

Kiwanis International President Forsythe, Small Town Newsmen, Got Ink-Stained At 14

By MILTON LOMASK
IN THE KIWANIS MAGAZINE

One summer morning in 1917, a fourteen-year-old high school freshman looked out the window of his home — and saw tragedy. A block and a half away, the Pennsylvania Railroad's crack Cleveland Flyer, charging through Conway, Pennsylvania on its daily run, had smashed into a wreck derrick set up in the aftermath of another, less serious accident. During the previous months the boy had sold some items of local interest to the *Daily Times* of nearby Beaver, Pennsylvania, and already the churn of the presses was in his blood. Within the next half hour he had talked to the city editor of the *Daily Times* and the offices of the Associated Press. That evening, newspapers the country over carried a story of the railroad catastrophe under a by-line familiar to Kiwanians and likely to become more so in the year ahead — the by-line of Donald T. Forsythe.

The new president of Kiwanis International, elected by more than 3800 delegates in New York City's Madison Square Garden last June, entered the field of journalism early enough to buy his first long pants with professional earnings. He cannot, in fact, remember a time when newspapering, publishing and printing were not his major vocational interests. Today he is sole owner of the *Journal Printing*

Company of Carthage, Illinois, publisher of the county's sixty-five-year-old weekly newspaper, the *Hancock County Journal*, and commercial printer of "everything," as Don puts it, "from shipping tags to 400-page books."

Like all veterans of the typewriter, Don knows the tricks of newsgathering, and during our chats he was inclined to keep an amused eye on the reporter's busy pencil.

"Have a heart," he said once. "I know you want to make the most of these simple facts, but please don't put lights around my name. I haven't earned them."

This statement seems overly modest, for Don has held every elective office in the organization, including the vice-presidency and, last year, the treasurer's office. Since 1926 he has been unusually active in every phase of the work of an unusually active local club. In 1946 it was at his urging and on the basis of his spade-work that the Illinois Eastern Iowa District set up Kiwanis' Hard of Hearing Foundation to: 1) disseminate much-needed information about this widespread difficulty; and 2) sponsor hearing tests for children in the public schools.

So thoroughly did the foundation do its work, so completely were its jobs of enlightenment and testing taken up all over the country, that after five years the foundation itself could be dissolved, although the project is still carried on by the underprivileged children committees in the district.

Looking back over years of International Council going, Don dredges up a pleasant memory. One, no doubt, many oldtimers will share. "In the old days," he says, "one of the nice things about Council meetings was that my name begins with 'F.' That put me next to Roe Fulkerson. Roe had been attending sessions since way back, and sometimes, while someone was talking on the platform, he'd lean over and whisper:

"Look, Don, I'm getting restless. Tell me a good story."

"You know, there was something so compelling about that fellow that I'd do it every time. I'd tell him a good story, and every time I got to the point, dog-gone it, Roe would guffaw. I don't mean laugh. I mean guffaw! I used to feel sorry for whoever was speaking, but it makes a delightful recollection now."

"Those who have visited the area or traveled through it know that the Beaver River Valley of Pennsylvania is one of the busiest centers of industrial production in the country. There, in the little Borough of Conway on the banks of the Ohio above Pitsburg, Don Forsythe was born on Memorial Day, 1903. His father worked in the Pennsylvania Railway yards and in time was to become foreman of the car department in charge of the overhaul and repair of rolling stock. Prior to his death, Don's father was an honorary member of Kiwanis.

At the end of Don's sophomore year in high school, the family moved to nearby Rochester at the junction of the Ohio and Beaver Rivers. After his prompt coverage of the Conway railroad tragedy, Don's services as a reporter were in demand. For two summers he worked full time on the *Beaver Daily Times*.

One summer, as he puts it, "I decided to find out how the other half worked, and you know I fell into such a variety of jobs that I came very near doing it." That summer Don painted boxcars, helped repair rolling stock in the machine shop and lugged and heaved and pushed and swept in the big storerooms of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

In 1920 he entered Thiel, a co-educational liberal arts college sponsored by the Lutheran Church at Greenville, Pennsylvania. At Thiel, Don helped earn his way working for the *Greenville Evening Record* and for two years was editor of the *Thielonian*, the college weekly. He liked athletics, too, and is still one of Thiel's few-and-far-between four-letter men. He got his A.B. in 1924. Not long after Don's graduation, one of his Thiel professors buttonholed him.

"Don," he said, "how would you like to take Horace Greeley's advice?"

"It all depends," said Don, "on what the Far West has to offer."

"This is the Near West," said the professor. "Carthage, Illinois. A newspaper publisher out there, Mr. John P. Beckman (who was a Kiwanian, by the way) is looking for a managing editor."

"He's found one," said Don.

It was January of 1926 when Don arrived in Carthage. "That first day," he says, "the place gave me a permanent feeling."

