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**74. Promoted to publisher**  
After holding various advertising and management positions with the *Reporter-News* and the emerging Harte-Hanks company, A.B. "Stormy" Shelton was named publisher in 1964, a position he would hold for more than 30 years. By the time of Shelton's death in 1997, the *Reporter-News* had been managed by the Hanks-Shelton family for 90 years.

**75. Technological advances**  
The *Reporter-News* switched to computerized typesetting in 1975. In 1984, a new \$6 million printing press enabled the newspaper to use color pictures on a daily basis throughout the paper.

**76. Civic benefactor**  
Stormy Shelton was one of Abilene's most generous philanthropists. Hardin-Simmons University, Hendrick Medical Center, the West Texas Rehab Center, First Baptist Church and United Way were among his favorite causes, but he contributed to hundreds of others during his life. On his death, the Shelton Family Foundation was formed to continue his benevolence.

However, Shelton preferred to remain in the background, much like his father-in-law, Bernard Hanks, and another generous Abilenian, Judy Matthews. Throughout much of the '90s, when a large donation would be announced from "an anonymous donor," Abilenians often would be left to wonder whether the gift had come from Matthews or Shelton. They became referred to — respectfully — as Anonymous One and Anonymous Two.

**77. Shelton Stadium**  
Two Abilene facilities that are named for Stormy Shelton are HSU's Shelton Stadium and Hendrick's Shelton Building.

**78. Role in Harte-Hanks**  
Stormy Shelton played a major role in the growth and development of Harte-Hanks Communications as an international company. He was a board member, controlled the largest block of stock in the company, and played a key role in the company's decision to go public in 1972, to go back private in 1984, and then go public again in 1993.

**79. Who gets the credit?**  
"If you don't care who gets the credit, you can get a lot done."  
— Stormy Shelton's creed, as reported by those closest to him.

**80. Good for the town**  
"If it has been good for the town, Stormy has been for it. He's believed that as the community goes, so goes the newspaper. They will reflect each other's successes."  
— Frank Puckett, *Reporter-News* publisher at the time of Shelton's death, Jan. 16, 1997

**81. State presidents**  
Two *Reporter-News* publishers have presided over the state organization for publishers, the Texas Daily Newspaper Association — Stormy Shelton in 1976 and Frank Puckett in 1992. Three of the newspaper's editors have been president of the state editors' organization, the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors Association — Ed Wishcamper in 1959, Dick Tarpley in 1973-74, and Glenn Dromgoole in 1996-97.

**82. Ed Wishcamper**  
Ed Wishcamper went to work at the newspaper for no pay in 1936, "just for the experience." A few months later, he was elevated to a paying job — at \$5 a week. Sixteen years later, he would be named managing editor, then editor. He retired in 1979 and died this year.

**83. Idea man**  
"Ed Wishcamper was noted for his quick wit in public speeches or in civic affairs. And he was probably the sharpest 'idea man' in the newspaper profession anywhere in the U.S."  
— Dick Tarpley, who was Wishcamper's managing editor and succeeded him as editor.

**84. Minter Park**  
Vera Minter Park, at the corner of North 2nd and Cypress, was editor Ed Wishcamper's brainchild. He led the Abilene Kiwanis Club in financing and constructing the downtown park, which includes a waterfall (turned off during the recent drought).

**85. Two doctorates**  
Wishcamper received not one but two honorary doctorates — from his alma mater McMurry in 1971 and from Abilene Christian University in 1975.

**86. Civic leadership**  
The *Reporter-News* gave strong editorial leadership to a number of bond issues in the '50s and '60s

for building new public facilities. A \$13.3 million joint city-county bond issue in 1967 included the Civic Center, Expo Center, and Municipal Airport. Earlier bond issues had financed a new city hall, new library, Hubbard Creek Lake and a number of new schools, including the present Abilene High and Cooper locations.

**87. Wet by a drop**  
The *Reporter-News* took a stand editorially in the wet-dry election of 1978, the most hotly contested election in Abilene's history.

Two years earlier in a wet-dry vote, the newspaper had not taken a stand, reasoning that it might call into question the fairness of the news reporting. By 1978, however, the newspaper decided it had to take a position.

After outlining the issues, the carefully worded editorial concluded with these words: "The *Reporter-News* believes approval of the local option is in the best interests of Abilene."

The wets won by 131 votes out of more than 23,000 cast. The next morning's headline told the story: "Wet by a drop."

