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NNA: The Sixth Decade

Journey through the National Newspaper Association’s history



“It is no secret now that our association was in a staggering state of disruption and disorganization at that time. Practically every member, as well as allied industry groups, learned quickly of our plight, and instead of offering decent assistance were ready in almost every instance to help give a good start down the slide.”

-- NNA President Robert Pritchard of the Weston (WV) Democrat, 1936 convention in Poland Springs, ME

“The only way to pay off a debt is to start paying. I’m going to write a check for \$25.”

-- Walter Grannan, publisher of Western News in Canaan, CT
1936 NNA convention

The U.S. Supreme Court decided the National Recovery Act, which did not supply NNA with financial help to enforce its business regulations, was unconstitutional.



NNA took on more than \$13,000 in debt. Considering inflation, if that debt were to exist today it would total roughly \$200,000. The group nearly went broke while helping the government enforce business regulations for weekly and small daily papers under the National Recovery Act. To make matters worse, the association’s new executive director, Harry Rutledge, involved the organization in a promotion that lost a substantial amount of money.

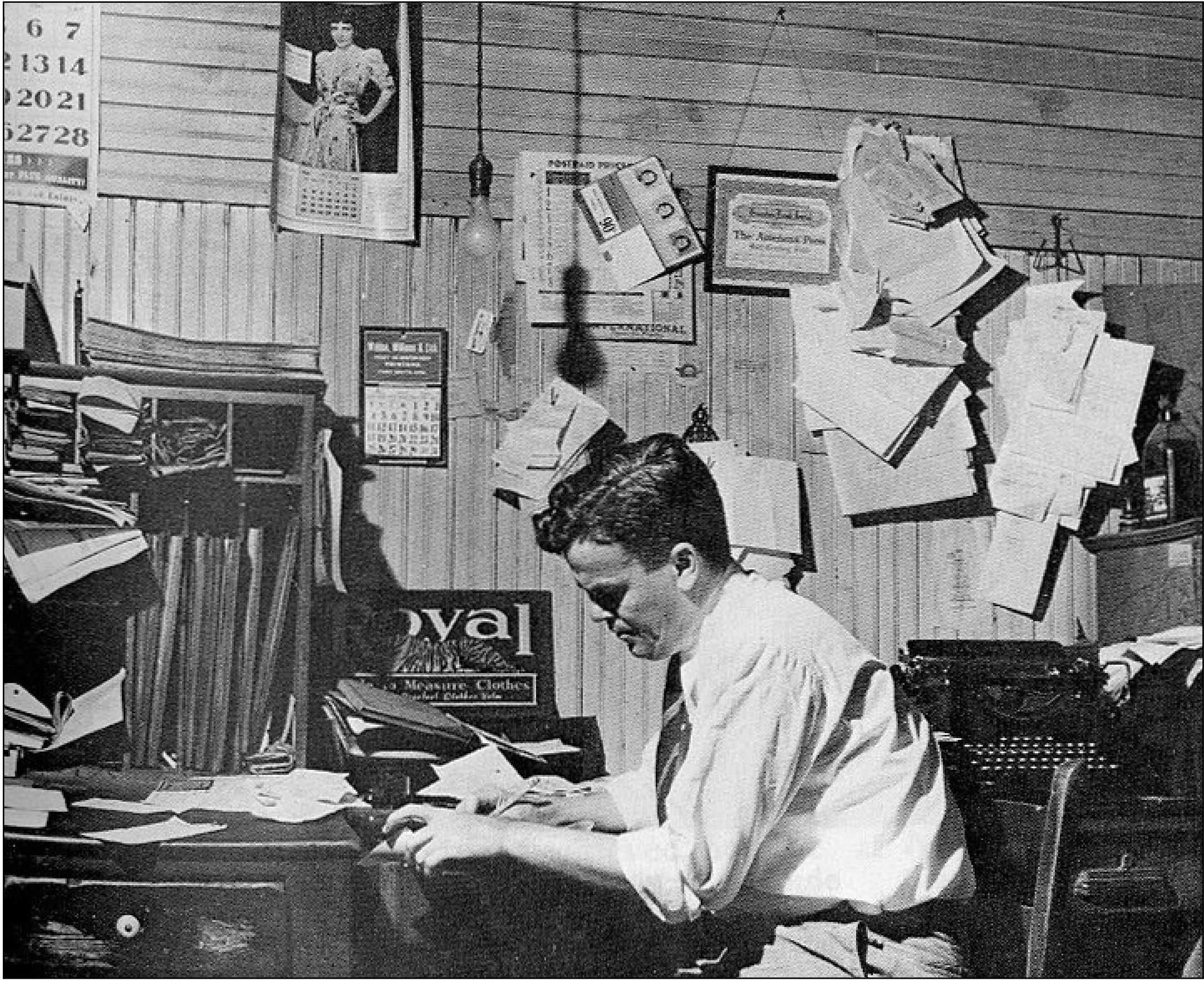
The economic ‘revival,’ as the group called it, took place at the annual convention this year. Two days after publishers received the criticism that they were turning their backs on the NNA, these publishers met to brainstorm ways to save the association.

