read the state constitution, "and remember everything you can." Kulsea was puzzled about what the constitution had to do with covering legislators and other politicians, but he read it, and years later realized it was the best advice Jenkins ever gave him. Lawmakers or governors might bend or break the constitution every day, but a reporter who knew the document at least understood what damage was done.³

³William C. Kulsea, "Michigan Mischief ... Wit, Wisdom, Whimsy at the Statehouse," (copyrighted manuscript, 1984), p. 9.

At first, Kulsea was specifically assigned to cover his alma mater, MSU. The next year, 1940, he also covered preparations for the start of the then-new Civil Service system, which took effect in January of 1941. That was a big continuing story then for it marked the end--on paper at least--of the old patronage method of hiring state employees. Michigan had finally adopted one of the prime reforms that the muckrackers had advocated nationwide thirty years earlier. Remnants of the patronage system, though, remained in provisions allowing governors and legislators to make political appointments for their own staffs. Those exemptions were to furnish much fodder for Kulsea and other Capitol reporters through the subsequent years.

America entered World War II almost three years later. Journalists were, at first, considered part of an "essential occupation" and not drafted immediately. The general exemption was dropped after the massive manpower needs of the military became clearer, but many reporters were signing up voluntarily anyway. Jenkins was too old, at 54, to join the service, but another bureau member, William Pyper, was drafted. Kulsea readied himself to enlist, but discovered to his shock that he was not a U.S. citizen. His natural father had never bothered to complete the naturalization process for baby William. Kulsea finally got the naturalization papers in mid-1942, but was classified "4F" and never called up because Jenkins persuaded the draft board that Kulsea--the only remaining staffer under him--was essential to

reporting government news on the home front.

The technology that Kulsea and other bureau members used to get their stories to the eight Booth papers in those days was primitive compared with today's electronics. Most stories were typed on manual typewriters on to eight sheets of onionskin (also called "flimsies") with carbon paper inserted between the pages. The stories then were stuffed into envelopes and mailed to the papers. Somehow, editors at the paper that happened to draw the eighth carbon copy usually managed to read it.

Kulsea recalls that sometime during the war period the Booth Bureau also began using the Associated Press Teletype machine. It was located at the Lansing State Journal building, five blocks from the bureau's office on the sixth floor of the City National Bank Building (later renamed Bank of Lansing). The bureau had moved into the bank building, one block east of the Capitol, in the summer of 1938 after several years in the old United Building two blocks away. The bank building has remained home to the bureau since then, although the Booth offices were moved in July of 1974 to the 15th floor after the bank wanted more space on lower floors for its own operations.

Booth did not have exclusive use, of course, of the AP Teletype. An AP operator moved the copy to Booth "points" only at certain evening hours, and the circuit automatically switched back to regular AP lines at 5 a.m. That meant that

Booth had no way to move bureau copy on the Teletype during normal daytime working hours. Even though Booth had only afternoon papers, the Lansing correspondents had to operate on deadlines that were closer to those of a morning paper.

In one way the deadline-transmission situation was beneficial to the correspondents in that they were not expected to be working during the early-morning hours that are typical for many staffers at afternoon papers. On the other hand, it also meant that the Booth correspondents had to work many late evenings to get copy ready for transmission. That could play havoc with family and social life, as wives or children were apt to call to the attention of married staffers who called home to say "you better eat dinner without me." The girlfriends of bachelor staffers were even less appreciative of dates broken because some politicians were doing something with a budget bill.

The early Teletype, while a giant leap over mailed flimsies, also had the built-in problem of printing only in capital letters. Copyeditors at the receiving end had to take the bureau stories and indicate by hand which words were to be "capped." That situation was one reason why so many newspapers continued to use a "down" style in which as few words as possible were capitalized even long after the laborious days of setting type by hand gave way to Linotype machines.

The Teletype copy much resembled telegrams and, in fact, the Booth Bureau sometimes used the Western Union

office around the corner to send stories that could not be moved by Teletype. The correspondents for many years also used Western Union almost exclusively while on the road covering a political convention or other news event. The copy was taken to the nearest Western Union office and sent "NPR (Night Press Rate) Collect" back to Lansing. Traveling Booth correspondents sometimes found especially kind Western Union operators who were willing to stay open past usual closing times to move bureau copy. A correspondent might show his appreciation by tipping a Western Union operator or giving a small gift. For instance, a longtime woman operator on isolated Mackinac Island never would accept any proffered tip of cash, but was known to favor--and accept--a bottle of a particular brand of bourbon.

Bureau activity started to pick up again as World War II winded down. Bill Pyper returned from the service, but was assigned to the Washington Bureau. Instead, the Lansing Bureau hired Harris Coates, who had been a United Press Lansing Bureau reporter before the War. Coates was known, among other things, for driving a motorcycle to Michigan State ballgames.⁴ It was the first time the Booth Bureau had hired anyone who had not been with a Booth paper. The bureau staff was back to three members, including Jenkins, Kulsea and Coates.

⁴Interview with William C. Kulsea, Okemos, Michigan, 2 February 1985.

With the war over and rationing and other restrictions lifted, bureau members became more concerned about the size of their paychecks. Kulsea remembers that the chiefs of the Lansing bureaus of the three Detroit papers at that time were said to draw about \$200 weekly and Jenkins got about \$150. Lower-ranking members of the press corps received perhaps \$75 to \$125, Kulsea estimates.

The Hooper Murder

Then came the sensational murder that affected nearly everyone in and around the Capitol, including the Booth Bureau: State Senator Warren Hooper of Albion was found shot to death in his burning car off a rural road in Jackson County. Speculation immediately started that the murder was somehow connected with the one-man grand jury headed by Circuit Judge Leland Carr of Lansing. The special tribunal had been formed several months earlier, originally to investigate alleged political corruption involving legislators and defeat of an anti-chain banking bill. The probe soon widened to include many other allegations of corruption by lawmakers and other officials.

The formation of a one-man grand jury caused extreme nervousness in Lansing because it is the nearest thing to a star chamber that legally exists in Michigan. The juror has sweeping powers to subpoena, question (in secret), and convict anyone for offenses ranging from perjury to disclosure of testimony to actual commission of a crime. By

extention, the special prosecutor for the grand juror also has tremendous powers. The man named to that position was Kim Sigler, then an ambitious young lawyer from Hastings, near Battle Creek. Sigler was a flamboyant figure who wore wide-brimmed hats, Chesterfield topcoats with velvet collars, white piping on his vests, flaming ties and bright-colored suits, to use a description by Kulsea.⁵ He loved to fly his own private plane and was a former cowboy, boxer, football player, factory worker and trial lawyer.

One reporter from a Detroit paper personally felt the power of the special prosecutor and juror when he began nosing around Hastings and Battle Creek to get background on Sigler just after he was appointed. Grand Juror Carr called in the reporter to explain why he was trying to "discredit" the grand jury. A state trooper was then sent with the reporter to the House Press Room to seize the writer's notes. The reporter was warned that his testimony and the notes were now secrets of the grand jury and could not be disclosed, upon penalty of jail. The reporter kept quiet. When transcripts of the grand jury became available in later years, there was no trace of the reporter's testimony.

Jenkins disliked Sigler intensely, primarily because Sigler, as special prosecutor, was picking on many of Jenkins' friends, most of them Republicans. Jenkins took it as a personal insult to him. Many witnesses were called before the grand jury and 115

⁵William C. Kulsea, "Political 'Cinderella Man': Most Colorful Governor in State's History Loved Air Travel," Grand Rapids Press, 1 December 1953.

persons, including fifty-four legislators, were indicted. Only five legislators actually were sent to prison for perjury or for accepting bribes ranging from \$50 to \$1,000 for their votes or other influence on passage or obstruction of bills. Some of the middlemen who distributed the bribes also were sentenced, but not the person or persons who had hired them.

Nobody was ever charged with the murder itself. The theory, among many observers, however, was that Hooper had accepted some bribes, but had decided to blow the whistle to the grand jury and was killed before he could talk. The speculation goes that the actual person who pulled the trigger was one or another of the members of Detroit's Purple Gang who were trustees at a State Prison of Southern Michigan farm camp in the Jackson area. The speculation continues that the inmate--in cahoots with some prison official--was let off the farm long enough to kill Hooper and then return to camp. If that sounds incredible, note that in mid-1985 a Jackson area couple was murdered--allegedly by two trustees of a work camp who slipped away, broke into a home, robbed and killed the residents, and returned to the prison camp. In this 1985 case, two inmates were charged with the crime several days later. In the Hooper case, the triggerman was never arrested, much less whoever ordered the murder.

Sigler lost his special-prosecutor job in 1946 after

Carr resigned to win a seat on the Michigan Supreme Court. The new grand juror, Louis E. Coash, fired Sigler after a state Senate committee complained that the prosecutor was spending money recklessly to keep the investigation going. At any rate, Sigler used the publicity from that job and aerial stumping in his own plane to run successfully as the Republican nominee for governor in 1946 against incumbent Democrat Governor Murray D. Van Wagoner.

Jenkins did not want to cover the new governor himself, although Sigler did try--with little success--to make friends with the Booth chief. Rather, Jenkins "put the whole damn thing (covering Sigler) in my hands," recalls Kulsea. Neither did Jenkins tell the younger reporter how to cover the governor nor change whatever Kulsea wrote about Sigler. The governor apparently either admired or feared Kulsea's coverage because Sigler unsuccessfully tried to hire the newsman as his press secretary.⁶

Sigler had won handily in 1946, gathering 359,338 votes more than Van Wagoner, who had sought a second term after being out of office four years. By 1948, though, Michigan's political world had changed. Sigler still did not have the Republican party pros in his corner and, as noted in Chapter 2, these party bosses were willing to sacrifice two years of GOP control of the governor's office to get rid of him. In 1950, they thought, it would be easy to dump the Democrats

⁶Kulsea, interview.

and reinstall a malleable Republican governor. The first phase of the strategy worked and the second almost did. Democrat G. Mennen Williams beat Sigler in 1948 by 163,854 votes. Williams, however, refused to follow the GOP bosses' plan in 1950 and managed, with his hard campaigning and public-relations savvy, to eke out a second victory with a plurality of 1,154 votes. Williams' third campaign was almost as tough, with a winning margin of only 8,618 votes in 1952 against Republican Secretary of State Fred M. Alger, Jr. After that, however, Williams was unbeatable.

Guy Jenkins was then giving Bill Kulsea more assignments in covering the Williams administration. It might be thought that Williams would have been glad to have the abrasive Jenkins off his back more often. Strangely enough, Williams does not remember it that way. Not only does Williams now downplay any problems in getting along with Jenkins personally, but he adds: "Kulsea was a very dogged, persevering individual and very capable guy I may have had more criticism from Kulsea."⁷

That comes as news to everyone else interviewed, including Kulsea, who chuckles at the idea. In his valedictory column as Booth Bureau chief, Kulsea summed up his impressions of governors he had covered and said of Williams: "Soapy Williams, we once believed, could have been governor forever, if he wanted to. He's

⁷Interview with Chief Justice G. Mennen Williams, Michigan Supreme Court office, Lansing, 28 August 1985.

the champ. He served 12 years until it became nearly a bore to watch him day after day over six terms wrestle with state problems."⁸ An even longer-reigning champ was to emerge after that was written, but at the time, Kulsea was right. Williams was beaten later, but not in a race for governor, and eventually became a winner again as a state Supreme Court candidate. Between those times, Williams retired as governor in 1960 to take two federal appointments in the Kennedy administration, first as Undersecretary of State for African Affairs and then as Ambassador to the Philippines.

Whether or not Kulsea was tough on governors, he was becoming famous in his own right. In 1947, in fact, he became too well known to suit Attorney General Eugene Black, who threw Kulsea out of his office for reporting a story he did not like. Later on, Black became a state Supreme Court justice and a friendly news source for Kulsea and the rest of the Booth Bureau. "Kulsea was the 'whispering reporter'," recalls one government observer. Kulsea would corner a legislator or bureaucrat and speak so softly that any other nearby reporter would quickly slip as close as possible to try to learn if Kulsea was getting some good news stuff or just telling a joke. Kulsea also became known for the many times he would slide up to a worried looking politician or reporter, put an arm around him, and earnestly

⁸Kulsea, interview."

assure him, "everything's going to be all right."

Fate was not so kind, though, to Kim Sigler. On November 30, 1953, he flew his plane into the transmission tower of a Battle Creek television station. Killed instantly with him were his secretary and two friends who were joining the former governor on a southern vacation trip. Kulsea wrote a lengthy, respectful obituary, calling Sigler the "Cinderella man" of Michigan politics and giving him credit for achieving "a goodly part of his program" in spite of heavy legislative opposition.⁹

Several months later, Jenkins wrote a retrospective column on Sigler as part of a special series of stories on governors he had known. Jenkins conceded that Sigler was one of a kind and "left a record in state government that will not soon be forgotten," including some notable efforts. In general, though, Jenkins downplayed the importance of Sigler's achievements or labeled other moves as failures: The grand jury only caught "political minnows," he "failed in his mission" to put 109 boards and commissions under his office, "there was no enthusiasm" for an idea to study a new state constitution, and a successful push for legislation to require lobbyists to register was undertaken only because "there was one bad apple in the barrel."¹⁰ The death of an ex-governor was not enough reason for Jenkins to give up an old grudge. (See Jenkins' column in Appendix.)

⁹Kulsea, 'Cinderella Man.'

One Era Ends

The Jenkins era ended in 1957, although not with the thunder and lightning Jenkins himself might have preferred. Jenkins fell ill about the first of the year. The diagnosis was cancer. He underwent treatment at the University Hospital in Ann Arbor off and on for several months. He died at his home in East Lansing the evening of May 4. It was just in time for his newspapers to carry the sad story in their Sunday morning editions the following morning. The obituaries noted that his first wife, Esther J. Schulz, had died July 5, 1933. They had three children, Arthur G. Jenkins, Jordan Jenkins, and Joan Jenkins Timms. In 1934 he had married Mary Louise Dirrim, who survived him.

The Lansing Bureau, of course, sent out its own story on Jenkins' death. It was written by Bill Kulsea and summed up as well as any one story can the life and impact of this newspaperman's newspaperman. This was the lead:

LANSGING--The Michigan newspaper business has lost a top hand.

Guy Hugh Jenkins, 69, chief of the Lansing Bureau of the Booth Newspapers, died Saturday after covering state politics and government for 30 years.

Few will forget Jenkins--the tall, straight man with the thick crown of steel-gray hair; the play of storm and sunshine on his face, the fury of his deep voice scolding the muddler in public office; the reporter to whom newspaper work was a priestly mission, to be done with purpose and dignity.¹¹

¹⁰Guy H. Jenkins, "Gov. Kim Sigler Was Only One of His Kind," Grand Rapids Press, 3 July 1954.

A "priestly mission." Jenkins himself probably would have considered that too high-falutin' a term, but Kulsea's assessment was close to the mark. That was also clear in another obituary that Jenkins' home paper, the Saginaw News, ran along with Kulsea's tribute. The story by Edward W. Miller, a former News colleague of Jenkin's, mentioned how other reporters felt about Jenkins when he visited his old Saginaw newsroom. Young reporters, Miller said, would stand at a respectful distance while their elders pumped Jenkins for some lowdown on what was really happening in Lansing. Some of the young staffers even dared hope for something more:

And they never will forget, either, the first time he boomed, "Hi, Kid," and clapped them on the shoulder as he walked by to the editor's office.

That, if you knew Guy Jenkins, meant a young newspaperman really had arrived. ¹²

Legend or not, Jenkins was gone and the world moved on.

The Kulsea Era

Bill Kulsea, the new Lansing Bureau chief, inherited an established, respected operation. It seemed unlikely that there soon would be events and movements to rival such things as the Depression, a world war and political upheavals that had punctuated the bureau's history to that point. Yet, it was not long before the Booth Bureau was reshaped by a turnover in

¹¹William C. Kulsea, "Jenkins: Newspaperman's Newsman," Saginaw News, 6 May 1957.