**88. Outstanding citizens**  
*Reporter-News* publisher Howard McMahon was named Abilene's Outstanding Citizen in 1954, Stormy Shelton won the award in 1968, Ed Wishcamper took the honor in 1974, and Frank Puckett was the selection in 1991.

**89. Dick Tarpley**  
Dick Tarpley joined the *Reporter-News* staff in 1946 as courthouse reporter and progressed through the editing chairs until being named managing editor in 1968 and editor in 1979. He retired at the end of 1985 but continued writing a weekly column for the newspaper until 1997.

**90. Youngest sports editor**  
When he started in the newspaper business as sports editor at the *Edinburg Valley Review*, Dick Tarpley was the youngest sports editor of a daily newspaper in America. He was 16.

**91. History lesson**  
In her Page One column, Katharyn Duff told a story about Dick Tarpley leading a group of school children on a tour of the newspaper in 1975. "You know," Tarpley told them, "this newspaper started way back in 1881."  
A little boy raised his hand. "Were you here when it started?"

**92. Responsibility of the press**  
Dick Tarpley preached to his staff, and to the community through columns and speeches, that the press has the responsibility (1) to report fairly, accurately and thoroughly what is happening locally and nationally; (2) to be a guardian of good government; (3) to provide leadership in the community through the editorial page; and (4) to be a reliable source for advertising information.

**93. Familiar names**  
Noted Texas author A.C. Greene got his start as a reporter for the *Abilene Reporter-News*, as did author/journalist Jerry Flemmons. Liz Carpenter was the newspaper's Washington correspondent, with her husband Les, before becoming Lady Bird's assistant. Garth Jones and Mike Cochran became well-known correspondents for the Associated Press, but both worked in Abilene first. Rawson Stovall was hired by editor Dick Tarpley to review video games when Stovall was just 10 years old. The video whiz kid columnist appeared on the



Glenn Dromgoole: Portrayed Frank Grimes.



Special souvenir edition after Gulf War, March 1, 1991.

"Tonight Show," "Good Morning America" and "That's Incredible." Bill Minutaglio went on to the *Dallas Morning News* and wrote a biography of George W. Bush. Ellie Rucker started Action Line at the *Reporter-News* and later was a columnist in Austin.

Jim Witt, a former city editor, became editor of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Another ex-staffer, Don Flores, became editor in El Paso.

Bill Hart covered sports for more than 20 years and was inducted into the High School Football Hall of Fame. Jess Cagle went from entertainment writer here to *People* magazine and then *Entertainment Weekly*. The movie "Last Plane Out" was based on former reporter Jim Conley's experience covering a revolution in Nicaragua.

**94. Familiar voice**  
As the newspaper's switchboard operator through the '70s, '80s and '90s, Millie Ates was the first contact most customers had with the *Reporter-News* for 27 years. When she retired in 1998, someone figured she had probably fielded more than a million calls in her career.

**95. Frank Puckett**  
Frank Puckett joined the *Reporter-News* as executive vice president and general manager in 1981, becoming president, then publisher before his retirement in 2000.

**96. Community leader**  
Besides his deep involvement with Dyess as chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, Frank Puckett played a leadership role in downtown redevelopment. He helped organize the downtown Tax Increment Finance District in the mid-1980s, which made tax money available for numerous downtown improvements. He was the first head of the TIF board. In the midst of an economic downturn in 1989, Abilene civic leaders launched a year-long communitywide planning initiative called ACT-NOW. Puckett was tapped to head the effort.

**97. All-America City**  
When Abilene was named an All-America City in 1990, the decision was announced late on a Saturday night in Phoenix, Arizona. Because Phoenix time is an hour earlier, the newspaper held its first edition until a staffer called with the announcement just before midnight Abilene time. The headline proclaimed, "We're All-America!"

Abilene's nomination for the award was based on three civic projects: providing health care for the needy, a communitywide planning initiative, and the approval by voters of a half-cent sales tax for industrial development, the first city in Texas to do so. A full-page editorial applauded the nomination and went on to cite "20 More Reasons Why We Think Abilene Is an All-America City."

**98. Running mates**  
While in Washington on a Military Affairs Committee trip in 1993, Frank Puckett, a veteran of several marathons, was invited to



Frank Puckett: Community leader.

go on a special run — with President Bill Clinton.

