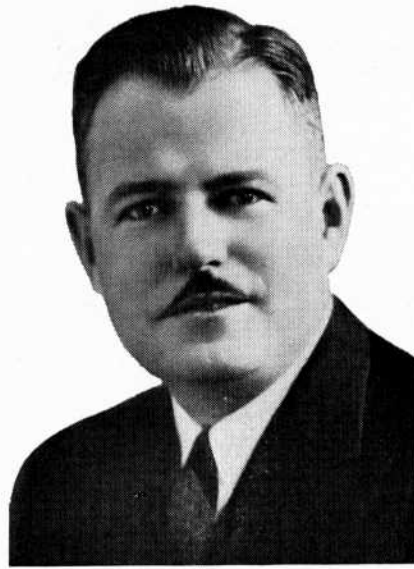


Press Organizer

by
Sigfrid Floren



Vernon T. Sanford

IN an office filled with journalistic atmosphere, Vernon T. Sanford, '32 journ, sits alertly at a modernistically designed desk on the third floor of Oklahoma City's Biltmore Hotel. He doesn't mind giving time to an interviewer, but he is often forced to excuse himself to answer important telephone calls his secretary cannot handle. It's a busy office.

His youthfulness justifies the shortening of his name to "Vern," which is the way he is known to most of his associates. He claims he is getting old, but his good humored smile and neat personal appearance make guesses range below the thirty-four years of age that he is. He might, however, be justified in feeling older, since he began to bear the responsibilities of an adult much earlier than most men do.

He started working when a ten-year-old lad, as carrier of a small eight or ten-page newspaper on the "graveyard route" out on the edge of town—and now is executive head of the state's press association. Mr. Sanford's biography is a success story compressed into comparatively few years.

Last fall Mr. Sanford completed his term as president of the Newspaper Association Managers, Inc., the national organization of the heads of state associations, and is in his sixth year as secretary-manager of the Oklahoma Press Association. He has already served the Oklahoma group for a longer period than any other secretary since its formation.

It might be explained to those outside the realm of journalism that the Oklahoma Press Association is a trade organization of newspapers. Its purpose is to secure for its members beneficial legislation, to watch for the latest advancements in all phases of newspaper publishing, and to bring the state's publishers closer to one another. There are similar organizations in most states of the union now. The Oklahoma association ranks particularly high among them, both in percentage of state papers that hold membership, and in general effectiveness of its work. No small

measure of this success may be attributed to Mr. Sanford's management, backed by his many years of experience in all the departments of a newspaper.

Delivering the poorest route of the *Chickasha Daily Express* was his first job. That was work in the real sense of the word for a boy ten years old. The roads were dirt—often mud—and near a lonely cemetery that raised the hair on his head during the early darkness of winter evenings.

Within a few years his territory included half the town, and later all of it, a total of a thousand papers to be delivered on a bicycle each evening. It is no wonder, therefore, that little "Sandy"—so dubbed from his last name, not his hair—was quite an accomplished cyclist.

A broad smile came over his face as he recalled for his interviewer some of the feats he mastered, such as pedaling up a hill while standing erect on the pedals, throwing papers from his sack with one hand and holding to the handlebar with the other.

With his mother to support and his invalid father to care for, newspaper delivery was not all that the youth had to do. He sold magazines, soft drinks and candy around the depot at train times. After finishing his paper route in the evenings, he took tickets at a theater, often leaving that job in the hands of a friend twenty or thirty minutes before his quitting time so that he might sell radios in Chickasha homes.

This, in addition to going to school and aiding his father in his occupation, left the youngster no time for anything other than work. His ability and industry were consistently recognized and rewarded with more and better jobs. Even while still carrying the total city circulation of the *Daily Express*, he worked in the composing department of the newspaper, first as a "printer's devil," then as assistant pressman.

At twenty years of age, Sandy was at-

tempting to get further recognition from the editor-publisher of the *Daily Express*, George Evans. Like most fellows of his age associated with newspapers, Sandy had the yen to write. Having learned of Mr. Evans' especial liking for personal items in his newspaper, the youth kept his eyes open for them, and on Saturday evenings he asked persons sitting in their cars parked on downtown streets for personal news. After several weeks in which an extra-large group of "personals" appeared, the editor asked their source.

One evening after an extremely heavy rain, Mr. Evans wandered into the office where Sandy was doing his daily sweeping, and inquired of him, "Vern, can you write?"

The boy, thoroughly perplexed, managed to say, "A little."

"Well, sit down there and write me a story about last night's rain."

Still more perplexed, Vern sat down and began to write. After two or three paragraphs had taken form on the page, the editor declared that would do, and left the room.

Several days later Mr. Evans unconditionally offered the youth the position of classified advertising manager and intrusted him with the task of installing the new Basil L. Smith system. In two years in this job, Mr. Sanford increased the amount of classified advertising from about twenty inches—less than one column—to more than a full page.