¹²Miller, "Journalistic Giant, Guy Jenkins, Dies."

Michigan's political composition, another war, a national political scandal, and dramatic changes in journalism technology.

One of Kulsea's early tasks as bureau chief was to hire a new third reporter. He chose Marion S. "Bud" Vestal, a reporter from the Grand Rapids Press. Vestal was an intense, moody person who could with a succinct, dry writing style summon to his typewriter a phrase or entire story that would grab the guts of a subject. He was, at his best, perhaps the best writer in the State Capitol press corps of his time. He had strong opinions and liked strong drink. He had an earthy sense of humor and a compassion for underdogs and minor scalawags, although he tended to view the world, fascinating though it was, through jaundice-colored glasses. He started his newspaper career on the Grand Rapids Herald, then spent two years as information officer with the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, returning to the Grand Rapids Press before joining the Lansing Bureau.

One of the major continuing stories that Kulsea, and later Vestal, began working on in the late 1950s concerned the state Highway Department. There were rumors of unjustified overpayments, shoddy road construction, inferior tests, and favoritism in the granting of construction contracts. A source, whose identity Kulsea and Vestal never acknowledged publicly, fed them enough hard data and internal memos to spark a long string of bureau

investigations and stories. It was mostly a lonely fight because other Press Corps bureaus usually did not seem to care much about probing the costs of sand and asphalt or the complicated bidding procedures in issuing highway contracts.

Highway Department officials did, of course, fight back, defending the costs and practices as reasonable and necessary. After John Murray, Williams' former press secretary, became an assistant to Highway Commissioner John Mackie, the department issued a "white paper" detailing and defending procedures used in the construction of a stretch of the I-94 freeway in the southwestern corner of the state. The department did not give the Booth Bureau advance notice that the paper was coming, and Murray recalls that when Kulsea learned of the paper, "he was one mad human being."¹³

Booth did not give up, however, and combined with stories later in the Chicago Tribune and a Detroit News editorial, helped generate a grand jury that finally was called to investigate the allegations. That probe found some poor policies, practices and mistakes within the Highway Department and in dealing with contractors, but no criminal wrongdoing was determined. A separate statement specifically cleared Commissioner Mackie.¹⁴

In spite of all the bother and time the Booth effort had cost Highway Department officials, at least some of the people on

¹³Interview with John Murray, East Lansing, 12 August 1985.

¹⁴William C. Kulsea, "Mackie Is Cleared: Salmon Asks Changes in Road Agency," Grand Rapids Press, 18 June 1969.

that side of the reporting fence did not see the bureau as being in the fray simply to sell newspapers or carry out vendettas--charges that public officials on the hot seat often have made against the press since colonial days through Watergate and beyond. "I still believe the Booth Bureau was sincere," Murray says. "They were darned good aggressive reporters. I ended up with respect for them as reporters."

Murray's assessment was based not only on the highway stories, but also on a more general observation: "One important thing was that the Booth Bureau was always there, and it was persistent. It covered the state departments, too, consistently, as the Detroit papers often did not. . . . It was what a first-class Capitol bureau should be, and did it consistently, whoever was in the bureau. . . . They had a sense of continuity and background when they came in to ask questions, and they had a sense of digging."¹⁵

Con-Con

That "sense of continuity and background" was tested intensively for a three-year period starting in 1961 and continuing through 1963 in coverage of the state Constitutional Convention and the campaign to adopt it. The coverage was the longest, biggest project until then or now

¹⁵Murray, interview.

in the history of the Booth Lansing Bureau. The project demonstrated not only what the Booth Bureau could do but also what the press in general can--at its best--do to offer readers information and perspective on political events that affect every citizen's daily life. The convention also became a spawning ground for new legislators, a governor, and Booth Bureau correspondents.

Officially, the Booth project lasted nine months, beginning October 3, 1961, with the opening of the convention. It ended on July 8, 1962, a month and a half after the convention closed and the last day that special Lansing Bureau analyses and background stories were presented. Actually, the coverage simply shifted into more of a regular, somewhat less intensive, pattern that lasted until electors approved the document April 1, 1963.

Bill Kulsea knew from the start that the bureau could not both do business as usual and give adequate coverage to "Con-Con," as the convention quickly became known. State government would not cease while the convention was in session and the Booth papers would expect their regular requests to be serviced. One obvious consideration was manpower. It would have been physically impossible to cover Con-Con and normal duties with the regular bureau staff of Kulsea, Bud Vestal, Charles E. Harmon, who had replaced Coates in 1961 after the latter went to a desk job at the Flint Journal, and secretary Virginia Diedericks.

After discussions with the Booth editors and corporate leaders, Kulsea was able to bring in extra hands on a temporary basis, although nobody knew then how long that would prove to be. Robert H. Longstaff of the Flint Journal was brought in for, as he recalls, "a couple of months" in October of 1961 to specifically cover Con-Con. When it soon became clear even more help was needed, another Booth reporter, Robert D.G. Lewis of the Kalamazoo Gazette, also was brought in temporarily for the convention coverage. In addition, reporters Donna Barnes of the Jackson Citizen Patriot and Jack Tucker of the Saginaw News covered some special reporting assignments on Con-Con. Citizen Patriot photographer Don Cunningham and Flint Journal cartoonist Ken Dolan provided art work for all the papers. A makeshift darkroom was set up in part of an unused women's restroom near the bureau's office in the Bank of Lansing Building. Meanwhile, among the regular bureau staffers, Harmon was covering the Legislature primarily, and Kulsea and Vestal were in and out of regular and convention coverage.¹⁶

To fully appreciate the size of the Con-Con reporting challenge, it should be noted that there were five previous constitutional conventions in Michigan's history: in 1835-1836, 1850, 1867, 1873, and 1907-1908. The 1835-1836 convention, for example, formed the first constitution of

¹⁶Interview with Robert H. Longstaff, Bay City Times office, 16 September 1985.

Michigan for its entry into the Union as a state in 1837. Voters were not easily convinced, however, of the necessity of adopting an entire new constitution, with the 1867 and 1873 plans being rejected by the voters. "Stick with the devil you know" seemed to be the feeling of many voters and politicians took note. The 1908 constitution had remained the supreme law of the state for fifty-three years until voters at the election of April 3, 1961, approved the calling of another convention and on September 12, 1961, chose 144 Con-Con delegates.¹⁷ The body convened October 3, 1961.

The new convention attracted different types of delegates than Lansing was used to seeing in the Legislature. Incumbent lawmakers did not want to give up their seats to run as delegates so the Con-Con field was left to different types: young people hoping to make a big enough mark to be elected to a regular office, older hands from business and labor, political theorists, local civic leaders, and retirees. While many considered the convention a stepping stone, others simply wanted to have some part in shaping the future of Michigan without getting involved in regular, long-term politics. Among the delegates were George W. Romney, president of American Motors Corp.; John A. Hannah, president of Michigan State University; and two promising black politicians from Detroit, Richard H. Austin

¹⁷Michigan Department of Management and Budget, Michigan Manual 1981-82 (Lansing 1983), p. 59.

and Coleman A. Young.

Hanging over the convention and giving it some sense of urgency was the prediction that the United States Supreme Court would soon extend its "one-man-one-vote" order to state legislative districts. That did occur in 1964. Republicans feared, with good reason, that reapportionment would give control of the Legislature to Democrats. Any needed changes in basic law, some Republicans reasoned, better be made at Con-Con before Democrats could make changes legislatively. Democrats, for their part, smelled blood, but were divided on whether the convention would help strengthen their coming control or put obstacles in their path. Putting it bluntly, Democrats wondered whether, since they now saw political control ahead, they should do away with the gerrymandering and other unfair devices they had long complained about from Republicans.

The Booth Bureau cast about for an intelligent, comprehensive way of covering all this without either boring readers or giving them intellectual pabulum. It was decided early on to cover the breaking hard-news stories in Con-Con daily and, further, to do a weekly report with more perspective and "soft" features concentrating on the people there. The weekly report was especially important because most of the well-known Con-Con movers and shakers were from the Detroit area. If readers in the Booth areas were to know what many of their delegates were doing in Lansing, the

bureau would have to make special efforts to include them in features and background stories.

By comparison, the other Capitol bureaus mounted weak efforts in covering the convention. The wire services, for most of the time, tried to cover both Con-Con and regular beats with their same staffs. The Detroit News and Free Press did, after it became evident the convention was going to last much longer than originally predicted, each bring in a special correspondent for that duty. All the bureaus would cover major convention events, but nobody except Booth had reporters there day after day, hour after hour, sitting through the many committee meetings and caucuses where much of the developmental work was happening.

The result was that Booth papers offered a range of Con-Con ingredients that included facts and analyses on the proposed changes in the constitution, coupled with looks at the politicking behind the scenes and at the well known and not-so-well-known people involved in drafting the document.

The eight Booth papers (which expanded during Con-Con to nine in March of 1962 with the purchase of the Ypsilanti Press) were not obligated to use everything the bureau sent on the convention, but all published extensive amounts. The Jackson Citizen Patriot, in fact, proudly noted that its presentation "has been called the most extensive coverage of convention proceedings of any Michigan

newspaper."¹⁸ During the seven and a half months that Con-Con was in session, the Citizen Patriot printed an average of three and a half columns daily, except Saturday, and eight columns each Sunday for 33 weeks. Even after the session was over, the Lansing Bureau produced an eight-week series analyzing and appraising article by article the convention's product. Over the same period, the Citizen Patriot printed the proposed new constitution word by word.

The weekly bureau Con-Con page was used in schools in many Booth towns as part of course work in current events, and several college journalism programs used it both for background and as a study of good journalism. The coverage was cited as "excellent" and "outstanding" by journalism and political experts, including Con-Con President Stephen S. Nisbet of Fremont.¹⁹ The convention coverage was probably Kulsea's greatest journalistic achievement as bureau chief and of the bureau in general until that time.

Even then, the Lansing Bureau's convention job was not over. Con-Con concluded its working session in May of 1962, but had to reconvene officially for one day August 1 to formally adopt the document. There then remained the matter of whether the people would approve the convention's work. The outcome was much in doubt. For every group that was

¹⁸"End of a Project," Jackson Citizen Patriot, 8 July 1962.

¹⁹[William E. Coté], "Bureau Chief Appointed," Ann Arbor News, 26 December 1976.

happy with a new provision, there was another group that feared its members would be worse off. Among the most controversial major changes proposed in the document were: The 126 executive agencies were regrouped into not more than twenty state departments, with the governor given more power over those agencies. The previously elected positions of highway commissioner, state superintendent of public instruction, and auditor general were turned into appointed posts. The governor's term was expanded from two to four years. Senators also were given four-year terms, while representatives remained at two years. The Supreme Court was reduced from eight to seven justices. A new Court of Appeals was created.²⁰

Partisan politics intensified during the latter months of the convention. Between the end of the working session and the formal return in August, George Romney had announced he would run for governor on the GOP ticket. Democrats became even more anxious not to give Romney credit for helping lead development of a new constitution. The Con-Con's product became a major issue of the fall campaign. Bob Longstaff, who had gone back to the Flint Journal after the convention closed, was brought back to the bureau on another temporary hitch to help cover the campaign for governor.

²⁰Constitutional Convention Office, What the Proposed New State Constitution Means to You (Lansing, 1 August 1962), pp. 1-7.

Romney won, beating incumbent Democratic Governor John B. Swainson, who served one term after G. Mennen Williams left the office.

The proposed constitution was submitted to the people in the election of April 1, 1963, and squeaked by with a margin of only 7,424 votes out of more than 1.6 million cast. Democrats complained that the springtime election was not fair in that their party traditionally had difficulty getting people to the polls when a race for governor or President was not on the ballot. Republicans replied that all citizens had a duty to vote and that if Democrats could not bestir enough of their faithful to go to the polls, it was their own fault. At any rate, the new constitution was adopted. It was the last time there was a spring statewide election because the new document deleted that method.

The new constitution had some ironic effects: Democratic leaders opposed the documents, yet under it and reapportionment they took over control of both houses of the Legislature, for the first time since the Roosevelt landslides of the Depression and World War II period. Republicans largely supported the constitution, but lost the Legislature. They gained, however, the governor's chair for the first time in sixteen years.

The Booth Bureau also expanded as a result of the convention. Bob Lewis and Bob Longstaff had acquitted themselves so well in covering the convention, that they were brought back to Lansing as permanent staffers,

Longstaff in July of 1963 and Lewis a few months later. Among other duties, Longstaff was assigned to cover the Senate and the Republican party and Lewis was assigned to the House and education beats.

More hands were needed if for no other reason than to cover the growing bureaucracy and the Legislature. Through 1964, lawmakers usually had met four or five months a year in regular session, although they sometimes returned for brief special sessions to consider a particular issue. In the 1964 general elections, Democrats swept both houses and, when the new Legislature convened in January of 1965, quickly began expanding many programs and creating new ones to aid children, minorities, senior citizens, welfare recipients, and the unemployed. Most legislators previously used their desks on the House and Senate floors as their offices. They made calls from a bank of telephones set up near each chamber. Any clerical help they needed came from a secretarial pool. They began getting their own private offices (starting with the Democrats) and personal secretaries.

Legislative salaries increased accordingly. From the 1920s until 1949 lawmakers got \$3 a day. In the 1960s, salaries began rising--from \$5,000 a year, to \$7,000, to \$10,000, to \$12,500. In 1969, the pay rose to \$15,000 a year, plus \$3,000 in expenses. In five years, the money legislators spent on themselves almost tripled, going from

\$2.8 million in 1964 to \$7.3 million in 1968.²¹ The full-time Legislature had arrived. For state government in general, while Michigan's population had risen less than 2 percent and average personal income less than 10 percent, state spending jumped almost 15 percent per year.²² It was about this time that Booth Bureau reporters dug out and displayed a framed statement that also had been posted at the House Press Room for time to time over the years. It was an excerpt from an 1866 New York State Surrogate Court decision in which the court found that a lawyer's estate must pay damages to a former client for an omission that amounted to culpable negligence. The attorney had lost the client's case because the lawyer had failed to note a recent change in state law. The judge explained the attorney's sin this way:

The error arose from want of diligent watchfulness in respect to legislative changes. He did not remember that it might be necessary to look at the statutes of the year before.

Perhaps he had forgotten the saying that "no man's life, liberty or property are safe while the Legislature is in session."²³

²¹"Lawmakers' Costs to State Nearly Tripled Since 1965," Flint Journal (?), 19 July 1968.

²²"Taxpayers Ride Runaway Horse," Muskegon Chronicle, 15 July 1968.

²³New York State Surrogate Court, 1866 (from framed excerpt on wall of Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau office).

An Evangelist Arrives

Even though Democrats swept control of the Legislature and almost all the statewide elective offices at stake in the 1964 election, they still were without the No. 1 post they wanted the most: the governor's chair. That prize had gone in 1962 and again in 1964 to a Republican, although a most unusual Republican--George Wilcken Romney. The executive office remained a GOP bastion in what was otherwise a Democrat Capitol. Romney "fascinated the customers," as Bill Kulsea was wont to say, and was to take the Booth Lansing Bureau along on what proved to be a lengthy political adventure in Michigan, the nation and the world. Bureau members were used to filing on-the-road datelines from such places as Grand Rapids, Detroit and Mackinac Island, but during the Romney tenure, their datelines sometimes were from Washington, D.C.; Manchester, New Hampshire; Moscow; and Saigon.

Romney was, indeed, intriguing. This businessman-evangelist-politician based his life on a rock foundation of his Mormon faith, hard work and sincerity. He was born in 1907 of American parents in Chihuahua, Mexico, where his parents had helped when he took over the reigns of the dying American Motors Corporation. With a combination of ruthless cost-cutting, salesmanship and a belief in small cars, he saved the firm and established his credentials as a practical, no-nonsense leader who could weld people together

to achieve a goal. Professionals in government, plus those in politics and the press, usually are suspicious of someone so blunt, uncompromising and religious. He did not smoke or drink and was happily married. What could be used to control a man such as that?

