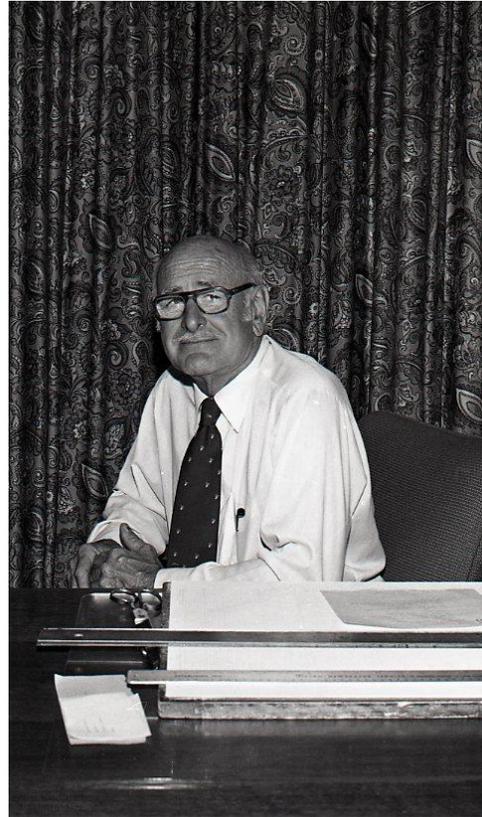


Steve Hopkins, former President and Publisher of the Marshfield News-Herald

Nominated by his children, Lea (Hopkins) Thompson and Steve Hopkins

For more than 60 years, Steve Hopkins was a mover and shaker, chronicler, watchdog and doer in our city.

Hopkins came to Marshfield at the height of the Depression in 1937 when the town numbered only 8,700 people. Raised in Chicago, he was fresh out of the University of Missouri with a journalism and advertising degree. He said he was seeking adventure and wilderness. He said he went to work for the Marshfield News-Herald because he was impressed with the honesty and integrity and just pure friendliness of this small town.



But Hopkins also arrived in a town with its industry in flux and a lot of people in need. He vowed to help build a better future for his adopted hometown.

He and his colleagues built the Marshfield News-Herald into a fine daily newspaper that filled as many as thirty pages every day with new articles about our community. He was credited more than once with creating one of the “finest and most up-to-date newspapers in the country.”

Starting as an ad salesman, Hopkins rose to president and publisher of the paper as well as the president of Forward Communications, which owned numerous television stations along with the newspaper. He founded the Wisconsin Newspaper Group, which provided a framework for six newspapers located throughout the state to share the costs of reporting while securing national advertising.

Steve had a reputation as being “tough but fair.” He took the public’s trust seriously and strongly believed it was a newspaper’s responsibility to serve its community and hold those in power accountable. He was a good newsman. He didn’t pull any punches and didn’t back away from controversy. His editorials and the newspaper’s campaigns brought big change to a developing Marshfield.

Hopkins came to know nearly every merchant, politician and service provider in town. A great communicator, he had a big and welcoming personality that made him difficult to turn down.

Back then, Central Avenue was alive with independent stores owned by a group of men who met almost every morning over a pot of coffee in the back of Wing's Drug Store. It is there they planned the future of the city and most of the town's major events, with Hopkins making sure the newspaper kept them honest and accountable to their fellow citizens.

As a newsman, Hopkins covered politics but never participated in it. He was never mayor, nor did he serve on the common council. But, within just a few years of arriving in Marshfield, Hopkins launched the Junior Chamber of Commerce, now known as the Jaycees. He became a director of the Marshfield Chamber of Commerce and general co-chairman of the Wood County Centennial Committee in 1956. He was also chairman of the Community Chest Drive, forerunner of the United Way Appeal. He thought the Boy Scouts taught values he believed in -- honesty, integrity and service - and was honored with the prestigious BSA Silver Beaver Award for his service at the local and regional level.

Hopkins and his wife Connie had a reverence for learning, and they championed just about everything cultural and recreational. They believed every child should have a great education and access to all the books they wanted. Hopkins served on the Wood County and Marshfield Free Library Boards for years. In 1960, while a member of the Marshfield Board, he chaired the Building Committee of what was the Marshfield Public Library, now the Second Street Community Center. The library went from 7,000 to 60,000 volumes during his watch.

Hopkins' love of the outdoors was legend. He brought the Stierle Bird and Egg Exhibit to the Library and believed the Wildwood Zoo and local parks were excellent places to teach conservation. The zoo was greatly expanded during his tenure on its board, and he was deeply involved in developing Ebbe Park on the Yellow River and Weber's Nature Park. He worked hard to clean up the seriously polluted Big Eau Pleine River.

Steve built one of the first cabins on the Big Eau Pleine flowage from Roddis hollow-plywood doors. He painted that cabin red – he loved red - as big and bold as the color of his life. It is still in use by his family today.

Hopkins was an artist who built museum quality model ships and carved magnificent birds in his free time. He never saw a boat he didn't like. He had sailing boats, a swamp boat and built a river steamer on a pontoon boat complete with a paddle wheel and a calliope. He was also named Commodore of the Fleet of the Marshfield Yacht Club.

His bookshelves were as eclectic as his life – romances of the seafarers and the west but also great literature, history and philosophy.

A good skier and mechanic – he built a Model T as a teenager -- Hopkins converted an old calliope and drove it anywhere the Marshfield Ski Club was headed or where the snow was good.

Steve Hopkins loved to celebrate everything and anything. He felt celebrations reminded people of what they had and not what they wish they had. He was the father of more parades down Central Avenue and more Mad Market Days than you can count, and he always had a costume and a hat for every occasion.

Gregarious but also humble, Steve was never one for awards or accolades, but credit came anyway. By his retirement in 1978, his office walls were decorated with dozens of resolutions and plaques.

A member of the Rotary Club since his early days in Marshfield, he received the Rotary's highest honor in 1978, the "Service Above Self Award" for his "years of contributions and devotion" to Marshfield.

John Parkin, himself honored as one of Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, said, "Everything Steve Hopkins has had to do with has been good for Marshfield." He also said, "Anything done with Hopkins has been fun."

One of his business colleagues said, "That's our Steve. You can't better him and you can't find anyone better."

Hopkins himself said, "It is no surprise that city people are moving back to small towns like Marshfield. This is where people really live, and they really love one another."

Steve Hopkins lived big and loved his city big.

He passed away in 1988. A Marshfield News-Herald editorial said this:

"Steve Hopkins had that matter-of-fact, down-to-earth style about him. He was the guy next door who knew how to tell a good story and how to draw a laugh. He knew a lot of people and knew how to get things done."