

of newspapering with us and Mary Lou Olson

from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday



HERALD CORRESPONDENTS AND STAFF who surprised Mary Lou Bendon with a bridal shower in 1957, before her marriage to Keith Olson, are shown (left table, from left, row 1) Anna Kruse, Leroy and Velma Post, Laurene Bryan, Maye Penn, Nellie Bell; (row 2) Ernest Woodward, Bernice Willcoxon,

Bessie Alstrom, Mary Lou Bendon, Gertrude Marietta; (row 3) Naomi Cozad, Evelyn Silvers, Dorothy Kelley, Delbert Shields; and (row 4) Ollie Muirhead, Vesta Steele, unknown, Richard Brown, Clifford Fiala.



MARY LOU BENDON OLSON during the late 1960s, when Howard and Sharon Kessinger were owners and publishers of *The Oberlin Herald*. She still loves her typewriter.



OBERLIN HERALD STAFF and guests in 1954 are shown at a dinner party at the Green Lantern Cafe. Shown (from left, row to right) Mr. and Mrs. Richard Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Fulcher, Millard and Lucille Kyte, Catherine and Delbert Shields; and (left row, from left) Marilyn Scherling, Gertrude Marietta, Mary Lou Bendon, Keith Olson, and Mary and Ernest Woodward.

She's gotten the news through four editors and 45 years of papers

By **MARY LOU OLSON**

My introduction to the newspaper business came when I was hired by E.R. Woodward as society editor of *The Oberlin Herald* after graduating from Decatur Community High School in 1951.

I had enjoyed English all my life, but never took journalism in high school and never thought of working in that field. However, my love for newspaper work was soon kindled by a caring and professional editor.

I remember that one of the first things Mr. Woodward taught me was that the two most important words a newspaper person needs to learn are, 'I'm sorry.' I have found that advice to be true over the years as I have worked with several publishers and editors.

A former Oberlin lawyer, the late L.F. "Cush" Cushenbery, always made the comment when he saw a correction in *The Herald*, "We all make mistakes, but only *The Oberlin Herald* has to apologize publicly!"

In those early days when all copy was typed first, then set on the Linotype, the atmosphere of the office was much different. Smelling the melting lead and hearing the press running in the back room soon became a familiar part of my life.

Elmer Carman was shop foreman for many years at *The Herald* and after his death, Delbert Shields took over his position and became a lifelong friend. Marvin Walker was Linotype operator in the 1950s and usually complained, good-naturedly, when I would rush back to ask, "Can I get in one more local?" before press time.

It was exciting to see the newspaper being printed, as Rolan Carman, a fellow classmate, fed the newsprint into the noisy press and the finished product came out, all folded and ready for our readers. If a mistake was discovered while the press was still running, it was nice to be able to shout "stop the press" and make that correction before it reached most subscribers.

I operated the Graphotype to make address changes for subscribers, as well as the Addressograph which printed subscribers' names on the papers. Most papers were mailed on Wednesday afternoon, but some were pasted and rolled in individual wrappers each Thursday morning. I remember many good times while rolling them with former employees, including Lucille Kyte, Mickey Foster and Gertrude Marietta.

One of the highlights during the summer was *The Herald* correspondent picnic, usually held at Sappa State Park shelter house. It was there that I learned to know and love the country correspondents, who faithfully shared news of their communities with readers each week.

I resigned after my marriage to Keith Olson in 1957, but filled in on occasion when my children were growing up.

After the Woodwards sold the newspaper to Howard and Sharon Kessinger in 1966, I worked part-time for them. Sharon developed pictures for the newspaper each Monday night in the basement of their home.

The Kessingers' time in Oberlin brought promotion of the canopies on Penn Avenue, which were designed

by the Kansas State University Architectural Department. I remember well how some businessmen came into the office very hostile to the thought of spending money on this project. However, the Kessingers and others with the foresight to implement them, have since been praised by business owners, customers and visitors. Mrs. Kessinger also did much work with the Amusement Authority to help start the home-owned carnival.

Dorothy Kelley also worked for the Kessingers, and her wit and down-to-earth style of living were an inspiration to the whole staff.

A highlight of all of the years of working at the newspaper came in 1979 when Randall Braden, publisher at the time, asked my sister, Helen Riepl, and me, to coordinate the Centennial Edition. It was a huge undertaking, but we met the challenge head-on. The final product included 106 pages of the history of Decatur County and Oberlin, as well as the newspaper.

During the preparation, Doris Miller, a longtime advertising employee, dubbed us "The White Tornadoes," a name which she still uses when speaking about us. Helen claims she is still tired from that endeavor.

However, we felt it was something we could do to pay back Oberlin for the good life we had enjoyed here as a family. The schools which educated me, along with my siblings, Leo, Frances, Cecil, Glee and Helen, were second to none and we all felt we had a wonderful education.

After we finished the Centennial Edition, Randall asked me about returning to work as society editor two days a week, a position I have held since that time. I consider working with people through the newspaper very rewarding and throughout the years, I have never dreaded coming to work. There is always something exciting about newspaper work and after so many years, I guess I can honestly say that I have "printer's ink" in my blood.

There have been challenges over the years, but overall I can only say that I truly enjoy my work and since I have always loved people, it is a joy to be able to serve the community in this way.

I consider working these two days a week as a wonderful hobby and I hope that somehow what I have tried to do for others over the years has made a small difference or made life more meaningful for the many I have written about.

It has been a pleasure and learning experience to work for Steve and Cynthia Haynes, who have updated *The Oberlin Herald* to a product that is completely computerized. Though it is hard to "teach an old dog new tricks," I have actually enjoyed learning the changes and improvements in the final product from professionals.

To all my fellow employees, past and present, whom I have worked with over the years, along with friends and the community, I say, "Thanks for many wonderful memories!"