It was difficult, though, to ignore Romney. He was elected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention from his Bloomfield Hills home area and was chosen as one of three Con-Con vice presidents. Romney never shied away from a battle, frequently butting heads with both Democrats and conservative Republicans. He was too liberal to suit many Republican leaders. He was more liberal, in fact, than some Democrats when it came to such social issues as race relations, but Democrat leaders saw him, correctly, as a potential threat. Even before he announced for governor, his name was being talked about not only for governor but also for president.

In 1964, Romney increased his winning margin to a healthy 382,913 votes by beating Democrat Congressman Neil Staebler of Ann Arbor, who was credited with being a master political theorist but proved to be a dull campaigner. Romney's victory was especially impressive when it is noted that Lyndon Johnson beat Goldwater two-to-one in Michigan and Republican candidates down through the local level were wiped out.²⁴

²⁴Michigan Manual, p. 387.

One of the first things Romney did as he prepared to begin his second term was to search for a new press secretary to replace Richard L. Milliman, a veteran newspaper publisher and executive. Following the familiar pattern, Romney sought an active journalist familiar with the Capitol scene and selected Chuck Harmon of the Booth Bureau, starting December 1, 1964. Harmon had been a reporter on the Kalamazoo Gazette and had served two tours on temporary assignment at the bureau before becoming a regular staffer in February of 1961. He covered the Senate and the previous three gubernatorial campaigns, among other bureau duties.

Some members of other Capitol bureaus grumbled that Harmon must be giving his former Booth colleagues tips and tidbits from the inside. Harmon and Kulsea disputed that, insisting that Harmon actually bent over backwards to avoid favoritism. Still, other reporters would mutter when they saw Harmon having lunch with Kulsea and other Booth staffers in the Gas Buggy Room of the Jack Tar Hotel (formerly Olds Hotel) across from the Capitol.

Another Booth staff change occurred in July of 1966 when Bob Lewis was transferred to the Booth Washington Bureau. To replace him, Kulsea chose William E. Cote, a reporter at the Ypsilanti Press and before that on training stints at the Jackson Citizen Patriot and the Grand Rapids Press. Cote, like Kulsea, well recalls the instructions from the bureau chief:

"Remember that you're not working now for only one paper. If the greenest reporter at our smallest paper calls the bureau for help, drop everything else you can and help them." Côté nodded happily.

Bud Vestal was the next to give the new staffer some advice. "Now that you're with the bureau, there's one thing you have to remember," Vestal said, with Côté tuning his ears for a sophisticated point about political coverage. "When you're out on the road working for the bureau, you're entitled to get a sirloin steak, but just be sure that you don't order a hamburger and put in for a sirloin on your expense account." It was good advice.

By that time in mid-1966, all the Booth correspondents were getting more chances to use their expense accounts, as they began covering campaigns for the U.S. Senate and governorship. Romney was seeking a third term, which would be the first for four years under the new state constitution. Running against Romney was Zolton Ferency, an ultraliberal Democrat who had been former Governor Swainson's chief of staff and known for his wit and sharp tongue. The Senate seat was defended for the Republicans by Robert P. Griffin, who had been a young congressman from Traverse City when Romney appointed him to fill out a term vacated when Democrat Patrick V. McNamara died a few months earlier. The Democrats fielded former Governor Williams for the Senate post.

Williams had never lost an election, but six years had

passed since he had left Lansing for the federal posts, and Republicans--and some Democrats--were irreverent about him. Williams had suffered some major illnesses and Republicans painted him as a weak, aging has-been. A GOP campaign billboard showed Griffin in a vigorous pose before a microphone, with the slogan, "Youth AND Experience." Even fellow Democrat Ferency could not resist repeating a joke that "The only new thing to come out of Soapy Williams in years is three kidney stones."

The Booth Lansing and Washington bureaus combined to field enough correspondents to cover the two big races, plus some especially hot U.S. House races and other contests. Reporters covering one candidate all the time may become either too friendly or too bored. To counter any such tendency, Kulsea used a "cross-coverage" plan in which a correspondent would cover one candidate for two or three weeks and then switch to cover the candidate of the other party for the other major race. For example, a reporter covering Democrat Williams in the Senate race, would be switched to cover Republican Romney in the gubernatorial campaign. The plan sometimes made it difficult to maintain continuity, but did help spark fresher and livelier copy. The method was used again in subsequent campaigns.

In spite of Bud Vestal's advice that it was acceptable to have steak while on the road, that often was not possible

for the Booth travelers. Ambitious schedules frequently kept the candidates, and the reporters covering them, on the move from handshaking at an auto plant gate at 6 A.M. to a drop-in appearance at 10 P.M. at a dance in a party hall. That was especially the case for those covering Romney, whose endurance and disdain for the ordinary bodily needs already were legendary. To Romney, food and drink (always soft) were just fuel. He could inhale two fast-serve hamburgers and be back in his car while aides and reporters were still swallowing their first bite.

Any campaign reporters who doubted that Romney had a pipeline to heaven did get some food for thought during a flying-circus tour of the Upper Peninsula. Heavy clouds seemingly blocked Romney's DC-3 from landing at one city, but a Romney aide proclaimed, "oh, ye of little faith, hold on." The clouds parted long enough for Romney's plane to land, then the clouds closed again behind him.

Whatever the sources of help, Romney was easily re-elected that November of 1966, beating Ferency by 527,047 votes. Williams lost his first election, with Griffin keeping the Senate seat.²⁵ Williams, however, was to make a strong comeback four years later in his election to the state Supreme Court.

Romney's election for a third term propelled him into the group of Republican leaders around the nation who had to

²⁵Michigan Manual, p. 387.

be considered as potential candidates for the presidency in 1968. In fact, national polls taken just after his re-election showed him not only as the most popular Republican potential candidate, but also overtaking incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson.²⁶ That was nearly two years before the 1968 presidential election.

While the national popularity initially delighted Romney supporters, it also quickly became a major handicap. Other potential candidates in both parties had the luxury of quietly building up campaign forces and formulating positions. Romney, though, was not ready with either staff or policies on such involved issues as Vietnam and had to endure a barrage of questions and criticisms from the national press and political snipers. He never quite caught up.

By mid-1967, he had accomplished many of his state goals, including passage of the new constitution, the first state income tax, elimination of a state-budget deficit, and a series of community-service programs generated and staffed by volunteer civilians. Why not, he wondered, carry his drive for honesty, businesslike efficiency, and volunteerism to the national level? By then, Romney also had been actively "exploring" national and international issues he would have to face as a presidential candidate. He made

²⁶Bill C. Simmons, "Romney Steps Closer to Candidacy," Lansing State Journal, 6 January 1967.

several trips to Washington, D.C., New York City, four western states (including Alaska) and the South. Romney made it official on Nov. 18, 1967, announcing he was a formal candidate for the White House.²⁷

Booth Lansing Bureau staffers found it a heady time. Here was a leading presidential candidate from their own backyard. Senior Booth correspondents were dispatched to follow Romney's early "exploration" trips and then the formal campaign. The biggest trip came in December of 1967 and early January of 1968 when Romney made a month-long flying tour of Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The trip was exhausting--that is, it was exhausting for the aides and reporters who tried to keep up with the vigorous 60-year-old governor. Twelve nations were visited, with conferences and tours in Paris, London, Bonn, Warsaw, Moscow, Tel Aviv, Amman, Bangkok, Saigon, Djakarta, Singapore, New Delhi, back to Paris and returning to Detroit. Bud Vestal and Bob Longstaff divided up portions of the trip, with Longstaff covering the European and Middle Eastern parts and nearly suffering frostbitten legs in Moscow.

Vestal covered the Asian visit, and the Vietnam stop was notable for two reasons: it was to be the symbol of Romney's downfall because of remarks he made following an earlier

²⁷"Intention No Surprise," Lansing State Journal, 18 November 1967, p. 1.

Saigon trip, and Bud Vestal wrote from there one of the most moving stories he ever did. Vestal had seen Vietnam before. It was between stints at the Grand Rapids Press that he had spent two years as information officer with the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The Vietnam trip was especially important to Vestal this time because his son, Charles A. Vestal, was there as a lieutenant in the Fourth Engineers Battalion. Vestal arranged to see his son briefly and related the end of the reunion:

Sgt. Dan and Sgt. Bob drifted silently back to the truck. Lt. Vestal said, "Well, I'll be home about the eighteenth or nineteenth of January. I'll call you when I know what plane I can get on."

"We'll be there to meet you," I said. "Your mother is counting the days. She has your car serviced up and ready to go."

Vestal then asked his son, "Who's winning?"

"Nobody," said Lt. Vestal. "Nobody."

As he walked to the truck and they drove off, I waved--at one of 480,000 of the Americans in uniform in Vietnam, and wished every American father could have the same good luck to visit his son and see how fine they all look in Vietnam, every one of them. ²⁸

To the joy of Bud and his wife, Phillis, their son did come home safely, eventually becoming a librarian in California.

That Vietnam visit did not, however, bring any joy in retrospect to Romney. Three months earlier he had made the notorious "brainwashing" gaffe over Vietnam that proved to be the decisive blow in a campaign that already had gone from a skyrocket to a fizzling ember. Romney had visited Saigon first in the fall of 1965, and had returned home to

²⁸Maury DeJonge, "Veteran Booth Newsmen, Cancer Victim, Dies at 56," Grand Rapids Press, 7 September 1976, p. 1.

give Lyndon Johnson a general, if somewhat qualified, endorsement of the war effort. Later, he gradually and fitfully changed his stand. The United States should not withdraw, he said, in a major address in April of 1967, but should seek a negotiated end to the war and avoid future involvements in similar Asian conflicts.²⁹

Then, at the taping of an interview for an independent Detroit television station on September 4, 1967, he was asked why he had not perceived the problems when he was in Vietnam two years earlier. Romney replied:

When I came back from Vietnam, I just had the greatest brainwashing that anybody can get when you go over to Vietnam. Not only by the generals, but also by the diplomatic corps over there, and they do a very thorough job³⁰

Bud Vestal, en route with Romney on a nationwide tour of America's power centers and ghettos, wrote a piece a few days later suggesting that Romney was turning the "brainwashing" controversy to his advantage by focusing the national spotlight on what he was saying about the administration's Vietnam follies.³¹ Unfortunately for

²⁹Robert A. Popa, "Won't Meet Hanoi Terms--Romney," Detroit News, 8 April 1967, p. 1

³⁰"Romney Explains Viet About-Face," Detroit News, 5 September 1967, p. 1.

³¹Bud Vestal, "Did 'Brainwash' Flurry Aid Romney?", Ann Arbor News, 11 September 1967.

Romney, any such advantage quickly evaporated. Instead, many national reporters contended that Romney's "brainwashing" showed he was naive and easily swayed.

After that, Romney's campaign plunged from what already had become a steady slide. His candidacy had been wounded by Detroit's 1967 summer riots, a failure to galvanize Republican governors and conservatives behind him, and by his evangelistic style that turned off the national press and some of the public. His advisers hoped that the round-the-world tour would make Romney be seen as knowledgeable and decisive about world issues, especially Vietnam. He did receive generally good receptions from national leaders where he went and there were no new blunders, but it was too late.

Booth correspondents from the Lansing and Washington bureaus followed Romney to his last make-or-break battleground, the presidential primary in New Hampshire, set for March 12, 1968. Romney campaigned hard there throughout most of January and February in bitterly cold weather. Finally, his aides gave him the results of the latest polls, public and private, of voter preference in New Hampshire. The findings were not good.

On February 28, Romney called a press conference in Washington, D.C. Smiling and good-humored, he said his candidacy had not "won the wide acceptance" he had sought and he was withdrawing from the presidential race. Romney left the New Hampshire field to the only remaining official

candidate, Richard Nixon. Romney needled Nixon and lauded the other potential candidate, Nelson Rockefeller. Two days later, Romney returned home to Detroit, where supporters met him at the airport to give him a warm, if sad, welcome home. Romney flashed a broad smile and raised his hands in greeting while a small brass band played his favorite nonreligious song, "Stout Hearted Men."³² The crusade was over.

Romney and those of his troops who had visions of White House political plums dancing in their heads were not the only casualties of the aborted campaign. There was also a book written by Bill Kulsea. Kulsea spent several months on the Romney political biography, weaving in facts, perspectives and tales accumulated over the years while watching Romney firsthand. The book, though, also was a victim of timing. By the time the manuscript was finished, Romney's bright star had dimmed greatly, and publishers were reluctant to take a chance. In addition, T George Harris, Look magazine's senior editor, had published a biography, Romney's Way, a few months earlier, skimming whatever market there was by then.³³ No publisher was found for Kulsea's book, but the Booth papers ran a 30-part daily serialization of the manuscript. The serialization began six days after

³²Coté, "Cheers, Tears Greet Romney," Kalamazoo Gazette, 2 March 1968, p. 12.

³³T George Harris, Romney's Way (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

the "brainwashing" controversy broke.³⁴ It seemed unlikely that anyone in the Booth Bureau would get another opportunity to write a book in the foreseeable future.

After Romney withdrew from the national race, Booth reporters went back to their more mundane duties in covering the the State Capitol and preparing for the 1968 November election. In July, the bureau mobilized to prepare a package of stories called "Michigan Money Madness," detailing the increase in spending by lawmakers and state government generally over the first five years of the full-time Legislature. Lawmakers smarted, as did the Romney administration. While conceding that the stories, "with only a few minor technical exceptions," were factually accurate, State Budget Director Glenn S. Allen, Jr., issued a white paper protesting the tone of the articles. Actually, Allen insisted, the spending increases were reasonable and necessary to put the state on a sound financial basis and to meet the needs of a growing, changing population.³⁵ Kulsea gave the defenders a chance to make their case in print, while observing with satisfaction to Booth staffers that, "only a hit bird flutters."

³⁴William C. Kulsea, "The Angry Citizen--1," Ann Arbor News, 11 September 1967, p. 15.

³⁵Cote, "Series On State Spending Jolts Administration," Ann Arbor News, 26 July 1968.

Another Millionaire Governor Reigns

Even though it was Richard Nixon, not George Romney, who made it to the White House in the 1968 general election, Romney still was restless for some kind of national post. He had two more years to run in his statehouse term, but much of the challenge had gone out of the job. So when Nixon asked Romney to become the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the new administration, the governor accepted.

The governor's office then fell to the lieutenant governor, William G. Milliken. It was hard to predict then that the quiet 46-year-old governor would set a record as Michigan's longest-serving chief executive. Milliken, like Romney before him, had been a successful businessman. After graduating from Yale University and winning a Purple Heart while flying combat missions in the Army Air Corps in World War II, he had returned home to Traverse City to become president of a family-owned department store chain. He was elected to the state Senate twice, in 1960 and 1962. Millikin soon became one of the leaders of a group of moderate GOP senators who wanted to shake off the mossback image of Republicans in the upper chamber.

Romney asked Milliken to be his running mate in 1964 and was elected lieutenant governor in that race and in 1966. He became governor January 22, 1969, when Romney officially resigned. That gave Milliken two "free" years to become better known as governor until he had to run on his own in

1970. Milliken needed all that time. His name was not well known even after he assumed the governorship. Some letters to him came addressed to "George Milliken," "William Mennen," and various other combinations.

Milliken, however, soon demonstrated that he had a talent for putting people at ease and getting cooperation from political opponents. He was too liberal to suit many professional Republicans, but liberal enough to suit many independents and Democrats, including Coleman A. Young, Detroit's first black mayor and a former state senator himself. Milliken won his first race as governor in 1970 by only 44,409 votes over former Democrat state Senator Sander Levin, but settled in for a long stay after that. One reason for the projection of Milliken's Mr. Nice Guy image was the work of his low key, but skilled press secretary's crew. Heading that shop was George Weeks, a veteran newsman who had been a UPI diplomatic correspondent in South America. Along with Paul Weber, Williams' press secretary, Weeks and his associates became known for their smooth way of keeping the name and picture of their boss before the public without appearing obnoxious about it.

