

THE HOWARDS OF NEWSPAPER STREET

By JOHN TEBBEL

CHAIN journalism in the United States, a phenomenon of this century, has never been the faceless octopus characteristic of other multifaceted industries. It has been the creation of a few strong-minded, colorful individuals who exerted absolute control over their properties for a long period of time, and never left anyone, from the White House to City Hall, in doubt about who was minding the store.

A list of outstanding chain newspaper entrepreneurs would have to begin with William Randolph Hearst, who was not the first but indisputably the largest and most absolute. The late Frank Gannett, whose dalliance with the radical right sometimes overshadowed his newspapering, would rank near the top. The late cousins, Colonel Robert Rutherford McCormick and Captain Joseph Patterson, would have to be considered too, even though their Chicago-New York-Washington axis was never a chain in the strict sense and, minus Washington, is even less so today. Then would come more modest empire builders like John S. Knight, John H. Perry, and Samuel I. Newhouse, a deliberately obscure man who may wind up surpassing all the others.

But the men who have made the deepest and most lasting impression on chain journalism in America are E. W. Scripps, who died in 1926, and Roy W. Howard, who at nearly eighty is still almost as active as a young reporter, although the direction of the Scripps-Howard Newspapers is in the hand of his son, Jack R., while financial control has passed to the grandsons of E. W. Scripps. This double inheritance has given a remarkable continuity to the chain, which began in 1889 as the

Scripps-McRae League and thus ranks as oldest of them all.

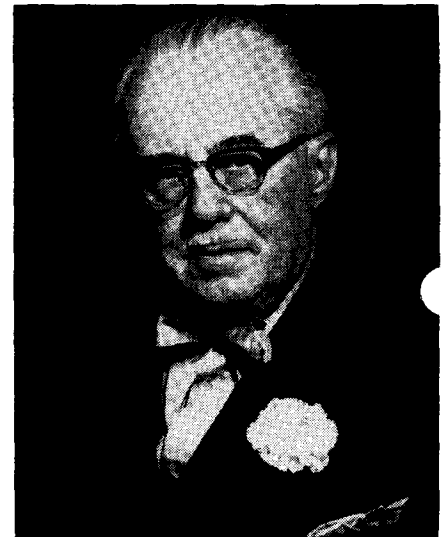
In the flamboyant nineteenth-century days of journalism, when great newspapers were made and empires begun, few publishers displayed more egocentric genius than E. W. Scripps, who fondly dubbed himself a "Damned Old Crank" in the title of his self-portrait. Like so many others of the breed, he was an ardent reformer who once declared: "I have only one principle and that is represented by an effort to make it harder for the rich to grow richer and easier for the poor to keep from growing poorer."

An Illinois boy who made his fortune in Ohio, Edward Wyllis Scripps came of a newspapering family. His grandfather had been a London publisher; a cousin had edited the *Chicago Tribune*; his older brother James founded the *Detroit News* in 1873; his half-sister Ellen and another brother, George, worked on the *News*. From Ellen and his brothers, Ed Scripps borrowed \$10,000 in 1878, went to Cleveland and started a paper called the *Penny Press*. Out of that audacious venture the Scripps-Howard chain was born.

To the building of his empire Scripps brought overflowing energy, uncompromising courage, and an unfaltering vision. He was also a tortured man, misanthropic and subject to raw nerves, who eventually withdrew to his Spanish-style ranch house, Miramar, sixteen miles from San Diego, from which he managed his enterprises at long range, as Joseph Pulitzer and James Gordon Bennett, Jr., were doing. Scripps was better at it than his eccentric contemporaries. He set up his increasing string of papers on individual shoestrings, gave them a nominal autonomy, but did his best to shape the young editors he hired in his own ideological image.



Jack Howard: "... at the controls of the chain."



Roy Howard: "... never wasted time at anything."

He dissolved his partnership in the Scripps-McRae League in 1907, and combined its news-distributing facilities with two other agencies to form United Press. The chain itself continued to grow, surviving a series of family storms, until the "old crank" himself withdrew completely from management in 1920, turning editorial direction over to his third son, Robert P. Scripps, and entrusting the business affairs of the papers to young Roy Wilson Howard, who had done his apprenticeship on the Indianapolis papers, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Cincinnati Post*, and in various other segments of the chain before becoming general manager and president of U.P.

Of his new executive, E. W. had made a shrewd estimate: "Howard's self-respect and self-confidence, right from the start, were so great as to make it impossible for them to increase.

Doubtless to himself his present situation in life, his successes and his prosperity, all seem perfectly natural, and no more and no less than he expected, he ever wasted his time in forecasting. Of which I have very much doubt."