During that meeting, publisher Walter Grannan, pitched in with \$25, which is equal to about \$400 today. Moved by Grannan’s generosity, a wave of other publishers pledged their financial support with fervor. The money raised put NNA in the black by the 1937 convention.

1935

1935

1936



Once America’s involvement in World War II began, newspapers played a role in boosting morale. Rural papers were instrumental in organizing drives for scrap metal – including pots and pans – to be transformed into war materials.

Many rural papers lost employees to the draft, and some of those employees never returned.

In 1938, the association created the Amos Award, named after pioneer journalist from Ohio and late NNA member Gen. James O. Amos. The Amos award is still awarded today and recognizes association members who come from community newspapers and do an exemplary job of serving their community and journalism.

“Literally scores of country journals closed their doors ... while others hung on, once again with mothers, wives and daughters assuming both front and backshop duties.”

-- Robert Karolevitz, author of “From Quill to Computer” about WWII

1938

During the war, first- and second-generation Japanese Americans as well as people who had been educated in Japan were relocated to camps. There, they were allowed to publish their own Japanese-language newspapers, and the papers often spoke out against the prejudices that had robbed them of their freedom.

Above, Editor Cary William of the Greensboro (GA) Herald Journal, like most rural newspaper editors and publishers, was confronted by the uncertainty brought on by World War II.



At the Laruens (IA) Sun Grace Maurer took over the management “for the duration” when her husband, Neil, was called into military service. This scenario was repeated in numerous newspaper shops throughout the country as women stepped into the breach as they had in colonial times.

1941

Presidents of NNA’s sixth decade

1. R.H. Pritchard of the Weston Democrat in Weston, WV, 1935
2. Clayton T. Rand of the Gulfport Guide in Gulfport, MS, 1936
3. William W. Loomis of the LaGrange Citizen in LaGrange, IL, 1937
4. W.H. Conrad of the Star News in Medford, WI, 1938
5. Howard W. Palmer of the Greenwich Press in Greenwich, CT, 1939
6. Roy A. Brown* of the San Rafael Daily Independent in San Rafael, CA, 1940
7. Raymond B. Howard of the Madison Press in London, OH, 1941
8. Edwin F. Abels of the Lawrence Outlook in Lawrence, KS, 1942
9. Albert S. Hardy of the Gainesville News in Gainesville, GA, 1943
10. W. Verne McKinney of the Hillsboro Argus in Hillsboro, OR, 1944

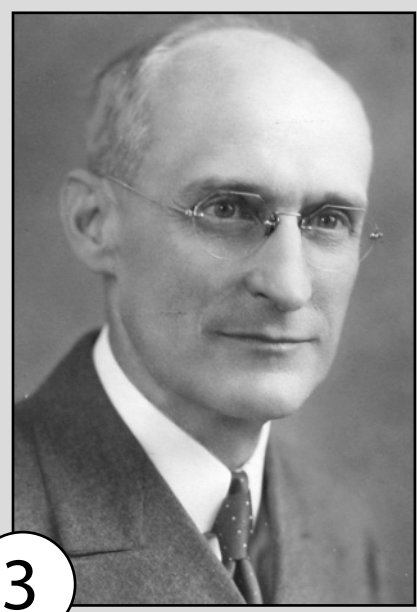
* No photo available



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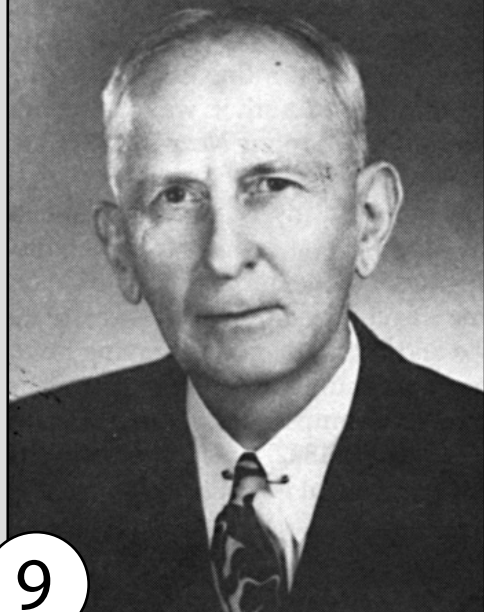
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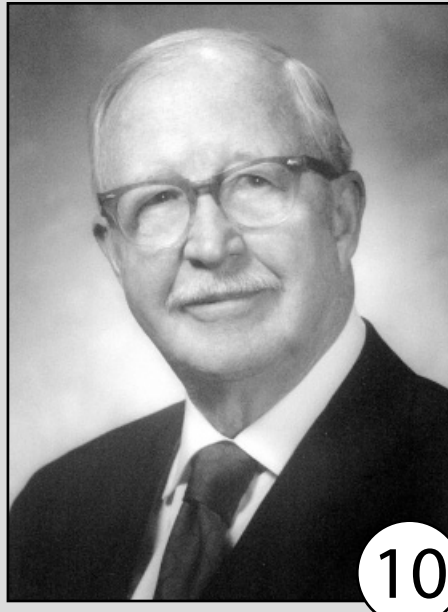
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