They ran together, just the two of them accompanied by Secret Service agents, for about 30 minutes, then Clinton invited Puckett into the Oval Office for a chat.

Puckett related the experience in a full-page article in the *Reporter-News* on April 11, 1993.

**99. Almost killed him**  
Publisher Frank Puckett broke his back in three places and almost died in a hunting accident on Dec. 30, 1994.

The accident occurred early in the morning when a tree limb broke, plunging Puckett from his hunting platform about 30 feet to the ground. In freezing temperatures, he would not be found by his hunting companions for more than six hours.

One month later, he returned to work in a plastic body cast with rods and screws in his back.

Managing editor Danny Reagan's two-page account of Puckett's experience was headlined "Wait for a miracle." It won statewide awards for feature writing.

**100. Glenn Dromgoole**  
Glenn Dromgoole came to the *Reporter-News* from Bryan-College Station as executive editor in 1985 and became editor in 1986. He left the newspaper in November 1997 to write books.

**101. The 50 cent newspaper**  
On April 1, 1986, the *Abilene Reporter-News* became the first newspaper in Texas to charge 50 cents for its daily editions. Soon most large dailies would follow suit.

**102. Afternoon edition dropped**  
Following an industry trend, the *Reporter-News* dropped its afternoon edition in 1987 and expanded its morning edition.

**103. Literacy project**  
The *Reporter-News* published a full-page editorial in December 1987 listing "50 Ways You Can Help Stamp Out Illiteracy." The editorial led to the creation of the Taylor County Adult Literacy Council.

Reprints of the editorial were requested by more than 150 newspapers, literacy organizations and community groups in the U.S. and as far away as Australia.

**104. Desert Storm**  
"We're at war," screamed the headline in the Thursday morning *Abilene Reporter-News*, Jan. 17, 1991, after U.S. warplanes attacked Iraq in "Operation Desert Storm." The newspaper announced in a box on the front page that a special afternoon edition would also be published that day.

"Allies kick Saddam" was the bold headline leading the front page of the 10-page Thursday afternoon special edition, filled with nothing but Desert Storm news. Sold exclusively at newsstands, it was the *Reporter-News'* first PM paper since the afternoon edition was dropped four years earlier.

Six weeks after Desert Storm



David Mercier: Current publisher.

began, it was over, and the newspaper published a VICTORY souvenir edition on Friday morning, March 1, 1991.

**105. Civic spirit**

"Two characteristics of this city made a strong initial impression on me when I first came here: its friendliness and its goodness. I sensed right away that this was special ground, that through the years a civic spirit had been molded that made Abilene different."

— Glenn Dromgoole, *Abilene Reporter-News*, June 10, 1990.

**106. Cheerleader**  
"If a newspaper isn't leading cheers for its town, who is?"  
— Glenn Dromgoole, *Abilene Reporter-News*, Nov. 14, 1997

**107. Goodfellows**  
Goodfellows, the *Reporter-News*-sponsored Christmas charity fund drive, began in 1912 as the Mother Hubbard Anti-Empty Stocking Campaign. The Exchange Club provides the president for the drive.

Pennies for Goodfellows was started in 1988 as a way to encourage everyone to give something, especially young people. School groups collect several thousand dollars a year in change for the charity drive.

**108. Religion coverage**  
The *Reporter-News* was one of the first newspapers in the state to have a weekly section devoted to coverage of religion. The section, edited first by Roy Jones, then Loretta Fulton, was started in 1986 and expanded in 1995 to include the Faith & Ethics page.

**109. School boundaries**  
In 1991, the Abilene school board, concerned about increasing racial imbalance at the city's two high schools, changed the high school attendance zones. In numerous editorials, the newspaper urged and supported the changes. It was one of the most controversial issues of the '90s in Abilene. Former AISD administrator David Polnick called it "one of the best things ever to happen to the schools here. History will bear this out."

**110. Crossroads series**  
One of the most extensive series published by the *Reporter-News* was "Crossroads: Towns in Transition" about the challenges and opportunities facing the small towns in the Big Country. The project included 77 articles, 86 photographs, 70 informational graphics, filling 38 full pages in the course of a week, Sept. 19-26, 1993. It led to the creation of the Texas Midwest Community Network, an alliance of area towns, and swept top state awards for journalism that year.

Other major special reports included two on aging concerns: "Aging Parents, Caring Children" in 1995 and "Understanding Alzheimer's" in 1997.

