

Why I Love Community Newspapers! By Julia Traylor Dyar

I'd really rather make that – “Why I Love Newspapers!” After all, every newspaper has its own community of readers – urban or rural folks, or both.

A real newspaper is one that contains local/state/national/world news, editorials or opinion columns, feature stories, photographs and advertisements. If it has a crossword puzzle and “the funnies” it is that much better.

In my opinion newspapers are necessary to the preservation of recorded history and our quality of life. How can we know where we are going unless we know where we have been? How can we appreciate where we are now until we know how far we have come and who helped along the way?

When you need to know something about a town or city read its old newspapers to see what its citizens were reading at different times in history. This is the best temperature chart you can find. For World War II days you will find the latest news from the war front and on the editorial pages you will find opinion reflecting love of country, pride in our armed forces, hope and suggestions for a better future and gratitude for our blessings. The newspaper will contain births, deaths, marriages, school/church/social and sports coverage, all of which give the reader a mental picture of the “community” and its people. And that's what matters!

Newspapers educate us on local, state and national issues that greatly affect our lives. Newspapers make us better citizens, better neighbors, better shoppers.

Newspapers have been an important part of my life since 1941. I was 16 years old and a cheerleader at Greensboro (Ga.) High School when the late Alva Haywood was Sports Editor for the Greensboro Herald Journal. Alva gave me my first by-line for reporting on away basketball games for the paper. That same year I was one of three senior class members to visit the school principal's office to get permission to start a school newspaper. We did, and I was hooked.

My next writing experience came while I was a student at LaGrange College from 1942 to '46 and wrote for the school's literary publication, The Scroll. I also sold ads to help pay for its publication. I really swallowed the line in 1948 when I married Hubert Dyar, then editor of The Royston Record, and became its associate editor and a weekly columnist. At that time I was also a stringer for The Atlanta Constitution and in the mid-1950s wrote a Sunday column on Georgia folks in The Anderson (S.C.) Independent. During those years I was most grateful for a patient and loving husband who had learned enough at the Grady School under Dean John Drewry to teach me what I needed to know to become a life-long newspaper-woman. I didn't know then, that I would lose him at 47 and have to be a career woman the rest of my long life. But I'm getting ahead of myself, because the best years we had together came when we moved to Atlanta in 1958 when he became executive secretary of the

Georgia Literature Commission and I got a job at the Georgia Press Association. No longer was I just working for one newspaper, but for all the newspapers in Georgia and I loved every minute of it. Once more, I had a great boss in the late Harvey Walters, who taught me so much as his assistant, preparing me for the promotion to executive managership of the GPA some years later, a position I held until 1978, when I returned to my roots in LaGrange, Ga., as public relations director of my alma mater, LaGrange College. Hubert had died in 1973, the year after I became manager of GPA, and I was beginning to feel the need to be with family again in LaGrange. My leaving Atlanta and GPA was a tough decision, but my contact with newspapers continued as I wrote stories about the college every day for the LaGrange daily and for the hometown newspapers of our students at LC.

When I retired from the college in 1993 I was bored to tears and asked my good friend, the late Glen Long at the LaGrange Daily News, for a job as proofreader or "just anything." He wanted a columnist, so we settled on my writing a weekly historical column based on newspapers 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago by month. I'm still writing "Memoried Glances" in July, 2013, and will begin my 20th year in December. The History Press of Charleston, S.C. published my book based on my columns that covered the years from 1894 to 1980 in 2011. It is entitled, "Remembering LaGrange" and is in paper back form.

At my age I'm not planning to write another book, but I am hoping that heaven will have a newspaper job open when I get there. I pray that I can either be a stringer or a proofreader.