Roy Howard, in fact, never wasted time at anything. He was utterly devoted to the business of making newspapers, and particularly to the flow of news, to which he was addicted with the passion which characterizes first-class newspapermen. His career with the organization Scripps had built ascended like a rocket after his 1920 appointment. A year later he was chairman of the board of the associated Scripps enterprises; two years later the Scripps-McRae name became Scripps-Howard. Reversing usual business procedure, he moved from chairman of the board to the presidency in 1936, and held that post until 1952, when he finally relinquished it to his son.

Observing his able and affable son Jack at the controls of the chain, in its familiar twenty-second-floor offices at 230 Park Avenue—the building that splits the traffic at 46th Street and looks northward up the Avenue—gives rise to the feeling that the Scripps-Howard papers have been there forever. This sensation is enhanced by the physical resemblance between father and son,

which extends even to voice and gestures. Jack dresses casually, with a certain flair which makes no attempt to match the sartorial grandeur of Roy, whose matched shirts and ties in bold designs became his trademark.

As an executive, Roy liked to think of himself as a reporter and often appeared in the news columns as the interviewer of this or that world figure. Jack is not inclined to these flights of newsgathering, but his compelling interest is the news. Like his father, he came up through the editorial side, after he left Yale in 1932. He is president today, but his other title, general editorial manager, more accurately describes his real interests. His father is still chairman of the executive committee.

The empire Jack Howard rules today consists of eighteen newspapers in seventeen cities—one more if the Cincinnati *Enquirer* is included. The organization has a controlling interest in this daily, but it is not called a Scripps-Howard newspaper, and does not carry the chain's familiar lighthouse symbol with its slogan, "Give light and the people will find their own way."

Scripps-Howard light is disseminated these days from both primary and secondary sources. Flagship of the chain is the New York *World-Telegram & Sun*, in which the venerable and revered *Sun*, acquired in 1950, has com-

pletely lost its identity. Another strong link is the tabloid *Washington Daily News*, which recently has shown a dramatic rise in circulation and advertising. In Cleveland, the *Press and News* (the competing *News* was purchased in 1960) prospers under the direction of another Scripps-Howard fireball, Louis Seltzer, who rejoices in being called "Mr. Cleveland," and is regarded by some knowledgeable Ohioans as the most powerful behind-the-scenes figure in state politics. The Pittsburgh *Press* is also a strong and growing paper.

But then all the chain's papers are in a healthy condition, unusual for this kind of journalistic operation. There is the Cincinnati *Post & Times-Star* (the latter was acquired in 1958) and its Kentucky extension across the river, with the same name; the Columbus *Citizen-Journal*, the result of a 1959 merger between the afternoon *Citizen* and the morning *Ohio State Journal*; the *Rocky Mountain News*, in Denver; the Evansville (Indiana) *Press*; the Memphis *Press-Scimitar*; the Houston *Press*; the Birmingham *Post-Herald*; the Fort Worth *Press*; the Knoxville *News-Sentinel*; the Indianapolis *Times*; the El Paso *Herald-Post*; the Albuquerque *Tribune*; and the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*.

THE mergers are a key to policy. Jack Howard is not interested in having more newspapers than any other chain publisher; his long-range expansion plans visualize the strengthening of his papers in their own backyards, while at the same time remaining alert to potential properties with growth possibilities. Editorially they operate autonomously, as Scripps originally conceived of his chain, but policy on national and international affairs is determined, as it has been since the Twenties, by annual meetings of the editors with top management, the most recent of which was at French Lick, Indiana.

At these meetings the arguments aren't what they used to be. "All newspapers are more objective," Jack How-

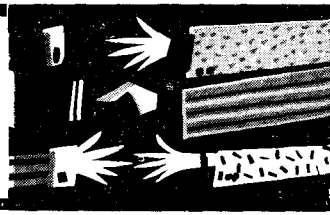
ard remarked the other day. "Maybe in one sense we've cut our own throats." Presumably, however, no one longs for the good old days when Roy was involved in frequent painful and public partings with such Scripps-Howard columnists as Heywood Broun, Westbrook Pegler, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, and Thomas Stokes, as well as the Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Rollin Kirby. The Scripps-Howard papers were once objectively Democratic (they even attacked President Hoover), but in the late Thirties they became objectively Republican.

In a way, the shifting command at Scripps-Howard reflects the change in the newspaper business itself, from the uproar of personal journalism to sober, conservative institutionalism. The "damned old crank" has been succeeded ultimately by a trustee troika consisting of Charles E. Scripps, second son of Robert P., as chairman; Robert P., Jr., and E. W. Scripps II. Their E. W. Scripps Trust owns approximately 80 per cent of the E. W. Scripps Company, which owns a majority voting stock in Scripps-Howard Enterprises and publishes the papers in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. The founder's trust provides that the trust estate will be distributed upon the death of the last grandchild who was living at the time it was set up. At last count there were fifteen great-grandchildren eligible for the distribution.

