

Howard A. Quirt

Nominated by his grandchildren: Paul Sandro, Phil Sandro, Ellen Anderson, Barbara Heck, Kris Peterson Crubaugh, and Steve Peterson.

“A GOOD NEWSPAPER MAKES A BETTER TOWN,” proclaimed a banner on Community Recognition Night in 1962 as Howard A. Quirt accepted congratulations for 35 years as the editor and publisher of the Marshfield News-Herald. Quirt was quick to give credit to his associates, to the dedication of his workers, and to the city of Marshfield. Establishing the newspaper in 1927, he would continue actively as its publisher until his death in 1968.

Howard Quirt was a consummate newspaperman with previous experience as a reporter and as founding editor and publisher of the Ironwood Daily Globe in Michigan where he had the financial backing of Frank E. Noyes of Marinette, WI. Quirt and his associate Siegel Mayer came to Marshfield, acquired the Marshfield Daily News and the Marshfield Herald, and started the Marshfield New-Herald in 1927. The newspaper doubled the number of typesetting machines, replaced the old flatbed press with a rotary press capable of printing up to 30,000 papers an hour, and leased the AP wire service for national and international news. Mayer managed the advertising and circulation departments while Quirt concentrated on developing the news and editorial staff.



Quirt was an effective writer, a believer in journalism of the highest standards, and a man of ideas and good judgment. He believed that a good newspaper should be a source of reliable information, a social institution that connects people to each other, to the region, the country and the world. His editorials included topics of national and international importance, but the development and improvement of Marshfield quickly commanded his attention. Proposals for new schools, new streets, and new recreational facilities found a ready champion on the editorial page. He prodded officials to improve municipal facilities and he was a staunch defender of Marshfield’s city-owned electric utility and water department. In the private sphere, he championed economic development of many kinds.

Quirt moved the News-Herald to a more modern building in 1953 that was built to the newspaper’s specification. A new rotary press was installed along with linotype machines and new office equipment. By 1968, the town of around 7,000 inhabitants in 1927, had grown to one of over 15,000. The newspaper’s circulation had grown from 2,000 to 13,000. Quirt put in perspective the valuable growth of Marshfield’s medical center—the hospital and clinic. “It is probably our greatest community asset. It has become known far-and-wide in the Midwest. We are growing steadily as an industrial community. But we have never lost sight of the great importance to our community or our agricultural surroundings.”

In 1954 Howard and Lila Quirt took part in an “Editors Tour” of key foreign countries. “We shall skirt the Iron Curtain, peek under it in East Berlin, and visit 10 countries during our 30-day absence,” wrote Quirt in the first of a series of dispatches published as a column “Seeing for Ourselves.” Headlines followed such as “France Will Stand Firm, Scorn Reds,” “Adenauer is Strong, But No Dictator,” “Freedom is Not Absent Under Tito,” “Turkey Unafraid of Ancient Enemy Across Iron Curtain,” “Lord Ismay Tells Story of NATO,” “Iranians in Doubt Over Role of U.S.” Mrs. Lila Quirt wielded her own pen in a series of articles such as

“Two Worlds Jostle in Partitioned Berlin,” “Palaces and Hovels Are Visited on Editors’ Tour,” “Service in Blue Mosque [Istanbul] Is Interesting Experience.” It was during this tour that Quirt began to criticize Senator Joseph McCarthy’s scare tactics and intimidation as chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations when the senator made accusations of Communist infiltrations of the federal government.

Lila Quirt actively supported her husband during their fifty-one year marriage. She was a charter member of Chapter AJ/P.E.O, the Marshfield Woman’s Club, and assisted in organizing the Gray Ladies.

Following Quirt’s death, Edward Heller wrote:

“He was a publisher who knew the feel of type and the smell of printer’s ink, the routine of the reporter’s beat and the keyboard of a typewriter, as well as the cost of a printing press. (...) To Howard Quirt, a good newspaper, a prize-winner, was not an end in itself—it was but a means to an end. It was a vehicle for bringing people information relevant to daily living. It was an instrument to be used in whetting the public appetite for the best things in community life.”

Howard Quirt was a reserved man yet never retired. He promoted Marshfield yet shunned publicity for himself. He was a publisher, not a public speaker. He had a deep interest in people; his home and family were a source of precious, and private, delight.