Milliken already was familiar with the Booth Bureau when he became governor in 1969. Bill Kulsea had covered him back in his state Senate days, with Bud Vestal and Bob Longstaff also observing him when he became lieutenant governor. Milliken and Kulsea liked each other, although the former

sometimes did not understand the Booth chief's ways: "Bill Kulsea was sometimes an enigma to me. He would come up to me in a hallway and ask an off-the-wall question. It was not to trick you, but to get a candid response, I'm sure. And he had a sly sense of humor, but he wouldn't let me off the hook on something."³⁶

Bud Vestal could be curt and tart in his writings and questioning of officeholders, but Milliken said he found Vestal to be "always polite and always knowledgeable, with, I think, some very definite opinions that he rarely let show." Bob Longstaff had the primary assignment to cover the Republicans and the governor's office, and Milliken found him "determined to be fair and as objective as he could, and I thought highly of him." Milliken especially was impressed that Longstaff would listen to him when the governor disagreed with some major point in a Longstaff story.

Milliken did not have the same regard while governor for some other State Capitol news bureaus, calling their performances "mixed": "Some were pretty shoddy, some were biased, some were superficial." The frequent turnovers among most of the other bureaus may have been one reason for a lack of thoroughness or continuity, Milliken speculated.

³⁶Interview (by phone) with William G. Milliken, Traverse City, Mich., office, 22 December 1985.

In 1972 John J. O'Connor, a reporter at the Grand Rapids Press, came to the bureau as a writer for what was a forerunner of a new "Booth News Service" (BNS). O'Connor and a photographer at the Grand Rapids Press were assigned to do Sunday features for the eight papers. They operated out of the Lansing Bureau, but developed stories throughout Michigan that did not necessarily involve state government. The internal feature service lasted for several months, but tailed off, with O'Connor gradually being absorbed into the regular bureau operations.

Later in 1972, Kulsea and Washington Bureau chief Ray Stephens launched the Booth News Service as a group wire service. The two bureaus' files were edited by Stephens and mailed out as a weekly package of stories to as many as fifty paying customers, including non-Booth papers, state officials and lobbyists. In July of 1978 the BNS administration was turned over to the Lansing Bureau, and, as other clients dropped out, was limited to seven non-Booth papers. BNS also handled a Citizens Band radio column that Cote wrote from February of 1976 to August of 1980. In addition to use by the Booth papers, the CB column was purchased for a time by the Oakland Press and by two small CB magazines in Michigan and Ohio. The remaining newspaper clients for the general BNS service eventually all dropped

out.³⁷

In December of 1984, however, the Oakland Press contacted the bureau and is now a paying customer for the daily bureau file. It is a happy arrangement for both Booth and the Oakland paper. The Press gets a service from an established, well-regarded State Capitol bureau without having all the expense of maintaining its own bureau. In return, Booth gains readership access to the Detroit metropolitan area and in particular to Oakland County, which now is the second most populous county in Michigan (1,004,884 residents at the latest count in 1983) and the highest in per-capita annual income (\$15,814).³⁸

The Booth News Service still exists, but now as an internal system which circulates stories written locally by the eight papers. Local editors select stories that are sent via computer to a BNS coordinator-editor, David Miller, who works out of an office at the Saginaw News. Miller edits the pieces for more general use and transmitted them to the papers.

³⁷There are indications since Booth dropped those BNS clients that smaller dailies and large weeklies still need and want specialized Lansing coverage. The Michigan State University School of Journalism operates a Capital News Service in which advanced journalism students write state government news for 19 papers. In fact, two of the former Booth News Service customers, the Traverse City Record Eagle and the Daily Mining Gazette (Houghton), take the MSU service and a third, the Cadillac Evening News, once did.

³⁸"What's Michigan's tiniest town? Abstract tells, and lots more," Lansing State Journal, 23 December 1985, p. 6B.

The Booth Bureau, meanwhile, was covering financial crises, special legislative sessions and bureaucratic proceedings in Lansing when a clumsy break-in at the Watergate Hotel early on June 17, 1972, in Washington, D.C., started a chain reaction that was to whip the bureau once again into the national scene. At first, President Nixon got through any serious problems because of the interrupted break-in and easily won re-election in 1972. Vice President Spiro Agnew, however, soon became the target of more than forty charges of conspiracy, bribery and tax fraud. He resigned October 10, 1973, and Nixon began seeking a new Vice President.

Nixon chose Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr., the Grand Rapids congressman whom Guy Jenkins had encouraged to run for the U.S. House twenty-five years earlier. He was sworn into office as Vice President on December 6, 1973, and instantly became the object of intense interest around the nation and world. The Watergate ripples were spreading against Nixon and it was clear that Ford might become President through Nixon's impeachment and conviction, his resignation or his death.

Ford had worked hard through the years, winning re-election thirteen times, and was minority leader of the House, a post of considerable power, when appointed by Nixon. He was little known, though, outside his West Michigan congressional district and Washington political

circles. Actually, Ford may have considered his appointment as Vice President to be a step down. Vice presidents generally have gotten little attention and, anyway, Ford had always wanted to be Speaker of the House.

Bill Kulsea surveyed the situation and saw that the time was ripe for a book on Ford--if it could be done quickly. Timing, as Kulsea had learned the hard way, was crucial in publishing a political biography, and this time a national publisher asked if someone within Booth could write the book. The Booth Lansing and Washington bureaus between them knew more about Jerry Ford than any other news operation anywhere. Kulsea proposed that the bureaus together serve as a seven-member team to research the book and share credit. One writer should, however, put the book together, Kulsea felt. Bud Vestal primarily covered the Democrats, but was from Ford's home base of Grand Rapids, knew that territory, and had known Ford somewhat since 1948. Vestal got the nod.

As it turned out, the only way to get the book written quickly was for Vestal to plunge in and do it, without waiting for detailed research help from the other Booth correspondents. Vestal turned out the book in 58 days, spending the final weeks holed up with his typewriter in a Washington hotel room. As Vestal finished a chapter, it was circulated among the Washington and Lansing Bureaus' members for editing and comments. The book was published in mid-1974

as Jerry Ford, Up Close: An Investigative Biography.³⁹ The book was not an "authorized" biography, although Ford and friends cooperated fully and all the photos were courtesy of the Ford family. It eventually was published in several other countries and languages and in a paperback edition. The Booth papers also published a condensed, serialized version. Interest in the book peaked after Nixon resigned and Ford was sworn in as President on August 9, 1974. It also was to be the peak of Bud Vestal's career and life.

"I'm a Ford, Not a Lincoln"

Ford's ascendancy to the White House brought the Booth papers a built-in news generator they had missed with Romney and other previous state politicians--a President of the United States from Michigan. Moreover, Ford was taking charge at a time of continued domestic political turmoil, economic problems and foreign crises. In other words, for news purposes, it was an excellent time.

The public, as Vestal said in his book, seemed to breathe "a national sigh of relief" when Ford became Vice President. The relief was still there when Nixon resigned. Nixon was removed and the man replacing him had a reputation for honesty, candor and humility. Ford also was known for

³⁹Bud Vestal, Jerry Ford, Up Close: An Investigative Biography (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1974).

running a hard-working, effective congressional staff that was a model in servicing constituent requests.

Ford had that going for him, but he also had a growing problem of convincing voters that he had the abilities for the job. The kindest thing some national writers said about him was that he was dull or plodding. Others questioned outright his intelligence, repeating a joke that he had been hit on the head one too many times without a helmet while playing on the University of Michigan football team thirty-nine years earlier. Columnists, cartoonists and comedians made fun when he bumped his head getting off an airplane and when he hit a golf-course spectator with a wayward drive.

Ford conceded that he was not an intellectual and that he did not have "charisma" or the gift of fancy speech. "I'm a Ford, not a Lincoln," he quipped just after his Capitol swearing-in ceremony as Vice President. "I will never be as eloquent."⁴⁰ But Ford said he did not mind being called a Midwestern square because, to him, that was a good label, implying a solid, honest, trustworthy citizen.

In spite of the sniping from the national press and political opponents, Ford still might have registered well with the majority of voters had it not been for his pardon of Richard Nixon. That, to many people, was a betrayal of their confidence. For some, Ford then became just another politician protecting his own. As the 1976 presidential

⁴⁰Vestal, Jerry Ford, p. 3.

campaign got rolling, it was clear that Ford would have a difficult time holding the office against Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter, who proclaimed that HE was not a politician.

Bud Vestal did not get the chance to see out that campaign. He had been feeling ill for some time, and in July of 1976 was told he had cancer of the liver. "Well, I guess I can't complain too much," he told friends. "I've had the chance to cover many interesting people, to travel around the world and to write a book." He died September 7, 1976, at age 56 of a heart attack brought on by the cancer.

Bill Kulsea wrote the obituary on behalf of the bureau. It was an unsentimental, straightforward story that Vestal might have chosen himself, noting his "reputation for penetrating and incisive newspaper stories" in his nineteen years with the bureau.⁴¹ Maury DeJonge, an old colleague at the Grand Rapids Press, wrote a Page 1 story mentioning that Vestal was regarded as a "tough" reporter who was not loved by many of his news sources. DeJonge also observed that Vestal had another side, as revealed in the moving story he did about visiting his son in Vietnam.⁴²

A non-Booth writer, John Teare of the Lansing State Journal, did a column a few days later noting Vestal's "unmistakably warty side" and that, "He drank and

⁴¹William C. Kulsea, "Journal Lansing reporter Dies," Flint Journal, 7 September 1976.

⁴²DeJonge, "Veteran Booth Newsman Dies."

could be intractable in his views." Teare commended the smoked too much, stayed up too late, reading sometimes, and "spare, dry way he wrote so effortlessly up to a point of often unexpected impact or meaning," and Vestal's attempt to "explain the dimensions of men's lives."⁴³

Bud had not wanted a funeral or memorial service, and his wife and son respected his wishes. The candid obituaries by his colleagues and peers would have to serve.

The rest of the Booth Bureau carried on, chronicling Ford's losing, but surprisingly close, campaign against Carter that November. The bureau returned to more typical coverage of Michigan-oriented stories.

Bill Kulsea Retires, Bob Longstaff Is Named

Another Lansing Bureau era ended that Dec. 31, 1976, when Bill Kulsea retired and Bob Longstaff was named chief. Kulsea, at mandatory retirement age of 65, ended 40 years of newspaper service, 37 years of that in Lansing. That even topped Guy Jenkin's 27 bureau years. The bureau's announcement story noted that Kulsea's byline had appeared on upwards of 10,000 stories, cited his reputation for fairness, accuracy and thoroughness, and listed some of his numerous awards and achievements over the years.⁴⁴

⁴³John Teare, "More to Tell," Lansing State Journal, 3 October 1976.

⁴⁴[Coté], "Kulsea Retiring After 40 Years, Bureau Chief Appointed," Ann Arbor News, 26 December 1976.

The career data and list of accomplishments were impressive in that story, but the newsman himself shown through more clearly in Kulsea's own valedictory column that appeared the same day.⁴⁵ He talked some about the nine governors and "seemingly endless stream" of legislatures he had seen over nearly four decades: Loren D. Dickinson, his second governor, was "a 79-year-old prohibitionist who claimed he had a 'pipeline to God' to help him govern the state." . . . Soapy Williams was "the champ" in years of service. . . . George Romney "fascinated the customers for nearly a decade with his evangelism and sincerity and national exposure." . . . "Milliken's final record is yet to be written."

Kulsea concentrated on two major themes that, at first blush, might seem contradictory: public officials have to be carefully watched, especially where money is concerned, and Michigan has generally had good governors and lawmakers. He noted that when he arrived in Lansing and for many years afterwards legislators were getting \$3 a day, and that "they were good, decent men and women, operating at a sacrifice." He rejected the idea that higher pay brings a better, more

⁴⁵William C. Kulsea, "Williams Was the Champ In This Writer's Career," Grand Rapids Press, 26 December 1976, p. 3-B.

honest legislator: "We hold to the notion that if a legislator has larceny in his heart no amount of pay can make an honest man of him." Such larceny has happened, he observed:

Minor rapes of the state treasury by conniving politicians have been a way of life around the statehouse for a generation, as they probably were a generation before that. But in the nearly four decades of state government only one major scandal has hit with a burst--the one-man grand jury probing legislative graft in the early 1940s. Yet even the most alert cannot be sure of what subterranean hanky-panky is going on now. Reporting is an endless vigil, if done properly.

The object of doing a reporting job "properly," Kulsea implied, is not to sell newspapers or air time:

We have learned the customers act wisely, often, when given the facts in a way they can understand them, and take the time and trouble to assimilate them. The media coverage is better than it used to be. Radio is more frequent. TV is sharper but short on complete coverage; newspapers, with two exceptions, don't depend on political news to sell newspapers. Most of them inform, educate, analyze, advise--in news stories and editorials. They'll get better.

Like saving souls, Kulsea said in effect, the reporter's job is never done, but an alert press and informed electorate can uproot crooks and fakers in government because, in general: "Michigan has been fortunate to have off and on a series of decent and honorable men running the executive and legislative branches of government." That was ten years ago, and Kulsea's assessment seems as valid today as then.

Bill Kulsea was the first Booth Lansing Bureau chief to retire on his feet, so several sendoffs were held by

colleagues and friends. Bureau members threw their own party and presented Kulsea and his wife Ann with an antique sea captain's telescope to use watching the ships sailing by their vacation home on Lake Michigan. Bud Vestal had found the telescope in New York City shortly before he became incapacitated.

The Booth company also held a party, with editors, managers and corporate executives coming to Lansing from throughout the Booth territories to salute Kulsea. They gave him a citizens band radio--secretly installed in his car a few hours before the event--for use on the Kulseas' travels. For a CB "handle," Kulsea chose "Easy Loafer." That was not a totally appropriate label because, while spending more time at his cottage and in traveling, Kulsea continued to write. He wrote a manuscript about humorous events and people at the Capitol over the years and still does freelance stories for several publications, including a monthly state-government column for the Michigan Business magazine. As long as interesting people and happenings continue, Kulsea is not likely to quit observing and writing about them. Kulsea still can be expected to amble up to a worried-looking new correspondent, or new governor, put an arm around the shoulder of the novice and whisper, "everything's going to be all right!"

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CHAPTER IV

NEW BUREAU CHIEF AND TECHNOLOGY RESHAPE BUREAU

The succession of 43-year-old Bob Longstaff to bureau chief brought a new generation to the helm of the Lansing Bureau. A native of Topeka, Kansas, Longstaff graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Kansas. He paid for college by working at various times as a truck driver, drugstore clerk and "soda jerk." In 1953-54 he was a general assignment reporter for the Topeka State Journal. He served in the U.S. Air Force in 1954-56 as a first lieutenant at a radar center in Minnesota. After discharge, he returned to the Topeka paper in 1956. Longstaff joined Booth in March of 1957 when he was hired by the Flint Journal as a medical and science reporter.

Although Longstaff won several awards for his reporting on medical matters, he became more interested in government and politics. After covering Flint local political and labor stories, he was sent to Lansing for the "couple of months" that stretched into two years off and on covering the Constitutional Convention. He was assigned to cover the Republican party and the Senate when brought back to the bureau on a regular basis in July of 1963.

Things did not look radically different to Longstaff from the driver's seat, but some old truths were intensified: "When I became chief I saw even more magnified the diversified nature of the papers and territories the bureau had to serve." That meant, he added, not only getting stories that were of direct local interest to the variety of papers, but also helping them in any little or big way they needed: "That's the real strength of a bureau such as the Booth Bureau. If there is one word that is most important to describe that bureau, I think it has to be service."¹

One of the first things Longstaff did when he became chief on January 1, 1977, was to hire another staffer to bring the bureau up to four correspondents, still one short of its authorized strength of five. Still at the bureau were Longstaff, John O'Connor and Bill Cote. This time, though, the new "man" turned out to be a woman, Nancy E. Dunn of the Ann Arbor News. She was the first woman to be regularly assigned to the bureau, although some female reporters had served temporary stints, especially Mary Wade of the Kalamazoo Gazette. Nancy Dunn had started reporting at her hometown Port Huron Times Herald before joining Booth in Ann Arbor. She quickly won a reputation in Lansing as a "workaholic" and as an aggressive, capable reporter. A few months later, in spring of 1977, John O'Connor was

¹Interview with Robert H. Longstaff, Bay City Times office, 16 September 1985.

transferred to the Washington Bureau. Replacing him was Daniel A. Koger, a Flint Journal political and medical writer.