The passing of his father left the young man with fewer responsibilities, and his work as classified ad manager had enabled him to save enough money to fulfill a wish he had long had in his heart—to attend the University. He moved to Norman late in 1927, enrolled in the School of Journalism, and secured a position in the classified department of the *Norman Transcript*. Later he was transferred to the display department. In 1929 he became advertising manager of the *Cleveland County Democrat-News*, a newspaper then published twice weekly in Norman.

On his own, Mr. Sanford operated a small advertising agency during the last two years he was in the University, handling local newspaper accounts, and selling billboard, direct mail, novelty, and other forms of advertising. His success in this venture was indicated by the fact that at the time he had to leave it, he had a staff of six employes working with him.

The same year that he came to the University, Mr. Sanford married. He and Mrs. Sanford now have a daughter ten years old and a son seven.

Although several jobs were offered him at his graduation from the University, he felt there were still things he could learn about advertising and about field managers' work, upon which he was specializing. At the University he had been the first individual to study this phase of journalistic activity, and he had worked with Harry Rutledge, the manager of the Oklahoma

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of this school year. Then he and Mrs. Arbuckle, the former Helen Meister, '26, '27ma, will establish their home in Norman.

Five years ago Mr. Arbuckle went to Oklahoma City from Duncan where he was high school athletic coach.

Death takes writer

Roy A. (Doll) Foster, '20ex, died last month at his home in Hollywood, California. He was a writer for several nationally circulated magazines and a regular contributor to Roy Wagner's *Script*.

While attending the University, Mr. Foster helped to organize the Jazz Hounds, campus pep order. He belonged to numerous other organizations and was active in athletics, being on the freshman football squad and track team.

His home had been in Norman, where he graduated from high school.

He joined the army as a private in 1917 and resigned as second lieutenant shortly after the Armistice. Returning to Oklahoma, he worked in the construction business both in Norman and in Oklahoma City, and also built and operated the swimming pool known as Doll's Park on Norman's west side.

World radio program

Max K. Gilstrap, '37journal, "Ranger Naturalist" of Yosemite National Park and the Grand Canyon, is conducting a weekly radio program of nature stories and bird calls this month over short-wave station WRUL, Boston. This station is the most powerful independent short-wave station in the world and is operated as a "World Radio University."

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Press Association. At that time the O.P.A. was part of the University Extension Division. The following year it was separated and moved to offices in Oklahoma City.

His desire for further school work took him to the University of Missouri as a graduate student in advertising. He was given a fellowship there, and during nine months graded 10,000 papers, by actual count, for his professor, E. K. Johnson.

Ironic as it may seem, Mr. Sanford accepted a job after his five years of schooling, with his Master of Arts degree from Missouri, at a salary less than half of what he was earning in Chickasha before he entered O.U. But it was 1933, not 1927. His new position was advertising manager of the *Anadarko Daily News*, which had just been established, with no mat service, no press wire—"nothing!" He held this position and helped the fledging newspaper to strengthen its wings until March, 1934, when the managership of the Nebraska Press Association became vacant.

One of twenty-four applicants for the Nebraska job and the only out-of-state man, he did not have a particularly strong

chance. He was, however, the only man with experience in a field which was just beginning to receive attention throughout the country. Each applicant was called individually before a large group of directors of the association and questioned intensively. By his special request, Mr. Sanford was the last to be interviewed. He had realized this would not only give him more time to prepare remarks for the assemblage of newspapermen, but would give him a psychological advantage over the other applicants.

One of the men began firing questions at the Oklahoman as soon as he had been introduced. They dealt principally with classified advertising. Mr. Sanford answered accurately and as rapidly as the questions were put. Soon almost all of the others were raising questions and seemed to have no idea of bringing the "interview" to a close when the chairman finally rose and stated, "Gentlemen, if you must continue to interrogate Mr. Sanford, I'd suggest you hire him."

He was hired and remained in Nebraska from March to August, 1934, at which time he was offered the managership of the Oklahoma Press Association, an older and stronger organization. Knowing he had left the Nebraska Press Association in better condition than he found it, he was happy to return to his native state.

As secretary-manager of the Oklahoma Press Association, Mr. Sanford has performed services for newspapers not only within the state, but all over the nation. He established and managed for three years the publication of the monthly *Newspaper Association Managers Bulletin*, by means of which information and ideas were collected from the various state associations and published for the benefit of the entire national membership. On his motion the publication of this bulletin was made automatically a duty of the president. It therefore passed from his hands at the end of his term as president last fall.

Chief among the services performed for the newspapers that are members of the state association is the publication of a monthly journal. Under Mr. Sanford's editorship, it carries information on such subjects as publicity control, newspaper contests, latest advertising schemes, newspaper laws, type variations, and countless others common in regular newspaper publishing.

By its official statement, the O.P.A. is "Devoted to the interests of newspaper men and the development of journalism in Oklahoma."

Mr. Sanford, in this position at the head of the O.P.A., must act as "middleman" between state journalists and the public, between newspapers and the legislature or other governing officials, and, most important of all, between the journalists themselves.

The little "Sandy" who began delivering papers on the *Daily Express'* poorest route at the age of ten has reached success—and he had to do it the hard way.

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