

## The Value of a Newspaper

Spending a week as an Educator Exchange participant with The Cullman Times, I have a new found respect for the paper and the staff associated with the creation of the paper. Walking through the doors on that first day to be greeted by the Editorial Assistant, Sallee Chandler, I immediately began to feel welcomed as she started right off taking time from her daily writing assignments to tell me about the staff and each department. I realized as I watched her take phone calls from citizens of Cullman that her mission is to pay attention to detail and receive accurate information worthy of reporting.

Each day while there, I observed each department's role to complete the creation of The Cullman Times and have it delivered in a timely fashion to its readers. From the business office to classifieds, advertising, reporting, editing and then to print, the common communication between each department demonstrated support of each other.

Meeting deadlines and paying attention to details were the common thread in each department. Observing that the need of the paper is to appeal to the interests of the readers whether it be local, state or international news, or other areas such as the crossword puzzle, horoscopes, Ann Landers, farm report, sports, comics, or the obituaries, the editor, David Palmer demonstrated seriousness in respect to the sections with the desire to publish the type of paper with something for everyone. After editing, the print is sent to the press room. By this time it is approaching 4:00 p.m.

In order for me to see the process of printing, I came in on the 2<sup>nd</sup> shift, 3:00 to 10:00. Scotty the press room manager, Virgil and April worked diligently to prepare the machines to continue the process of insuring the paper would be ready for delivery for the next day. I was greeted in the press room by Scotty who began showing me the process of print to press. He

also explained Haley's job was very valuable to the print. Once the sections were in print and placed in lay out it is then edited, by David Palmer. After editing, the print is sent to the press room where Haley, a press associate, spends time rechecking the headlines, pages and advertisements for possible errors. Again, I witnessed quality control in the mission for The Cullman Times to print a quality paper. While spending time with her, I learned that she also checked for possible errors for the papers, Athens News Courier, The North Jefferson News, St. Clair News-Aegis and the Oxford Independent. The Cullman Times press room also prints these papers. It is a nightly routine where each of these associates work to insure these papers would be ready for the next day delivery.

After Haley checked over the print, she then sent the print to a machine which burnt the print onto the plates. After the plates were completed, she then prepared the plates, bending the plates to fit the press. Again, Haley was paying attention to detail and to insure that she was on time with the print times. She also prepared the plates in order for print and had a system to insure the right sequential order for printing. As Haley brought the plates out into the press room, I knew printing was about to take place.

I enjoyed watching Haley prepare the plates for the press, but watching Scotty, April and Virgil, prepare the machines for print was exciting. Adjusting controls, levers, and other mechanical parts, April and Virgil were diligent to insure the machines were in good condition ready to print. When the bells started ringing, I could hear the machines start up. Virgil and April were walking from end to end to observe the controls and the machines. As the paper began to come off in folded, Virgil and April would take one and walk back to each machine checking the quality of the color. Back and forth they would walk to each machine adjusting the color levers. Virgil showed me what he was trying to achieve and indicated how the right

amount of water was the key. Also, he also indicated that sometimes the water could be sludgy which could make a grey line on the paper. After several trips back and forth to these machines, he brought me the paper to show me the how the color of a softball field had gone from a dull dark color to a bright green color that would match exactly to the color of a field.

After the paper was printed it was then off to the paper room where a series of associates worked to insert the coupons, (which is a must) stack them, put on mailing labels, bind them and prepare them to be sent out early morning with the carriers. I observed the associates in the paper room working like little bees; each one completing his or her job to get the paper out in time for the paper carrier to get it to our curbside or mailbox.

The enjoyment to walk to that mailbox or curb and get the paper to sit and enjoy a fresh morning and read the headlines of what is good in our town, or maybe even what is bad, to check out the sales, to check the obituaries, to get a new recipe, to learn about a new business coming to our town, to check out the sports, or to check the horoscopes, I do understand the value in a newspaper. The paper is designed to be informative, to appeal to the public, and this is what I observed at The Cullman Times. There is definitely something for everyone.

Hats off to David Palmer the editor and his reporters; Sallee Chandler, editorial assistant; Kara Sterling and the advertising department; Debbie Smith and classifieds; Sam Mazzara and his staff in circulation; Scotty, Haley, Virgil and April in the press room and those in the paper room for the jobs you do. CH & I, INC, should also know how valuable you are to The Cullman Times.