Longstaff returned the bureau to more basic state government and political coverage and away from intensive national reporting. "After all," he explained later, "Romney and Ford--who had generated our increased coverage of the national scene--were gone and we had new people in the bureau anyway."² Longstaff stressed the service-bureau aspects of the operation.

In addition to the tradition of responding to requests quickly, the bureau also began holding more special conferences and workshops in Lansing for staffers from the Booth papers, including groups of editorial writers, news editors and education reporters. Bureau correspondents briefed the editors and writers on key issues. In addition, the bureau brought in to discuss their jobs various elected officials, including Governor Milliken, plus lobbyists, department heads, judges and others with whom the visiting editors might like to rub elbows.

The conferences served to give the editors a chance to get away from their desks, highlighted the bureau's expertise, and often generated lively news stories. The guest officials usually were happy to talk with representatives of so many outstate major newspapers.

²Longstaff interview.

The bureau again reached its full complement of five correspondents in November of 1977 with the hiring of Pete Plastrik, a reporter at the Kalamazoo Gazette. Plastrik, 25, was born in Paris, France, and spent much of his childhood in New York City. He received his bachelor's degree from Columbia University and a master's from the University of Michigan before joining the Gazette. The bureau beats to which Plastrik was assigned reflected the increased specialized reporting that was emerging: news of consumer interest, the energy situation, and the business and economic climate.

Plastrik joined the bureau just in time to participate in one of the most audacious projects the bureau had ever undertaken. Bureau members spent several weeks researching the performance of all 148 legislators in the House and Senate and came up with a list of the "Twelve Best" and "Twelve Worst" lawmakers in 1977. The product was a bombshell that the Booth papers published New Year's Day of 1978.³ In addition to the main story, the package featured separate articles on legislators the bureau considered "average," "comers," "power players," and "furniture." By using all those categories, the bureau incidentally included some assessment about all the legislators from Booth areas.

From the start of the research, the bureau staffers agreed on two things: the assessment, to be manageable,

³"Lawmakers face reporters' review," Flint Journal, 1 January 1978, p. B-1.

should be limited to what the legislators did or did not do in one year, 1977; and the lawmakers should be evaluated on their effectiveness, not on their personalities or whether they were generally liked or disliked by bureau members or anyone else.

The next consideration was how to measure legislative "effectiveness." After several staff brainstorming sessions, it was agreed effectiveness would be based on questions in four categories:

--Participation: Did the lawmaker follow through on his/her bills, both in committee (the heart of the legislative process) and in debate? Did he/she vote on the controversial bills?

--Representation: Did he/she keep in touch with the voters "back home" to keep them informed? Was he/she concerned with statewide issues as well as local matters? Did he/she use time and staff to help constituents? Was he/she in the hip pocket of lobbyists?

--Honesty-integrity: Was his/her word "good"? Could he/she be trusted by colleagues? Was his/her personal spending--expense accounts, committee trips, mailings--in line with other lawmakers and within the bounds of good taste? Did he/she engage in "porkbarrelling"?

--Power-Initiative: Did he/she use personal power for the good of the state and his/her district--or to further political ambitions? Did he/she do the necessary "homework"

on the bills in his/her area of expertise so he/she could influence legislation intelligently, rather than on raw power?

Those criteria resulted in some interesting evaluations, sometimes even surprising the bureau members themselves. For instance, confining the evaluations to one year sometimes resulted in the exclusion of some lawmakers from "the best" category even though they had made considerable achievements in years past. A scrutiny of those situations sometimes found a legislator simply had not been as active as usual for a few months. In other cases, it turned out some solons were still politically living on their old achievements and had been coasting for years. Another factor uncovered was that even though several of "the best" legislators were prominent and well known, others who fit the category went about their work quietly and seldom attracted much attention from the press.

The ratings were surprising to anyone who assumed that the Booth Bureau simply would choose conservative, Republican legislators from Booth areas to be among the "12 Best." Actually, seven of the "12 best" were Democrats, and six of the dozen were from non-Booth areas, including two Detroit Democrats. Among the "12 Worst" were four Republicans and eight Democrats, and four were from Booth areas.

Three of the "12 Worst," all Detroit Democrats, later served jail or prison time for criminal offenses. The crimes

included, individually, soliciting bribes to obtain a liquor license for a constituent, larceny through increasing the amounts on receipts submitted for an expense account, and knowingly driving a stolen Cadillac. The offenses for which they were convicted happened after the Booth survey, but the Booth Bureau took some satisfaction at having identified legislators who apparently were neither model citizens nor model lawmakers.

Reaction to the stories varied. Those who made one of the favorable categories allowed that the ratings were perceptive and fair. The others complained that the ratings were biased or that the criteria were unfair. The project also was an instance of how the bureau serves as a buffer between editors and the politicians from their areas. Some of the legislators put in the poor categories complained to their local Booth editors. In several of those cases, the editors clucked sympathetically and promised to talk with the bureau about it. When the editors did call, the conversation usually went something like this: "Gee, we have to live with those guys, but we're sure happy you took them on. It's hard for those of us back home to know what those people are really doing in Lansing. As it is, we can honestly tell them, 'well, you know how those Lansing correspondents are, and we don't have much control over them.'" The Booth Bureau has not done a comparable project since then, but legislators know that it is always a

possibility, and the research and reporting techniques were used in the next big bureau project.

The Detroit News flattered Booth by attempting a similar project a few months later. Instead of their own correspondents doing the ratings, however, the News sent questionnaires to a list of legislators, lobbyists and others. That method was advertised as being a more "scientific" survey than Booth had. Actually, it had more drawbacks because many persons did not respond and among those who did, it was impossible to know what ax a particular respondent had to grind.

Dan Koger left the bureau in September of 1978 to return to the Flint Journal and work part time on a doctorate in American Studies at Michigan State University. He was replaced by Robert Novosad, a reporter at the Grand Rapids Press, who was placed on the increasingly active environment beat.

Lobbyists Are the Next Booth Target

As dramatic and intriguing as was the ratings project, another effort under Longstaff one year later may have had longer-lasting relevance to readers' understanding of the underlying power machinery of Lansing. This package of stories analyzed the "fourth branch" of state government, the lobbyists. All eight Booth papers ran the lobbyist package, with the Flint Journal devoting an entire Sunday

Page 1 and inside section page to the six stories.⁴ The main story summarized the importance of lobbyists today, including these assessments:

Accountable only to their employers, lobbyists are part of the process that forms public policy and divides up the public pie of billions of tax dollars sent to Lansing by Michigan citizens, businesses and industries.

With their power, they mold, shape, change--even create or kill--laws that affect the everyday lives of citizens, the profit margins of businesses or working conditions of employes.

The study acknowledged that lobbyists have always been active in state government, citing the wild, lavish parties they threw and the many favors done for legislators going back into the 1920s. The stories then documented how lobbying and lobbyists have changed since those days. Now, the articles noted, the emphasis has shifted to campaign funds, fund-raisers, and political power through endorsements. Now, the Booth Bureau observed, lobbyists must lobby staff members and bureaucrats within the swollen state government as well as legislators.

Another recent lobbying phenomenon explored was the growth of powerful lobbyists representing many clients, creating "a small, elite class of lobbyists who have millions of dollars at their disposal." The stories detailed who those multi-client lobbyists were, their backgrounds, and how they functioned. Some lobbyists complained about the

⁴"Study finds state lobbyists powerful," Flint Journal, 31 December 1978, p. A-1.

stories, but most privately said something like, "the articles are okay by me; if my clients think I'm that powerful, that's great for my business!"

Soon after that, the Booth Bureau was the first to analyze the new "officeholders' accounts"--sometimes called "legal slushfunds"--that permitted legislators to collect private funds to spend on activities not allowed on their state expense accounts. "We probably succeeded in closing some loopholes and in prompting some legislators to turn back some of their funds," Longstaff said.⁵

People Change Along With the Technology

Newspaper people have a reputation, probably deserved, of being resistant to change. At a time when some journalists still preferred to use manual rather than electric typewriters, reporters were being told they had to get used to "interfacing" with computer things such as VDTs (video-display terminals), passwords and "hard copy." By early 1980, all eight Booth papers gradually had shifted over from "hot type," in which type is set from molten lead, to "cold type," which uses photographic engraving processes to form printing plates. Reporters' typewriters were replaced by VDTs.

⁵Longstaff interview.

The Lansing Bureau was one of the last Booth units to complete the transition to the computer age, although the bureau had been creeping up on it for several years. First, the AP Teletype was replaced by a balky punch-tape machine. Then came a Xerox Telecopier. Correspondents still had to type their stories on a manual or an electric typewriter, but then the pages were fed into the Telecopier and sent over a phone line to one of the papers, where someone would punch the bureau copy into a computer terminal that was hooked into the Booth Computer Division in Ann Arbor. The central computer then distributed the stories to all the papers.

Next was a hybrid system using a combination of machines made by Teletype and Michigan Bell Telephone Co. Stories were typed onto a tape that then fed them over the phone to the Computer Division and thence to the papers. It was a relatively slow method, but at least the bureau copy did not have to go through an intermediate retyping stage.

More modern video display terminals finally were used by the bureau in covering the 1976 Republican National Convention in Kansas City. Bob Longstaff got there before the rest of the bureau crew and helped set up the system. The dispatches first were transmitted back to Lansing and then retransmitted to the central Booth computer.

The bureau did not, however, get a late-model computer system designed specifically for newswriting by ordinary reporters until the Atex system went "on line" at the bureau

on June 8, 1980. Several VDTs were included so that staffers no longer had to wait in line to retype stories into a machine. Stories could be transmitted at the touch of a button to the Computer Division for immediate retransmission to the papers or kept temporarily within the bureau's own smaller computer for more editing. Bureau members had just enough time to get familiar with the new equipment when they took some of the system to the Republican National Convention in Detroit that August and then to the Democrats' National Convention in New York City a few weeks later. One can only wonder what Guy Jenkins would have thought--and bellowed--about the electronic gadgets.

The new equipment also allowed the bureau for the first time to quickly transmit a story at any time to any one of or all the papers. The technological timing was opportune because about that time the bureau began getting more requests for coverage of breaking stories, in spite of the admonitions over the years for the bureau not to duplicate the wires.

The requests were mainly the result of a circulation battle between the two Detroit dailies, who were aggressively starting or expanding outstate editions. Among the Booth papers, the Grand Rapids Press and the Flint Journal in particular now wanted major stories that would not be the same wire versions in their afternoon publications as the Detroit papers carried in the morning

editions hitting the outstate areas. The bureau gave the breaking stories more perspective and analysis than the wires usually did, but the changing situation presaged an examination of whether the bureau should recast a philosophy that had persisted--because of history, tradition and habit--for half a century.

Bob Novosad left the bureau in June of 1981, joining the Amway Corporation's public-relations staff in suburban Grand Rapids. Replacing him was James Kates, a Saginaw News reporter. In September of 1981 Bill Cote left the bureau after fifteen years to take a part-time teaching assistantship in journalism at Michigan State University and to work on a Ph.D. in American Studies. Michigan's severe recession was affecting even the Booth Newspapers by that time and a hiring freeze was placed on the Booth papers and bureaus. One result was that, contrary to expectations within the bureau, Cote's position was left vacant for several months. Just a few months later, Kates also left, becoming the third bureau member in a short time to leave for graduate studies at MSU.

Democrats Win Governor's Chair

Two events, one political and one internal, affected the bureau in late 1982 and early 1983. The first was the change in statehouse administrations. Milliken retired in 1982, ending his record-setting tenure of fourteen years. The state was in the dregs of the most severe recession since

the Great Depression, and Democrat James J. Blanchard was elected governor in November of 1982, ending the Republicans' twenty-year hold on the office. Blanchard was virtually unknown outside his Congressional seat in the Detroit suburbs until he helped lead the fight to get federal loan guarantees to bail out sinking Chrysler Corp. Republicans complained that that was Blanchard's only significant accomplishment. Perhaps so, but it was enough, coupled with a UAW-led campaign that talked about Blanchard's three main goals: "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs." Republicans contributed to their own defeat by nominating insurance executive Richard H. Headlee, who, among other foot-in-mouth miscues, angered women in both parties by saying lesbian feminists were among the chief advocates of the federal Equal Rights Amendment.

One of the first aides Blanchard selected for his new staff was Pete Plastrik, 31, who left the Booth Bureau after five years of service. Instead of putting Plastrik in a press-related job, however, Blanchard appointed him staff director of the governor's Cabinet Council on Jobs and Economic Development. Blanchard himself and most of his staff had little experience in Lansing politics and Plastrik's appointment was seen as a way of gaining some quick, savvy counsel.

The placement worked. Plastrik became one of the chief engineers of Blanchard's successful campaign in March of 1983 to increase the state income tax, raising extra money

to pay off a state-budget deficit and to restore funding slashes in many programs. Plastrik, working quietly behind the scenes, coordinated lobbying efforts with special-interest groups to pressure legislators to approve the tax hike. The Detroit Free Press even published a story on Plastrik's role in the tax battle, calling him "a power within the new administration."⁶

Longstaff Moves On

Just as the tax issue was being wrapped up, Bob Longstaff was appointed editor of the Bay City Times, after almost twenty years with the bureau as a regular member, including six as chief. He was the first Lansing Bureau chief or member to become a Booth editor. Named to replace Longstaff, effective March 16, 1983, was Ed Petykiewicz, a member of the Washington Bureau staff of the Newhouse News Service.⁷ Petykiewicz was, at 31, the youngest person to become a Booth Lansing Bureau chief. He had received a bachelor's degree in political science from St. John Fisher College and a master's in journalism from Marquette University. He began working at a non-Booth paper, the Midland Daily News, in 1974. He moved to Booth's Saginaw News in 1977, covering city hall and later becoming

⁶James N. Crutchfield, "Architect of tax vote gains status in Lansing," Detroit Free Press, 25 March 1983, p. 3A.

⁷"Booth Newspapers Appoints New Chief To Direct Lansing Bureau Operations," Grand Rapids Press, 8 March 1983.

the paper's chief investigative reporter.

After Newhouse had bought out Booth in 1976, the Booth Washington Bureau was folded into the Newhouse Bureau, and Petykiewicz was transferred there in 1981 as part of the regional reporting team covering the Michigan Congressional delegation. He was shifted to the Newhouse national staff eighteen months later.

The Longstaff and Petykiewicz appointments also were notable because they marked the organizational downgrading of the Lansing Bureau. After some forty years, the Lansing Bureau chief no longer was part of the Booth "executive group." In part, that merely meant the chief no longer would be in the regular joint business meetings of editors and publishers, and would lose some perquisites, such as a country-club membership and an annual "conference" at a resort. More importantly to the Lansing Bureau's function as a news operation, the change called into question whether the bureau would continue to have the independence and autonomous news judgment that apparently had served the papers well since Guy Jenkins came to Lansing in 1930.

To gauge the effects the changes have had on the Booth Lansing Bureau, one can examine the bureau's product and look at what is happening elsewhere in the Booth organization. First, the change in the Lansing Bureau's status was not an isolated move. After Newhouse named Weiner Veit as the new president of Booth, the former Grand Rapids Press editor made several changes that

tightened reigns throughout the organization. The Lansing Bureau, the Washington Bureau (as a "desk" within the Newhouse office) and the Booth News Service were each assigned to a "supervising editor." Muskegon Chronicle editor George Arwady was made the Lansing Bureau's supervising editor when Bob Longstaff moved to Bay City.

