

On Chicago Defender Honor Roll

Sugarmon, Evers, Bates Get Coveted Honors

A Publisher's Success Story

W.O. Walker's Achievements Equal Paper's

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a series of articles on Negro publishers, presented in cooperation with the National Newspaper Publishers Association. This series is designed to acquaint the public with the men whose publications have been in the forefront of the fight for first class citizenship on behalf of minorities in this country.

By CHARLES L. SANDERS

However history rates Negro journalism, it will almost certainly record that, when the time of dying came for bias, bigotry and intolerance, the Negro Press was the power that thrust the rapier that inflicted the mortal wound.

And rubbed salt into the sore did the Negro editors whose writings were voices of conscience and warnings, virtually thorns in James Crow's flesh.

WILLIAM O. WALKER

William O. Walker, editor and publisher of the Cleveland Call and Post, has been a newspaperman for 40 years. In 1919 he turned his first news story to Managing Editor Ira Lewis of the Pittsburgh Courier.

Walker covered a speech of Roscoe Conklin Simmons at the Syria Mosque. An expert shorthand writer, the young reporter wrote down every word the orator said.

The complete story enabled the Courier to hit the streets with an "Extra" and scoop all competition. For his night's work, William Walker was promoted to City Editor.

A year later he went to the city desk of the Norfolk Journal and Guide. After working there for a year he got fed up with the town and started to look for another job.

STARTED TRIBUNE

He went to Washington, D.C., where, with the Murray Brothers (job printers) he started the Washington Tribune. The Tribune grew to be one of America's largest Negro weeklies in that era.

After working as Tribune managing editor for nine years, W. O. quite when one of the Murray brothers died and subsequent family bickering became intolerable.

He went on to work as advertising manager of Washington's famed The Fair Department Store, a store that pioneered racial integration of its sales clerks. Walker rose rapidly and finally became manager of the Baltimore branch store.

But the newspaper bug had bitten deeply: W. O. wanted to get back into journalism. He studied opportunities in several large cities and finally decided to try Cleveland.

In 1932 he came to Cleveland as Managing Editor of the Cleveland Call and Post newspaper -- if indeed, it could be called a newspaper in '32. Here is what he found:

The Call and Post was so deeply in debt to its printers they refused to work.

Subscribers had not received mail copies of the newspaper in 17 weeks.

A former employee had just won a court judgement for unpaid wages.

The corporation had lost its franchise because it had failed to pay state taxes.

There was little, if any, unencumbered real property on the premises.

REBUILDING EFFORT

Even though the Call and Post's future looked as bleak as the 1932 Depression years, the youthful M. E. plunged in head-first and started a rebuilding effort.

Acquaintance with Lawrence O. Payne, a popular young lawyer and republican Party leader, caused Walker to declare himself and the newspaper Republican. His hard-hitting editorials and practical approach to the Negro electorate won him enough financial backing to purchase crude newspaper make-up equipment and a second-hand linotype machine.

Walker arranged to set his own type, lock it in newspaper forms and transport the forms across the city to a Bohemian printing plant for stereotyping and printing.

The alliance proved to be a good one. Advertising steadily increased, the corporation's bank account grew and the Call and Post started to really prove its slogan:

"Ohio's Fastest Growing Weekly."

Today the newspaper plant houses every conceivable mechanical device necessary for the production of an excellent newspaper.

\$350,000 PAYROLL

There are 50 fulltime employees, about 30 part-time writers and photographers. The company's payroll is nearly \$350,000 annually.

Each week the plant produces two editions of the Call and Post -- one edition for Cleveland, the other for smaller Ohio cities, another newspaper, "The Neighborhood News," and several "shoppers" for Cleveland supermarkets.

William O. Walker's personal achievements have paralleled the success of his newspaper.

He has served as president of the Cleveland Board of Trade, president of the Cleveland branch of the NAACP, president of the Cleveland Urban League. he is president of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, an organization of American Negro newspapers.

He was one of the founders of the Future Outlook League, a militant organization responsible for numerous boycotts that forced open doors of employment to Ohio Negroes.

Walker served for six years as a member of the United States Commission for UNESCO and, in 1940, he was a member of a three-man team appointed by the Secretary of War to tour Europe to seek evidence of discrimination against Negro soldiers. The evidence was found and, after a report was made to the President of United States, efforts were made to eliminate discrimination in the Armed Services.

POLITICALLY ACTIVE

He has been active in Ohio Republican politics for 27 years. He served for six years as member of Cleveland City Council, and since 1956, he has been a member of the Ohio Republican State Central and Executive Committees.

While serving as a Councilman, he spearheaded a successful fight to get Negro motormen on Cleveland streetcars and used his vote to force numerous industries to hire Negro workers.

He held training classes in the Call and Post building for Negroes seeking to become policemen, firemen and highway patrolmen, and was a co-sponser of legislation in Council that created the Cleveland Community Relations Board, a forerunner of the Ohio Fair Employments Practices Commission.

Cited For Efforts In Area of Civil Rights

ATTY. RUSSELL B. SUGARMON

O. Z. EVERS

L. C. BATES