

Risley

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"He was an exceptionally intelligent man," Bachman said. "Perhaps he is best remembered by many people for riding around in his red Ford convertible with his pet monkey on his shoulder. When it wasn't on his shoulder it was in a cage in front of the newspaper. There were many times it nipped people."

Don Weidner of Lehman, now employed at Offset Paperback, worked for Howard Risley at The Dallas Post for 12 years. He was the pressman who ran the last edition of The Dallas Post off the large flatbed press when Risley decided to go to offset printing. The change meant that The Post would contract its printing out. Lenny Nordfors, Jim Lohman and John Kupstas also operated the press and later most of them moved up in the printing industry.

"Howard was the kind of man who always got the best he could from an employee," Weidner said. "He had two favorite sayings: One was, 'trifles make perfection but perfection is no trifle,' and the other one was, 'Why is there never enough time to do a thing right but always enough time to do it over?'"

Weidner described Risley as a philosophical person, who spoke out for the things he believed in. He made more than one enemy by writing and printing what he believed, according to Weidner.

"I remember one time I was going to a breakfast meeting at our church and I asked Risley to go with me. I didn't know it at the time, but there was a gentleman at the breakfast who had had words

with Risley, but you'd never have known it. During the breakfast they talked with one another and everything went fine. By the time we were ready to leave they had agreed to let bygones be bygones," Weidner said.

He recalled one time when they were putting together the paper and some cuts hadn't come in from downtown on the bus. Risley sent Weidner down to Dallas for the cuts. The store where the bus driver usually left the cuts was closed, so Weidner went back to the paper without them.

"He sent me back to get them and told me not to come back without them," Weidner said. "When he told you to do something he expected you to do it."

Weidner said that Risley was way ahead of most newspapers in the area, that he started in stereotyping then started in offset printing and at the time of his death had ordered his own offset press.

"He stayed on top of current issues but kept them localized," Weidner said. After the paper was sold, Weidner eventually left and worked for a printing business for a short time before going to Offset.

Howell Reese, an outstanding writer and columnist, who has traveled all over the world and is now living in the area, knew Risley very well. He described Howard Risley as an idealist, one who loved poetry. He met Risley when he came to work as a reporter at the Wilkes-Barre Record where Rees was at the time.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Risley of Tunkhannock, Howard moved with his parents to Noxen where his father owned and

operated a store and became quite wealthy. After high school, Risley attended Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

While at the Wilkes-Barre Record, he and Rees became very good friends, but Risley left the paper to become a salesman for neon signs. Then, in a deal with Lloyd McHenry of Dallas, Risley bought shares in The Dallas Post and became the publisher. He asked Rees to come out to the paper with him which Rees did.

"Howard became very interested in the printing end of the newspaper and learned a lot about linotype, type faces, etc., and soon became an expert in the field."

"Howard printed the Seminary Opinionator, Misericordia, and the Wyoming Valley Motorist. He was devoted to The Dallas Post and worked hard to make it a success. He met Myra Zeiser, later his wife, and courted her for 13 years."

"Durelle Scott and I went to his wedding up in New England. The Risleys had a summer place at Lake Carey which had burned down one year, but Howard and I used to go and stay in the garage overnight. Howard loved it there. Howard was the type of man who wrote what he believed in. I never had as much freedom as I did while working with Howard. He was more than a boss to his employees, he was a very good friend."

"We worked together covering fires, the woman in black and other great stories. We roomed together before he was married and we used to collect newspapers and go through them. I owe him a great deal," Rees concluded.

Who could know Howard Risley better than his nephew, Leighton

Scott?

"I only worked for him for six months but I knew him all my life," said Scott. "He was like a second father. He had a powerful and magnetic character and a bright and magnificent voice. Somebody once told him he ought to be in radio."

"He was interested in everything and could be difficult because of his beliefs. At one time he was threatened because of his stand on drunk driving," Scott explained. "He, Nort Bertl, Harry Ohlman and Doc Schooley were great friends."

Scott said when he would stay at his uncle's home, Risley would get him up early in the morning, get in the car and drive at great speed out some country road to see roses. He'd bring the car to a sudden stop to admire their beauty. "What young kid is interested in roses at 6 a.m. in the morning?" Scott asked.

Risley was Scott's idea of a truly great man. He said his father was soft spoken and nobody could outdo him in many ways, but he also loved his uncle. "He was tough as an employer. I didn't realize it at the time but he was grooming me and several others because he had had several heart attacks and knew his condition."

"He seemed to be very demanding to me because I didn't know what he was doing. It wasn't until after his death that I came to grips with the job and realized how much he had taught me."

Risley was deadly serious but always had a sense of humor. He could be as audacious as one could get. Scott said after his uncle died the pet monkey, whom Scott always considered homicidal, became his buddy and was always around him.

Doris Mallin, who was with The Dallas Post for 22 years, came to the paper as a bookkeeper. Because Risley recognized that she had ability, he gave her a desk in the corner of his office and taught her the basics—how to write, to edit, and offset printing.

"He was compassionate and caring. When we would work long hours in the hot weather, he would go over to his house and bring back iced tea or lemonade and sometimes supper. He also taught me how to drive."

"He was a detective at heart and was a great investigative writer. He loved animals. He wrote what he believed in and on several occasions he was threatened for stories he worked on which espoused causes in which he believed. He put emphasis on local features including animals," Ms. Mallin said. "He was a Civil War buff and he and the late Ray Shiber used to get together with others and talk about the Civil War. When he went on vacations, he used to go through the cemeteries looking for veterans of the war and then trace their families."

Ms. Mallin said Risley shared his knowledge with everybody who came to work for The Dallas Post. His teachings have helped many today. He wrote editorials on current issues and he loved bringing in Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and school students to tour the paper.

He gave his employees the opportunity to use their talents and encouraged them.

"We worked long hours and the work was hard but it was fun. There was a feeling of being a family and everyone was a part of the family, but he always told us exactly

what he thought. You always knew where you stood," Ms. Mallin said.

Sandy Sheehan was just out of high school when she first worked at the paper. "He was always nice to us," she said. "He believed right was right. I remember one time I got a ticket for speeding. I didn't expect him to do anything about it but I mentioned that I got it and his answer was 'You got it, now you pay for it.'"

Mrs. Sheehan said Risley had patience with those who had no experience and he would take the time to teach those who were willing to learn. That is how she learned the use of the darkroom. Risley sent her to Kodak for training because she showed she was interested.

Risley died in December, 1962, and Sandy Sheehan learned of his death at the post office. She went to pick up the mail and they told her. She thought they were mistaken until she walked into the office and saw the expression on Leighton Scott's face. She was so shocked she didn't remember whether they closed the office or not.

Following Risley's death, his widow continued as publisher and editor until 1968, when she sold The Post to Henry Null, owner of the Abington Journal. The Post and Journal have remained sister newspapers ever since.

Howard Risley—the consensus of the people who knew him best is that he was truly a great man—a man of intelligence, conviction, patience and compassion, not a person everyone agreed with but a person whom everyone respected—a "typical country newspaper editor."

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