Ed Petykiewicz, who had worked at the Lansing Bureau from time to time on temporary assignment before becoming chief, said he also wanted to be sure he would have the traditional leeway and tools to do the job. He got that assurance, he said, when interviewed by two Booth editors before getting the job and immediately afterwards. In the pre-job interview, Petykiewicz said he believed the bureau should be very aggressive, more selective in choosing stories, not compete so much with the wire services, and continue to be "preeminent in servicing our papers' requests." After his appointment, the editors in turn urged him, he said, to emphasize service and the quality of reporting.⁸

That was the theory, but how has it worked in practice? Very well, Petykiewicz maintains. The bureau's supervising editor does have the say now in determining the application on the bureau of corporate policy, budgeting, long-term planning, and manpower. Petykiewicz said, however, that he

⁸Interview with Ed Petykiewicz, Booth Lansing Bureau office, 30 October 1985.

has never had a decision challenged or second-guessed by his superior and, "I've been able to take the bureau in the direction I want to go. I am very independent."

One of the reasons Petykiewicz said he was willing to leave the supposedly glamorous Washington press corps for Lansing was that "there is such an incestuous relationship in Washington between reporters and those they cover And I believe we can have more impact here as reporters than on the national scene." That impact, he said, has come from stories that tell readers about the workings or nonworkings of government that affect them, including in-depth stories on medical malpractice, Medicaid abortions, and parochial-school trends.

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the impact of the Petykiewicz bureau was the coverage of General Motors' search for a location for its planned new high-tech Saturn plant. The first that the residents of quiet little Spring Hill, Tennessee, knew that a elegant horse farm outside their town had won the GM prize was when their local papers printed a story quoting the Booth Newspapers Bureau out of Lansing, Michigan. The story was on Page 1 of every Booth paper on July 29, 1985. "Nashville, Tenn., has landed Saturn, but Michigan will get several of its small rings,"

said the story's lead.⁹

It was no lucky break that the Booth Bureau learned first who would get all the new jobs. Bureau staffers had worked for months researching and following the GM selection process. When GM announced its Spring Hill decision, Booth Bureau correspondent Lou Ransom already had arrived for his second trip to that town and was busily filing stories. In the weeks before the announcement, bureau stories explored how the plant would affect the possible sites, including one near Kalamazoo, and what it would mean to Michigan's economy in general to gain or lose Saturn. In the course of this coverage the bureau made solid contacts with ranking news sources, and when the winner was selected, Booth got the story first.

Petykiewicz still faces the same dilemma as Longstaff, Kulsea and Jenkins before him: How to ensure that bureau members and the staffs of the eight scattered papers remember that they are part of the same organization. The correspondents come from several papers and that helps somewhat, but after a while in Lansing the roots may be forgotten. As Petykiewicz puts it, in the bureau "you belong to everybody, but are not part of anybody."

⁹The lead of the Booth story took a bit of liberty in declaring that "Nashville" got Saturn. Actually, Spring Hill is about 25 miles from Nashville, and many Spring Hill residents perceive their distance from the big city as keenly as inhabitants of, say, Ann Arbor do from Detroit. Spring Hill's location was pinpointed later in the story.

One way the bureau is now tackling that problem is through a regular, rotating system of visiting reporters from the papers. Each visitor spends six weeks at the bureau, living in a furnished apartment maintained by the bureau near downtown. "It helps us at the bureau," Petykiewicz said, "by giving us an extra hand and making sure we don't forget who we're working for. It does the same for the papers so they don't forget we're here. And they learn how hard we work here!" The visitors carry out regular bureau duties for all the papers and in addition work on a special project to take back to their own paper when they leave. They also take back, it is hoped, an understanding of the bureau and what it can do for them.

"When I came back to Muskegon, instead of calling it the Booth Camp I started calling it the 'boot camp' because it was like going to an actual boot camp," said David Kolb, a Muskegon Chronicle reporter who had one of the duty tours. "It was kind of like being on a front line because of the competition. . . . You always have to hustle to get the story right away or you will be beaten. The adrenalin was really pumping."¹⁰

In spite of the admonition to Petykiewicz not to duplicate the wires, the type of competition Kolb referred to has led to sharply increased filing of stories under morning deadlines, something the bureau traditionally did

¹⁰Petykiewicz, untitled Memorandum for 1985 Booth Newspapers Annual Report, Booth Lansing Bureau Files, 28 October 1985, p. 3.

not often do because of tradition and lack of technology. Petykiewicz said that during the first ten months he was chief, the bureau was the first to file stories on nearly every major event, from budgets to tax rollbacks, to the governor's State of the State Address. During that period, the bureau also stepped up emphasis on covering the bureaucracy and in reporting stories beyond the Capitol, including the Port Huron union riot and the Indian gill-net controversy.¹¹

How well all the new methods are working is going to be subjective, depending on what a particular bureau member, or an editor or reporter back at the papers, believes the bureau is accomplishing. There is one, more objective, measure that does indicate the bureau's current product is, to use a common term around the bureau, "selling" well. An analysis of the number and percentage of bureau stories used by the eight papers shows interesting trends: the number of stories filed dropped, but the percentage of stories used increased considerably. Two periods were selected for comparison: March 15, 1982, through January 31, 1983, (the last ten months before Petykiewicz), and the comparable period of March 15, 1983, through January 31, 1984, (the first ten months under Petykiewicz):

In the 1982-83 period, the bureau filed 750 stories. During

¹¹Petykiewicz, "Lansing Bureau Report," Memorandum, Booth Lansing Bureau Files [n.d. but early 1984], p. 2.

the 1983-84 period, 545 stories were filed, a drop of 205 stories (27.3 percent). In the proportion of stories used, however, in the earlier period the eight papers used an average of 60.7 percent, ranging from a low of 51.4 percent (Muskegon) to a high of 71.2 percent (Flint). In the later period, the papers used an average of 75.7 percent, ranging from a low of 65.7 percent (Kalamazoo) to a high of 83 percent (Muskegon).

It could be theorized that the percentage increase in the bureau stories used might be attributable simply to the papers' having fewer stories from which to choose. An analysis, however, of the bureau stories that made Page 1 also shows a jump from one period to the next. During 1982-83, 35 percent (253 stories) of the stories made at least one front page, while 61 percent (334) made Page 1 in the following ten months.

The analysis thus apparently supports the contention that bureau correspondents could develop more major or exclusive stories if freed somewhat from the traditional expectation of each reporter's filing a set number of stories." He praised the Saturn-plant coverage as a good example of that course. His only reservation, he said, is that the bureau not become a wire service: "The bureau should be going after the deeper, more significant story; a story where you can use the background that has been built there, the

credibility and reputation of the bureau."¹²

There has been talk over the past several years that the Booth News Service might eventually be folded into the Lansing Bureated stories." He praised the Saturn-plant coverage as a good example of that course. His only reservation, he said, is that the bureau not become a wire service: "The bureau should be going after the deeper, more significant story; a story where you can use the background that has been built there, the credibility and reputation of the bureau."¹²

There has been talk over the past several years that the Booth News Service might eventually be folded into the Lansing Bureau. If that happens, Longstaff said the temptation may be to also turn the bureau into a more general wire service, "but I hope that temptation will not be followed because I believe the bureau is more valuable in its service and speciality talents."

Longstaff predicted at the time of the interview that the bureau would become more specialized, perhaps adding correspondents to concentrate on environmental and business matters. That, indeed, is what has been happening since then. Petykiewiz advertised nationally for an environmental writer, eventually hiring Wayne A. Schmidt, staff ecologist with the Michigan Conservative Clubs, a politically active

¹²Longstaff interview.

research and lobbying organization. Schmidt is the first correspondent without previous newspaper experience ever to be hired by the bureau. In this case, Petykiewicz said he made an exception to the rule because the new fulltime beat is highly specialized and Schmidt is an experienced writer who can pick up the necessary journalistic methods.

Petykiewicz also is now making plans for a full-time business correspondent, who probably will work much of the time out of the Detroit area, where the headquarters of most of Michigan's business and industry giants are concentrated.

All of the other current bureau reporters have gone through more traditional journalistic hoops, even though the staff has changed more rapidly in the past ten years than anytime in its history. In addition to Petykiewicz, the other three staffers are, or have been, reporters at Booth papers: David Waymire, the Flint Journal; Mark Hornbeck, Kalamazoo Gazette; and Jerry Morlock, the Grand Rapids Press and the Kansas City Star. The office manager is Carol Cruz, who makes it possible for the correspondents to get their work done.

All of those present and future Booth correspondents also will be covering more regional stories around the Great Lakes states and Canada. Beyond that, Petykiewicz said he foresees even more aggressive coverage on a still more selective basis, with more stories done on deadline. Times and technology are changing at a rapid rate and so must the Booth Lansing Bureau.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Booth Bureau Is Changing Rapidly: Are All the Changes Desirable?

A former journalism professor at Michigan State University recalls that when he was a working journalist strangers would ask him at a social gathering what he did for a living. He would reply that he was a newspaper reporter. "Oh, you must meet such interesting people in your job," they would say. "Yes," he would answer, "and most of them are newspaperpeople." That usually generated puzzled looks, but George A. Hough III was right. He was not being arrogant or snobbish. Some of the people he had in mind were not models of virtue. Some he did not like personally. Nevertheless, they were colorful, interesting persons.

The same holds true in this history of the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau. Several ways might have served logically to organize the narrative, including grouping chapters by historical events (the Depression, wars, etc.) or--adopting the pattern often used in telling national history by presidential administrations--by governors. The best way, however, seemed to be to organize the history mainly around the times and deeds of the four bureau chiefs. Partly, this was a matter of convenience.

The first two bureau chiefs, Guy Jenkins and Bill Kulsea, alone spanned nearly half a century in Lansing. They were constants in a world that otherwise was changing around them.

In addition to chronological convenience, using the four bureau chiefs as the prime organizational focuses proved a useful way to mark periods of change in the technology and techniques of reporting the Lansing scene. Each chief tended to preside over the development of one era and leave at about the time another period was taking hold. Finally, as implied, in a world filled with interesting politicians, hangerson, lobbyists and scalawags, the Booth chiefs held their own as interesting characters.

Summary

In one way it is remarkable that the Booth Bureau did generate so many individualistic correspondents because the parent firm and the man who was its main founder were not colorful or eccentric types. George Gough Booth was a cautious, conservative businessman who happened to choose newspaper publishing as his business. Booth was an excellent financial planner and, starting in the 1880s, methodically bought and consolidated newspapers scattered across outstate Michigan. He tried to make each one a model of modern efficiency for the time, in facilities and organization.

If there was anything that might be considered eccentric about George Booth, it was that he was not eccentric. At a time when chain newspaper publishers such as

Hearst and Scripps were famous or infamous for their personalities, Booth stayed out of the limelight and counted his money. There was no doubt that his was a family business, but once the company was well established, the papers were run by editors and managers from outside the family.

Similarly, George Booth did not meddle in local editorial policies. His personal correspondence and other papers show his conviction that an owner should not sit in Detroit and tell editors elsewhere what stories to cover, what community projects to support or oppose, or which politicians to endorse. Each Booth paper, he said, should reflect its community and work for the betterment of that community. That, he said, was good business as well as civic responsibility. The formula seemed to work as the eight or, for a brief period, nine papers prospered even though the communities they served varied widely in geography, people and attitudes.

Some strategies, however, do not travel well. The Booth corporation began having troubles sparked in Michigan and elsewhere when it bought properties in other states, including a television station in Indiana, a small chain of weeklies in the Cleveland area, and the national Parade magazine. As the original Booth-family members died out, the younger generations and outside stockholders cared more about getting faster and bigger profits than about

maintaining the organization. Finally, the company went to the highest bidder, Samuel Newhouse, another practical, quiet businessman leading a family operation. Newhouse, like George Booth, kept a close watch on the bottom line and was willing to let others make the day-to-day news and business decisions for his new Michigan properties.

The Booth Lansing Bureau, almost from the start, was a reflection of the let-them-alone philosophy. Fred Grimes, the first correspondent who wrote from Lansing regularly for all the Booth papers, was tied fairly closely to the directives of his home Grand Rapids Press during the 1920s, but he was not considered a "bureau chief." When Guy Jenkins was plucked from the Saginaw News in 1930 as the first true Booth bureau chief, he brought with him a general mandate to serve all the Booth papers, but without tight reins put on him by any particular editor or corporate executive. Indeed, he eventually was made a formal member of the Booth "executive group" and as such carried the same rank as an editor or manager.

Much of what follows bears the personal inprint of the writer. After serving fifteen years at the Booth Lansing Bureau, it would be exceedingly difficult--and perhaps not even desirable--for the writer to ignore all of his own observations and feelings. The history of the Lansing Bureau, after all, is based on the people involved and how they responded to the job and times. To evoke a picture and interpretation of the history it often was necessary to rely

on interviews with the people involved or, when it was too late for that, on the observations and recollections of those who were around them. Similarly, the writer sometimes had to interview himself.

The most widely known Booth correspondent undoubtedly was Guy Jenkins. In his physical appearance, talk and reporting he reflected an age of colorful, personal journalism that has disappeared from the American scene. Even his photograph (see Appendix) is straight out of casting for a Hollywood movie--the piercing eyes, the craggy jaw, the pinstripped suit, with a liquor bottle and playing cards before him on the House Pressroom table. His voice boomed and so did his writing. A journalism professor today probably would flunk Jenkins for his poor grammar, not to mention his undisguised, opinionated commentary. Even when an old adversary (as he saw it) died, Jenkins did not soften much of his criticism in a political postmortem. (See Appendix for Jenkins column on former Governor Kim Sigler.)

If Jenkins had not served in Lansing, however, many pompous and some crooked politicians might have escaped public attention and censure. Jenkins tended to lash most vigorously the persons he believed could take it, not the small fry of politics and government. Even when he did score a hit on a legitimate political target of opportunity, he then would worry how the politician's innocent family would fare, recalled his successor, Bill Kulsea. Jenkins also was

careful to ensure that a Booth staffer, if not himself, got both sides of a story.

Jenkins' death in 1957 did not, though, mean an end by the Booth Bureau of blasting politicians. Under Bill Kulsea, the attacks perhaps were written in more gentlemanly language and were more interpretative, but many individual officials and groups still were tackled enthusiastically. Such offerings as the "Michigan Money Madness" series of stories in 1968 about state-government spending drew squeals from officials even though the articles mainly outlined the gluttonous financial appetites of state-government institutions, rather than individuals. Under the next bureau chief, Bob Longstaff, the bureau tradition of investigative and analytical journalism continued with a package of stories about the "12 Best" and "12 Worst" legislators, complete with labels such as the "do-nothings" and "furniture." Even Jenkins would have enjoyed many of the comments and sketches, as he would have liked the package of stories a year later investigating the power of lobbyists.

The bureau's coverage of "Con Con," the state constitutional convention, 1961-63, was a reflection not only of Booth's tradition of aggressive, interpretive reporting, but also of a recognition that major changes in Michigan and state government were forming. Basically, Michigan was going from a state characterized mainly by small towns and farms to one reflected chiefly by cities and suburbs. For month after tedious month, the bureau devoted

extensive space and time in trying to explain what the convention was doing and why. The coverage probably was, in part, a nod to the old journalistic saying that "a good newspaper has the duty to tell readers not only what they want to know, but also what they need to know." That idea alone, however, can result in reporting that is too long and dull to keep many readers. The bureau challenged that potential problem by putting the convention coverage in understandable language and wrapping much of it around the personalities of the people developing the state's new supreme law. The Con-Con coverage was a prime example of what Bill Kulsea referred to as "history in the making" or "history on the wing."