**111. Online newspaper**  
The *Abilene Reporter-News* went online via the World Wide Web in February 1995. It was the second newspaper in Texas (Austin was first) to offer news on the web updated daily.

Danny Reagan, then managing editor, became the newspaper's online editor and webmaster, and continues to oversee its content. Reagan developed a website devoted to news about the Dallas Cowboys in the fall of 1995, and that site (cowboys.texnews.com) brought thousands of readers to the *Reporter-News* online product from all over the world. The online newspaper



Terri Burke: First female editor.

(www.reporternews.com) has continued to grow to more than 15,000 unique visitors a day, logging two million page views a month. In April of this year the newspaper added an online video newscast, ARNoonCast.

**112. New owner**  
Early in 1997, Harte-Hanks Communications, founded as a newspaper company, announced it would sell all of its daily newspapers.

On May 19, 1997, The E.W. Scripps Co. signed an agreement to purchase the Harte-Hanks papers, including the *Reporter-News*. The sale became effective on Oct. 15, 1997.

Scripps is one of the nation's oldest newspaper groups, established in 1878, three years before the *Reporter-News*.

**113. Jimmy Denley**  
James H. Denley, a veteran Scripps newspaperman, was named editor of the *Reporter-News* on Dec. 1, 1997. He stayed for about a year and a half before taking a Scripps assignment in Memphis, Tenn.

**114. Color Comics**  
In 1998, the *Reporter-News* became the first Texas newspaper to publish its daily comics page in full color every day.

**115. Spelling Bee**  
The *Reporter-News* began sponsoring the Taylor County Spelling Bee in 1999. The local winner advances to the National Spelling Bee, sponsored by Scripps, in Washington, D.C. A Wylie student, Kayla Lyssy, has won the local Bee all three years.

Scripps also has demonstrated its presence in Abilene as a strong financial supporter of local literacy and community causes through the Scripps Howard Foundation.

**116. Terri Burke**  
Terri Burke became the sixth and current editor of the *Reporter-News* in November 1999 and the first woman to hold the top editorial job. A fourth-generation Texan, she came to Abilene from the Scripps-owned *Albuquerque Tribune*, where she was managing editor.

**117. David Mercier**  
The current publisher, David Mercier, was promoted from vice president for sales and marketing to publisher of the *Reporter-News* upon Frank Puckett's retirement, Aug. 1, 2000. Mercier came to Abilene in 1998 from Palm Springs, Calif.

He leads a staff of 230 employees plus several hundred agents and contractors who work throughout the Big Country. The *Reporter-News* consistently ranks among the top 50 newspapers in the United States in market penetration, with three of four adults reading the paper at least once a week. Market studies show that 70 percent of the residents of Taylor County say the newspaper is their primary source of advertising information.

Besides the *Reporter-News*, the company publishes *The Abilenian*, *Dyess Peacemaker*, *Money Clip* and *Abilene Magazine*.

**118. Local section**  
In May 2000, the *Reporter-News* added a local news section and changed the width of the newspaper to a narrower, more convenient size.

**119. Water woes**  
The *Reporter-News* published an eight-day series in July 2000 examining Abilene's water situation, a continuing concern for the community throughout its history.

"We believe no other issue is more important to the future of our city and our region," wrote editor Terri Burke.

The series won the community service award this spring from the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors Association.

**120. Ensuring its future**  
"I know I'm just a steward of this institution — tending it and nurturing it on behalf of its readers, charged with ensuring its future for long after I've retired to a porch near Catclaw Creek."  
— Terri Burke, *Abilene Reporter-News*, Nov. 21, 1999

"The *Abilene Reporter-News* plans to be an integral part of Abilene and West Texas for another century of growth and opportunity."  
— Publisher David Mercier

Compiled by former editor Glenn Dromgoole. Sources include *From Tents to Computers* by Ed Wishcamper; *Catclaw Country* by Katharyn Duff; *Lone Star Christmas: Seasonal Editorials of Frank Grimes* by Charles Marler; *Abilene Remembered: Our Centennial Treasury Book, 1881-1981* by the *Abilene Reporter-News* staff; and numerous newspaper files, including the *AR-N's* 50th anniversary edition. Retired editor Dick Tarpley, retired reporter Bob Bruce and newspaper librarian Ginny Daughtrey provided valuable assistance. Edited by Danny Reagan and designed by Sally-Anne Moringello.