Similarly, Roy has been replaced by his son, who in turn has a son, Michael, at Yale, who has already worked summers for United Press International, at home and abroad, and nearly a year for the *Commercial Appeal* before he went to Yale. It looks as though the Howard family would be as durable as the Scripps succession, and if the papers stir up more hell locally than they do on the national and international scene, that may well be what is happening to newspapers generally. Whatever further changes occur, the Scripps-Howard dynasty seems good for at least another half-century.



Public Relations



There Is No Magic Wand

By L. L. L. GOLDEN

THERE is a dangerous idea abroad, often promoted by public relations practitioners themselves, that, by some magic trick, public consent can be engineered so that—presto!—a corporation can suddenly achieve a favorable public reputation.

That this is utter nonsense is understood by sophisticated management and underlined by the best public relations directors of large corporations. A clear example of how effective public relations can be attained only by hard work, good conduct on the part of management, and frankness with those who question their operations is provided by the current effort to establish better communication between academicians in the social disciplines and large corporations.

Beginning with the premise that what the intellectual thinks today, the general public will think tomorrow, many corporations have established seminars, round tables, or conferences to which university professors are invited to discuss the functioning of the companies. Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), General Motors, International Harvester, Chrysler Corporation, General Electric, American Telephone and Telegraph, and Standard Oil Company of California are some that have tried to establish a better understanding between the academic community and corporate management. Though each program is different from the other in approach, all have the same general purpose.

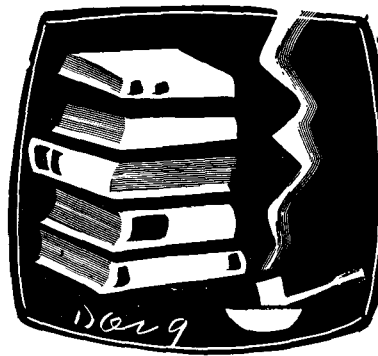
One of the most successful is that of E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. Its Educators Conference is probably the only conference designed to bring professors in the social disciplines close to the top men of the company in as free and frank a discussion as possible.

In 1949 the du Pont people found, after a careful study, that many people on university faculties, other than the men in the physical sciences, had a serious misunderstanding of the company. Du Pont's premise was that if the university professors in the areas of greatest misunderstanding could meet with top management to probe and

argue, then both sides would benefit.

The guidelines for the first Educators Conference, held in 1950, are the same as they are today and show the kind of intelligence brought to bear on the project. Du Pont decided to invite no fewer than forty and no more than forty-four educators representing institutions of various sizes from all sections of the country; all were to be from the social sciences. The purpose was to have the groups small enough for free discussion and large enough to make it worthwhile for top management to give it a great deal of time.

THE educators are not invited directly. Instead, the invitations are sent to the presidents of the universities or colleges, who select those who will attend the conferences. All the top management group of the company participates, including all nine members of the executive committee of the company and all twenty-four department heads. The thought behind this is simple: the real McCoy, not just a few washed and scrubbed smoothies.



Another guideline is that there is no ducking of questions, except those, naturally, where an answer would reveal competitive products or process secrets. Under no circumstances is there an attempt at a "snow job" or "selling" of the company. The goal is simply an exposure of the facts. The educators make their own judgments.

Expenses of those attending the conference are paid by the company, but no fees or stipends are given, to avoid the suggestion that those attending should feel under any obligation to du Pont. Now, after thirteen conferences

in as many years, at an annual out-of-pocket cost of some \$25,000 by the company, those who have attended and the du Pont people are pretty well satisfied that the meetings have been of value.

Ten institutions are invited every year, forty-four institutions every other year (that is, twenty-two a year), and eight institutions every three or four years. So far a total of 550 educators from 139 institutions of higher education have attended, including some from France and Great Britain.

The 1962 Educators Conference gives a clear picture of the kind of colleges and universities represented. Professors came from the University of Alaska, Athens College, Bucknell University, California Institute of Technology, University of California (Berkeley), University of Colorado, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, University of Delaware, De Paul University, University of Detroit, Duke University, University of Florida, Fordham University, George Washington University, Gettysburg College, Grinnell College, Harvard University, and University of Illinois.

In addition there were professors from Lehigh University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Miami, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri, University of New Mexico, University of Notre Dame, Oberlin College, Ohio State University, University of Oregon, University of Pennsylvania, Purdue University, Rutgers University, Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas, University of Texas, Washington University, Wesleyan University (Connecticut), West Virginia University, Whitman College, Williams College, University of Wisconsin, and Yale University.

NO one, least of all the du Pont people, believes the Educators Conferences have wrought a change in the thinking of the nation as a whole. But the conferences have made management and the educators involved more understanding of each other's views. Most certainly it is useful for the academic people to hear management explain what is done and why. It is just as useful to management to have to go through this process.

If there is any idea that good public relations are the result of gimmicks or tricks, or waves of the wand, what is being done at du Pont ought to dissipate it. Good public relations for a firm can only come from good performance, intelligently explained with frankness and honesty. It is slow work and no one knows it better than the serious practitioner in the field of public relations.