One way to try to explain the working conditions of Booth correspondents is to reconstruct a fairly typical "diary" of a bureau working day in the late 1960s:

9 A.M.--Report for work at the House Pressroom. Check announcements and press releases to see if any pertain to interests of the Booth papers. Wait for governor's press conference, set for 10 A.M....In meantime, Booth men are challenged to a "quick game" of pitch at the round table by Detroit news reporter. A fourth player is needed, so pressroom manager Eddie Augenstein fills in. "All right, it's the Boothies against the world!", Bud Vestal cries with a mock snarl. Game surges back and forth for an hour, ending with some profane dispute over who won the last trick. About

seventy-five cents changes hands.

10 A.M.--Governor's press conference. Romney not expected to announce any blockbusters, but all Booth correspondents are there, just in case. Room is more crowded and reporters more unruly than a few years earlier before TV cameras became regular features. TV and radio reporters don't follow old tradition of letting senior members of press corps (Booth's Bill Kulsea and Detroit News' Carl Rudow) open and close the conference. Some TV and radio reporters don't even know, or care, who Kulsea and Rudow are. AP and UPI wire reporters cover conference in shifts, with each bureau sending someone back to Teletype every now and then to move a new lead for conference stories, while others stay to pick up any other worthy comments.

11 A.M.--Booth reporters walk to office in Bank of Lansing Building a block away to talk over what, if anything, they can develop out of press conference to put on bureau wire that night. Wires, radio and TV will have skimmed off any obvious stuff, so what's still "new" for next day? Kulsea notes that Romney vaguely mentioned cutting down on his presidential "exploration" trips around the nation. Supposedly because his hand is needed more at the helm in Lansing. Are there more compelling reasons? Everyone told to check out angles on that.

Noon--Booth staff drifts over to Gas Buggy Room of Jack Tar Hotel, a favorite gathering spot for politicians and reporters, for lunch. Kulsea can see practically whole

room--and who's there--from his favorite seat. Assorted legislators, lobbyists, drop by to whisper in Kulsea's ear or exchange jokes. Food arrives, with Booth crew complaining, as usual, about it. "We've got to stop eating here," someone says for the thousandth time. Others nod, keep eating.

1:15 P.M. or so--Staffers drift away to Capitol or office to start tracking down Romney angles, other stories. Kulsea remains a bit longer to talk with an old acquaintance who obviously wants to tell him something privately.

2 P.M.--Two staffers attend Senate and House sessions. Both chambers break soon for party caucuses. Another pitch game--or is it the same one continued?--forms while everyone waits for caucuses to end. . . . Chambers reconvene. Senate lasts only a few minutes before recessing for the day. House goes back in session for longer, milling around for an hour before calling it quits. Nothing good out of floor sessions, but both Booth reporters come up with story ideas from talking in corridors with legislators who didn't like what went on in their caucuses.

4 P.M.--Nearly everyone has found a piece for the Booth wire. Looks like everybody may get out of office by 6 or so, for a change. . . . Phone rings at 4:55, with a source returning a call that had been placed at 11 A.M. Results in best story of day, but some reporters will have to go out and buttonhole legislators, others at known watering holes

to confirm, add to piece. There goes early checkout. Some staffers leave by 7 or so; others can't reach people for a while, so they go to dinner--steak, on the bureau--nearby and return by 8 to make final calls, write stories, finally leave for home about 10. . . . Tomorrow, two staffers will leave office early to cover Democratic state party convention in Detroit. That'll take up most of weekend. No extra pay for weekend work, but Kulsea tells traveling men to come in late Monday. Next weekend, others will cover Republican convention in Grand Rapids. Kulsea plans to drop in on both conventions "just to touch some bases and see some guys." So ends the Booth Bureau day.

That was a representative day for many Booth Lansing correspondents during many days. The hours were long, uncertain, and ranged between numbing boredom and frantic work. Anyone outside the bureau--especially friends and spouses--who knew about those working conditions for the Booth bureau sometimes would ask a correspondent, "why do you do it?" The answer might be serious or flip, but it usually was unsatisfactory to both the questioner and the respondent, such as: "It's like watching the circus in town all the time." Or, "Where else could you have so much fun?" Or, "Oh, sometimes you feel you can make a mark on things." If a staffer complained, good-naturedly or otherwise, about a particularly fatiguing assignment, Kulsea might say with a chuckle, "Remember, you asked for work when you came here!" The reporter might reply, "Where does it say that, exactly,

in my contract?" (There was no contract, of course).

Money certainly was not the biggest factor in luring or keeping Booth correspondents. The bureau had a reputation for paying well, but that was partly because of the low rates paid many members of other Capitol bureaus. Salaries were kept confidential even within the bureau, but the most an experienced staffer other than the bureau chief might make in, say, about 1980, was perhaps \$28,000 to \$32,000 yearly--something like what a lower-level news executive such as a city editor drew back at one of the Booth papers. Overtime pay was not frequent, and staffers sometimes would avow, only half jokingly, that if their hours were divided into their pay, they often were getting less than the federal minimum wage. Under the current organization, the starting salary for a Booth Lansing Bureau correspondent ranges anywhere from about \$27,000 to \$35,000 annually, according to Bureau Chief Ed Petykiewicz.¹

If money was not the big attraction for Booth correspondents, perhaps it was what might be called the psychic paycheck. Every reporter, on every newspaper from the smallest country weekly through the biggest metropolitan daily or bureau, knows he is being paid partly in bylines. It has always been so. There is something satisfying to the ego to see one's name over a story, whether it is about a

¹Interview with Ed Petykiewicz, Booth Lansing Bureau chief, Lansing, Michigan, 2 December 1985.

150-pound pumpkin raised by a local kid or an exclusive on the resignation of a president of the United States.

Lansing furnishes many opportunities for such ego balm, for a Booth reporter or other correspondent. The governor calls you by your first name. Legislative leaders, lobbyists and other powerful people whisper in your ear and give you a tip or want--so they say--your counsel. You are, in short, "in the know" and known. Reporters are alleged to be cynical and suspicious. Those are necessary attributes for someone trying to sift through the reams of propaganda and theatrics encountered every day in covering the Capitol. Many correspondents, though, mask a streak of idealism, however bruised. In an increasingly complicated world of big government, big business and big labor, you can feel that perhaps you are making a difference, that something you report may help clean up or improve government and better the lot of citizens. Whether a reader fifty miles away from Lansing perceives your product the same way is another matter.

Former correspondents and former politicians learn how fleeting that aura of power is once they leave office or a news job. An ex-reporter may hang around Lansing as a public-relations agent (frequently called "flack" by the still-working journalists) for a private group or a governmental agency. Some ex-lawmakers join or form a successful lobbying firm and wield more political clout than

before, but they more often end up as an employee of former legislative colleagues or in an invisible job somewhere in the state bureaucracy catacombs. The pay may be higher than the reporter or legislator ever drew, but the old sense of power and deference shown them evaporate. As Bill Kulsea would say, "once you're gone, you're gone, even if you're still here." Such is the lure and habit of Lansing that many remain, even under those circumstances. In Washington, a similiar pattern is called "Potomac fever."

There must be, or at least was, a similar fever in Lansing because many Booth correspondents stayed for years. There also must have been a loyalty and job-satisfaction factor because nearly every Booth bureau member was, from time to time, offered a better-paying job with a politician, state agency, or a competing news organization. Some did take the offers, but most stayed. For example, in the ten-year period from mid-1966 to mid-1976 there was only one personnel change in the Lansing Bureau, and that was to add one member. By contrast, the longest any member of the current staff has been with the bureau is about three and a half years, and there have been five comings and goings alone in the twelve months from early 1985 to early 1986.

In part, the Booth turnover situation is typical of what has been happening in the Lansing Press Corps in general. The old situation is obvious to anyone who visits the Michigan Newsmen's Hall of Fame on the overfloor of the

House Pressroom. More commonly called "the Rogues' Gallery," it simply is a collection of framed photographs of about 25 former State Capitol reporters who either served at least five years in the press corps or died on the job. Most of the pictures are of middle-aged men. All are white. There is just one woman.² Several more correspondents have qualified for inclusion since the last "hanging," but there has not been much interest in updating the gallery recently.

There also is a picture in the gallery of a balding, mild-looking men who never worked a day as a journalist, but who for many years was the alter ego of everyone in the the Press Corps. He was Eddie Augenstein, pressroom manager for some thirty-four years before he retired in 1977--a term of service in the Press Corps second only to Bill Kulsea's thirty-seven years. Eddie was paid by the Legislature, but was a friend and confidant to decades of reporters. Somehow he managed the delicate balancing act of satisfying his legislative employers while sticking up for reporters who might be attacking them. Stories about Eddie are legendary; many of the tales are even true. Eddie got more than one reporter out of a jam, including one drunken Detroit correspondent who was hiding under a hotel bed when Augenstein yanked him out and told him his editors said he was fired if he did not meet the next deadline. He made the

²The lone woman in the Michigan Newsmen's Hall of Fame is Carole Eberly, formerly a United Press International Lansing Bureau correspondent and now an instructor in the Michigan State University School of Journalism.

deadline, at least that time.

Augenstein was one of the potentially most powerful persons in state government because he knew so many dark secrets about reporters and politicians. The fact, however, that he served out his job until retirement indicates that he did not get crossways of powerful people often--or that they were afraid to do anything to him if he did. When a few disgruntled legislators did try once to block a proposed salary hike for Eddie, Press Corps members quietly put on the heat by buttonholing individual legislators until the raise was approved. He played thousands of games of pitch at the pressroom's round table through the years, winning enough so that he could not be accused of running a "customer's game," as some lobbyists did with legislators and reporters in games elsewhere.

Parking places behind the Capitol are at a premium, and who has one and how close it is to the door is an indicator of someone's importance. Eddie's reserved place was next to the governor's spot. When Eddie died in 1980, the governor, current and former reporters, lobbyists and legislative employees attended his funeral, and a scholarship fund for journalism students was started in his name at Michigan State University.³

³The Augenstein Memorial Scholarship is awarded annually to an alumnus of the Capital News Service (CNS) program in Michigan State University's School of Journalism.

The pressroom atmosphere is vastly different now than in Eddie Augenstein's days. Gone are the round cardtable and the pitch players who once congregated around it and in other gathering places. "Pitch playing is nonexistent today," said Wes Thorp, Augenstein's successor as pressroom manager. "If you interviewed everyone in the Press Corps today and asked them about pitch, probably nine-tenths wouldn't know what you're talking about."

Thorp, who has been pressroom manager since early 1977, said the composition and attitudes of the reporters are sharply different from when he came to the Capitol in 1972 as a Panax Newspapers correspondent. The reporters are younger and while there was just one female fulltime correspondent when he arrived, the ratio now is about half and half, he said.⁴ While there were only one or two television crews regularly covering Capitol events fourteen years ago, nine to eleven often show up now, he estimated.

"It's a whole new generation of reporters here," Thorp said. "They view things more as a job. In the old days, it was viewed more like an avocation and there was more socialization among members. When they go home now, most of them socialize with other friends outside the Press Corps

⁴Actually, the State Capitol Press Corps list of accredited correspondents, updated 26 February 1986, shows that only about 31 percent of the 33 reporters considered full time are female, although women are chiefs of two of the biggest bureaus, the Associated Press and the Detroit News. Of the five biggest bureaus, only Booth did not have at least one woman.

and Capitol."⁵

Thorp and the reporters still do, occasionally, join ranks to protect some Press Corps traditions. A House leader tried in 1983 ago to get rid of a pressroom window that is plastered with an assortment of political bumper stickers that the legislator considered unsightly. Reporters protested, stories about the battle went out on the wires, and the display was saved.⁶

It is clear, then, that the changes in the composition of the Booth Lansing Bureau are part of a larger picture: State government has grown and all of the Press Corps has grown and changed. It would be impossible for the Booth Bureau not to change, too. The Booth correspondents thus are, on average, younger and specializing more than were their predecessors of, say, ten to fifteen years ago. That seems inevitable if the Booth papers are to keep up with the times.

What may not be as inevitable or desirable is any long-term change in the "memory" of the bureau. In addition to being aggressive and digging, the Booth attributes most often cited by those interviewed for this study were the bureau's persistence, sense of history and perspective.

⁵Interview with Wes Thorp, House Pressroom manager, Lansing, Michigan, 2 December 1985.

⁶See "Press corps battles to protect untidy political 'documentary,' Lansing State Journal, 24 July 1983, p. 8B.

Even politicians and lobbyists who were targets of Booth investigations generally gave staffers good marks for doing their homework and putting it in a background. A practical consideration also is that it simply takes some time to learn the people and ways of Lansing. Booth Bureau chiefs used to estimate that it took perhaps three years before a new staffer was of full use. There is no guarantee that a correspondent with, say, thirteen years of experience, automatically will be a better or more productive reporter than one with two years, but the odds do favor experience to some degree.

Now, however, the Booth staff is changing as rapidly as those of other bureaus criticized by observers. If the bureau continues to experience the frequent turnover rate of the past few years, it may be impossible to maintain that sense of continuity and history. That would be especially unfortunate at a time when taxpayers and voters need more, not less, perspective to understand a rapidly changing world.

The situation is even more worrisome now that each of the eight Booth papers takes only one or the other of the two major wire services. One of them, United Press International, has been on the edge of bankruptcy several times and if it should fail, the possible basic news sources left to papers and readers for public-affairs news would narrow still further. Loss of one of the major wire services

also would affect news on radio and television because most local stations get their state news from the broadcast files of UPI or AP. Many surveys have shown that the majority of citizens rely most today on television for their news so the narrowing of sources is further compounded if one of the wire services disappears.⁷

Recommendations

With all those factors in mind, some recommendations may be useful. On a technical matter, the bureau should consider modifying the computerized filing system now that actual clippings of stories are not kept. A revised computer program could include headline and page information from at least one of the papers using a story. The bureau recently has begun keeping a typed index card for each story with the lead paragraph of a story, and perhaps that information also could be incorporated electronically into the computer system. That would combine the speed and convenience of the computer with the more detailed publishing information of the old file system.

More importantly, the bureau might re-evaluate whether there are additional ways to not only get but keep good correspondents. Bureau Chief Ed Petykiewicz said in a follow-up interview that he was not concerned, at that

⁷See Kristine Portnoy, "Blanchard is big winner in new poll: Survey addresses 13 issues," Tuscola County (Mich.) Advertiser, 2 February 1986, p. A1.

point, about the turnover rate "It is good," he said, "to continue getting infusions of fresh blood. We get new people who are enthusiastic, and that's good for us. I also don't want to stand in the way of people who get a chance for a better job." In fact, Petykiewicz said, the chief difficulty in the turnover from his administrative perspective has been the time he must spend searching for and interviewing new staffers. That, he said, cuts down on the time he has to sit back and think about what the bureau should be doing. He expects that the bureau will remain relatively stable through at least 1986.⁸

Petykiewicz no doubt is correct that fresh blood is important. He did not say it, but the stability of the bureau in previous periods was not automatically desirable. Correspondents had to fight against any tendency to be so complacent or jaded that they did not explore other ways of tackling the beat. Nevertheless, constant staff turnover is draining on a State Capitol bureau and, as Petykiewicz found, makes it more difficult to plan or to carry out long-term projects. Such turnover might have made it impossible, for example, for the bureau to do the comprehensive, interpretive job it did in covering the state Constitutional Convention.

The ideal answer to the stability-turnover situation would be a better mix of newer and more experienced

⁸Interview with Ed Petykiewicz, Lansing, Michigan, 2 February 1986.

correspondents who could help balance each other in perspective and freshness. That, of course, is easier said than done. A step in that direction is the already-described program in which promising reporters from the Booth papers are rotated to the Lansing Bureau for a certain period of reporting and then go back to their home papers. Besides serving staffing and internal public-relations purposes, the rotation also gives prospective bureau members a better idea of whether the Lansing life is for them.

Filling more bureau openings with reporters from within the Booth group also might help to attract and retain correspondents who have a strong personal investment in Michigan generally and in Booth in particular. The disadvantage of that method is that it would reduce the nationwide pool of prospective reporters to fill the increasingly specialized bureau beats. On the other hand, it would not be of lasting help to the bureau--or to readers--to choose future new correspondents who are likely to "jump ship" for a little bigger paycheck or a byline on bigger papers.

Salaries, incidentally, must be competitive enough to entice and satisfy the newer generation of journalists for whom a psychic paycheck is not enough. It may irritate those from older generations that a star baseball player or star reporter is not more content with a "reasonable" salary, but it is a fact of economic life that must be faced. Booth salaries still are good compared with most newspapers and

their bureaus, but if the Booth Bureau is to compete for reporters with Detroit and out-of-state metropolitan papers, pay must be comparable to them, not just to industry averages. Otherwise, the Booth Bureau runs the danger of becoming simply a brief way station on the career road of the best writers.

The Booth Newspapers has a policy of encouraging the hiring of more women and minority reporters, so it is somewhat surprising that this has not been reflected more at the Lansing Bureau. The bureau always has had a mixture of correspondents from diverse ethnic and religious groups, but there has been only one regular female staffer and one black reporter, and both of them are gone now. The chief reason for the absence of minority reporters may be the usual problem that newspapers have in hiring more blacks and other minority staffers: Few are journalists to begin with, and many of them who do go in the field are hired away at higher salaries by business and industry.

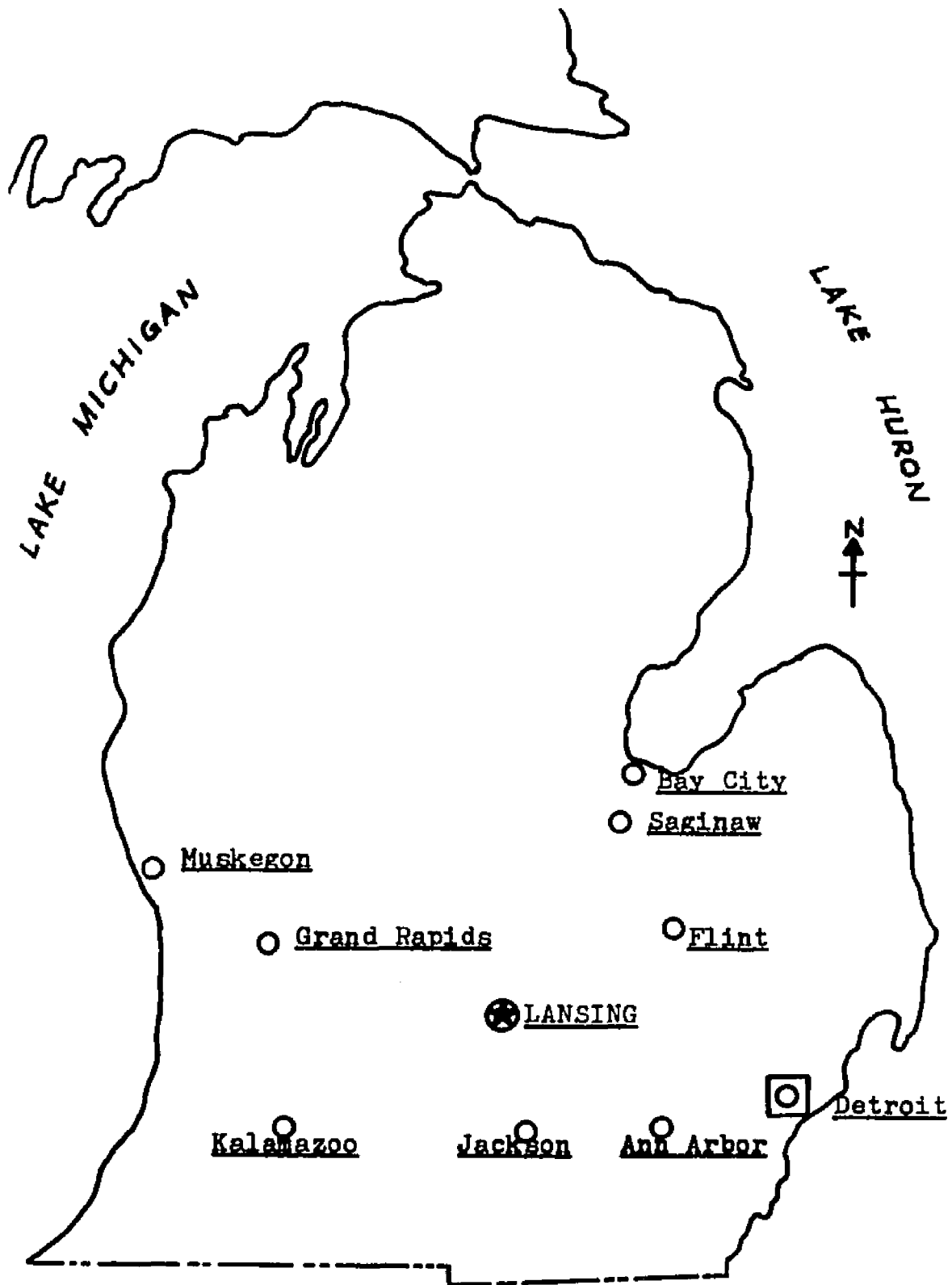
Perhaps it is time for Booth and other news corporations to work more closely with college journalism programs in finding more minority students who have writing talent. To be most effective, such efforts should include support both at the corporate level and in the home areas of the individual newspapers. That means more financial help for scholarships and more professional liaison efforts locally to show students what the trade is like.

The absence of more female staffers at the Lansing Bureau and in higher ranks at newspapers generally is another matter. Two-thirds of the School of Journalism graduates at Michigan State University, for instance, are female.⁹ The long hours and male-preserve traditions in the press corps, however, have worked against more newswomen having careers in Lansing. Perhaps a lasting trend finally is catching hold. Women now are chiefs of two of the major State Capitol bureaus, for the Associated Press and the Detroit News, and most of the other bureaus have female reporters.

In sum, the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau's reputation as an elite operation has been the result of a combination of people, financial support and philosophy over more than five decades. The final judges of the success of that unusual combination are the readers, who should expect their papers to help them understand what is happening in that strange land of Lansing. New technology can enable the Booth correspondents to do a faster and, potentially, better reporting job. No computer, though, can interpret whether taxpayers should be jubilated or alarmed by a smirk crossing a legislator's face. For that, Booth correspondents will have to continue watching and probing.

⁹See "Annual Placement Report 1985," Michigan State University School of Journalism, 1985.

APPENDIX A



Appendix A. Locations of the eight Booth newspapers in relationship to Lansing and Detroit.

APPENDIX B



Appendix B. Photographed at House Pressroom, c. 1940

APPENDIX C

State Political Gossip: MICH. BIOG. MICHIGAN STATE LIBRARY CLIPPING DEPT.

Gov. Kim Sigler Was Only One of His Kind

(By Guy H. Jenkins.)

LANSING—Kim Sigler will be remembered as the political skyrocket of Michigan.

To become governor, he went sky high, spewing brilliantly colored sparks all the way. Then came the fadeout.

It's been a long time since the days of Stevens T. Mason, Michigan's first governor. But in that period of more than 100 years there has been only one Kim Sigler. The future may never produce another like him.

Kim Sigler's spectacular rise in Republican politics began back in 1943 when he was named special prosecutor by Judge Leland W. Carr, then sitting as a one-man grand juror.

CARR, SIGLER GAIN POLITICAL PROMINENCE

Their work as inquisitor and as prosecutor did much for both politically. Today Judge Carr sits as a member of the Michigan supreme court. Sigler became governor.

Kim Sigler is dead. He was the victim of an airplane crash Nov. 30, 1953.

He left a record in state government that will not soon be forgotten.

It was in the administration of Gov. Harry F. Kelly and Attorney General Herbert J. Rushton that ugly stories were told about the lack of integrity among certain legislators.

Money was being spent rather lavishly to influence legislation.

Rushton, after a preliminary investigation which was limited because Michigan's attorney general is without subpoena powers, filed a petition with Judge Carr, then an Ingham county circuit judge, asking for a grand jury inquiry into the ramifications of the anti-chain banking bill.

After some consideration, the petition was granted and a large-scale investigation was launched. Things did not go well between Judge Carr and Rushton, the upshot being the appointment by Judge Carr of Sigler as special prosecutor.

The inquiry went on for three years. It cost the taxpayers \$500,000. Political minnows were in-

He had dictated the GOP ticket at the fall convention. He failed to choose wisely and well. Sigler had trouble getting a candidate for attorney general. He finally settled on Eugene F. Black of Port Huron for the spot. The time came when he regretted the choice. Black fought everyone from the governor down.

Sigler called on Oscar G. Olander, commissioner of state police, to retire. In his place Sigler named Capt. Donald S. Leonard. An officer under Olander had been indicted for taking graft. Three state police directly under Leonard also had been indicted for being on the take.

FAILED TO GIVE GOVERNOR MORE POWER

Sigler had many ideas of how to improve government. He set out to put 109 boards and commissions under the executive office. He failed in his mission.

The governor was confident the Michigan constitution was outmoded. He studied the constitutions of New York, New Jersey, Georgia and Missouri, with the idea of re-vamping Michigan's fundamental law. There was no enthusiasm for his program.

The governor did propose the creation of a department of administration to supplant the administrative board of Alex J. Groesbeck. In this mission he was successful. Whether state government is better off for the change remains debatable.

The governor went all out to side-track the gravy train created by Michigan's social welfare act. In this he was successful. Without much fuss the legislature passed the so-called recovery provision of the social welfare law. It has saved Michigan taxpayers many millions of dollars.

The act had the 100 per cent indorsement of Oscar R. Ewing, director of the federal security agency under President Harry S. Truman.

Gov. Williams has been trying

Today's Book

"Mary Anne."

By Daphne DuMaurier.

TV gave the McCarthy-army

to repeal the provision since he took office Jan. 1, 1949. He calls it the lien law.

Gov. Frank Murphy sponsored and the legislature enacted the model corrections law. Sigler got rid of it when his commission resigned in a body following an investigation the governor made of corrections department personnel.

Caught in a difficult position, Sigler switched to a one-man operation of the panel system. He was attacked for that move by Williams in his election campaign of 1948. Then Williams did everything he could to preserve the one-man domination until the 1953 legislature went back to the system inaugurated by Frank Murphy in 1937.

FORCED LOBBYISTS TO REGISTER

Because there was one bad apple in the barrel, Sigler had the legislature pass the act requiring lobbyists to register. He also revised the public service commission to get rid of some of the incumbents.

Sigler was chairman of the Michigan delegation to the Republican national convention of 1948. The delegates were pledged to support Sen. Arthur H. Vandenberg for the presidential nomination.

The governor carried out those instructions, but when it became apparent to Sigler that Vandenberg could not be nominated Sigler wanted to switch the Michigan vote to Gov. Thomas E. Dewey of New York, but Rep. Joseph Martin, jr., permanent chairman of the convention, refused to recognize Sigler. The governor was bitterly criticized at home because the Michigan delegation watched the Dewey train pulled out from the station. Sigler was not to blame. Martin afterward admitted he knew what Sigler wanted and decided against him. Martin opposed a rash of vote switches.

Sigler asked for two minutes, saying to Martin:

"I think I can end this," meaning Michigan would decide the presidential nomination.

"Yes, the governor (Sigler) did ask for time," Martin recalled. "My memory is he asked for 10 minutes, not two, but that does not make any difference. At that

...the greatest audience ever drawn to such an inquiry, but its cast of characters couldn't compare with that of a similar investigation in England 145 years ago that stole the spotlight even from Napoleon.

And one of the most unusual incidents of the inquiry was the cover-up of what the star witness received. Legislative inquiry, however, disclosed a payment in excess of \$14,000.

Then came a vacancy on the supreme bench. Gov. Kelly named Carr to the vacancy.

SOLGHT STATE POST ON DEMOCRATIC TICKET.

Judge Louis E. Coash succeeded Carr as grand juror. He and Sigler parted company soon after the switch.

That split served as the springboard from which Sigler jumped successfully into the 1946 Republican primary campaign for governor. The peculiar thing about this move was that Sigler had been an active candidate for attorney general on the Democratic ticket. The primary developed into a bitter fight. Sigler became the champion of all that's good and righteous. He played his indictments and convictions and his efforts to solve the murder of Sen. Warren Hooper, who was killed on his way home to Albion the night of Jan. 11, 1945. Hooper was murdered the night before he was to have appeared as a key grand jury witness.

Sigler attacked the legislative committee which had investigated the grand jury expenditures. He singled out Sen. Ivan Johnston of Mt. Clemens, for special attention.

Johnston was indicted by the Dehnke grand jury in Mt. Clemens just before the primary. The former senator never was convicted. Judge Herman Dehnke of Harrisville, the grand juror, defended the indictment as nonpolitical. But his grand jury action had a terrific influence on the voters.

The hysteria created by the grand juries was at its peak when the primary election day arrived.

Sigler was nominated and went on to defeat Murray D. VanWagoner, his Democratic opponent.

Kim Sigler found things very different in the governor's office. He took office with all the pomp and ceremony incident to the crowning of an Indian prince.

He was at the height of his popularity.

As in 1954, the 1809 investigation was in effect a trial, with the whole house of commons sitting in judgment. The defendant was His Royal Highness Frederick, Duke of York and Albany, second son of King George III and commander-in-chief of the army. The charge was selling commissions, promotions and transfers. The star witness for the prosecution was Mary Anne Clarke.

An account of the investigation, drawn from the official record, provides the climax of this new book, an informal biography of the remarkable woman in the case. The author has more than a casual interest in her subject—Mrs. Clarke was Miss duMaurier's great-great-grandmother.

The story began in triumph, with Mrs. Clarke's rise from the London slums to the back door of the palace. Its end was rather tragic. Britain was deprived, at least temporarily, of the services of Frederick, one of the best of its royal generals. Mary Anne's efforts to retaliate against the associates who betrayed her in a maze of deals within deals led her to prison and to self-exile.

"Mary Anne" is a portrait of a "driving woman" worthy to take her place beside Scarlet O'Hara—a story all the more remarkable in being essentially true.

So They Say

Malenkov has stated that an atomic war would destroy civilization. This is a true statement and I believe he and his associates know this. Restraint, together with strength on our part, may postpone and perhaps avoid this conflict entirely.

—Physicist Harold Urey.

Is it too late to bring the oldtime Bible stand down from the attic or up from the cellar? Is it too late to give it the choice spot it once enjoyed in every home? If it is, then it is very late indeed.

—Clifford Hood, president,
United States Steel.

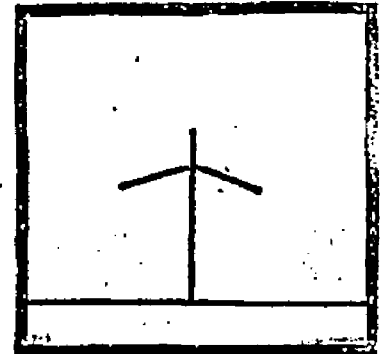
period after the roll call. ... completed we could not permit them to get started changing their votes."

At the insistence of Fred M. Alger, who was secretary of state in Sigler's administration, the governor picked G. Mennen Williams to fill a vacancy on the liquor control commission. That was the stone from which Williams stepped to become governor.

Williams won the Democratic nomination in a field of three. Sigler had no primary opposition.

Came the November election and Sigler went down to defeat. Sigler was elected in 1946 by a majority of 350,000 votes. He lost to Williams two years later by 160,000.

Doodles



"SCARECROW IN A NUDIST COLONY."

Actually, there aren't many nudists in this country (not counting Hollywood starlets) and they get an undue amount of bad publicity. Nudists are merely sunworshippers whose aim in life is to get healthy and sunburned and catch poison-ivy. And who can blame them if in the practice of their hobby they get to know other people better (much better). There are advantages to being a nudist. Ladies never complain about not having anything to wear or worry about the "new look." They're happy with the "original look." Perhaps we should all become nudists. It might not make us healthier but it would certainly cut down on the sale of those furshlugginer "art" magazines in drug stores.

Roger Price.

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