FORTUNE TELLER

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Obviously it did. Within a week, Don Forsythe had become a member of the Kiwanis Club of Carthage.

Most of the important things that have happened to Don began to happen early. He was a Junior in Rochester, Pennsylvania High School when he first saw "a beautiful young lady with golden hair." Her name was Katherine Marshall. On June 26, 1929 she changed it to Mrs. Donald T. Forsythe.

The Forsythes have one son, seventeen-year-old James. This fall Jim plans to enter Northwestern University. It won't be the Forsythe's first time with Northwestern. Some years back, while Don was serving as president of the Illinois Press Association, he accepted an invitation to become a member of the Northwestern chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, the national professional journalism fraternity. Although young Jim has attended no less than three International Kiwanis conventions, he had to miss the important one this summer. Like father, like son, he was putting his vacation to good use — shoveling gravel on a highway construction crew.

In Carthage, the Forsythes live in a 110-year-old white brick Colonial that once figured in a novel by Harriet Gilchrist Wood and stands on an intersection formerly known as "Gospel Four Corners." The Forsythes bought the house in 1939, kept the shell — "for charm," says Mrs. Forsythe — and renovated the interior for comfort.

When Don talks about Carthage, he is inclined to get a little lyrical. His conversation is studded with references to "stately elms and sweeping lawns"; to the ancient stone jail where in 1846 an angry mob killed the Mormons Joseph and Hyrum Smith and which now is a Mormon shrine and a monument to the futility of violence; to the courthouse in the square, with its peaceful and beautiful park and with the lively streets of the business district all around.

Delegates at the New York City convention were impressed with the fact that Don was obviously looking forward to the year ahead — long years in the Kiwanis harness had not rubbed off any of his enthusiasm. To this reporter he spoke at length about what is to be a major emphasis of the forthcoming program: the encouragement of more teaching of Americanism in the schools.

"I hope," he said, "we can find ways of helping one particular group. I mean the youngsters fourteen to eighteen. That's a tough period for kids now. Just around the corner for the boys is the draft, and just around the corner for the girls, of course, is the uncertainty and heartache which that entails. Kiwanis should be ready to help any good program — cultural, educational or recreational — that will show these young people that though it takes a little longer to get to them now, the opportunities are still here."

Shortly after Don became a citizen of Carthage, Dr. Harvey Hoover, then president of Carthage College, paid him a visit.

"Mr. Forsythe," he said, "how would you like to come out to the college and, as an avocation, start a little journalism department for us?"

"I wouldn't mind starting one," said Don.

"Fine. You get it going this year, and next year we'll bring in a full-time instructor to take over."

Don got it started. Every now and then he'd ask Dr. Hoover when he intended to bring in that full-time instructor, and Dr. Hoover always assured him it would be "any day now."

Nine years passed before "any day now" arrived. But, looking back, Don says he really didn't care. He enjoyed those nine years and felt proud to see many of his students go out into the profession and make a name for themselves. For the past ten years Don has also been a trustee of Carthage College and is serving his fifth year as secretary of the board.

That's the new president of Kiwanis International. What's a little more service along the way for the man from Carthage? Don puts it this way:

"The thing I like best about a small town is that it keeps you on your toes. In a little place like Carthage, you're just naturally expected to do something in return for the space you occupy."

Stream Pollution Talks Set March 18

RALEIGH — A general session on the "Legal Aspects of Stream Pollution" has been arranged for the Southern Municipal and Industrial Waste Conference to be held at North Carolina State College March 18-19. Dr. Nelson L. Nemerow, conference chairman, said today.


W. V. Bolich, professor in the Duke University Law School, will begin the panel with a discussion of "Common Law Relating to Water Usages."

An open forum discussion will follow with Gen. J. R. Townsend, city manager of Greensboro, as moderator. Panel members will include C. V. Jones, of Durham, A. H. Wieters, Washington, D. C., C. E. Geuther, Wilmington, Del., and Frank Gibson, Charlottesville, Va.

Dr. Nemerow stated that since the first public hearing on stream classification of the Yadkin River Basin will be held soon, the legal aspects to be discussed at the conference "should be of significance to the people of North Carolina."

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THANK YOU.

With this letter comes our sincere thanks for the help you were able to give the babies of our Society during our recent Christmas Fund Drive for \$50,000.

Friends from all over the state sent in contributions amounting to \$44,210 during December and January, and now, other voluntary gifts have put us "over the top" financially speaking for the present. While contributions from individuals were smaller in general this year, there were more people giving to the Society as evidence of their interest in our cause of helping little babies to find good homes. The fact that we reached more people this year we attribute in part to the newspapers and radio stations of North Carolina who cooperated so willingly in telling the public about our Society.

We hope you will be able to aid us in the coming months so we can do a year-round job of informing your community about good adoption practices. Our task at hand is building public opinion to protect all of North Carolina's homeless children which we can

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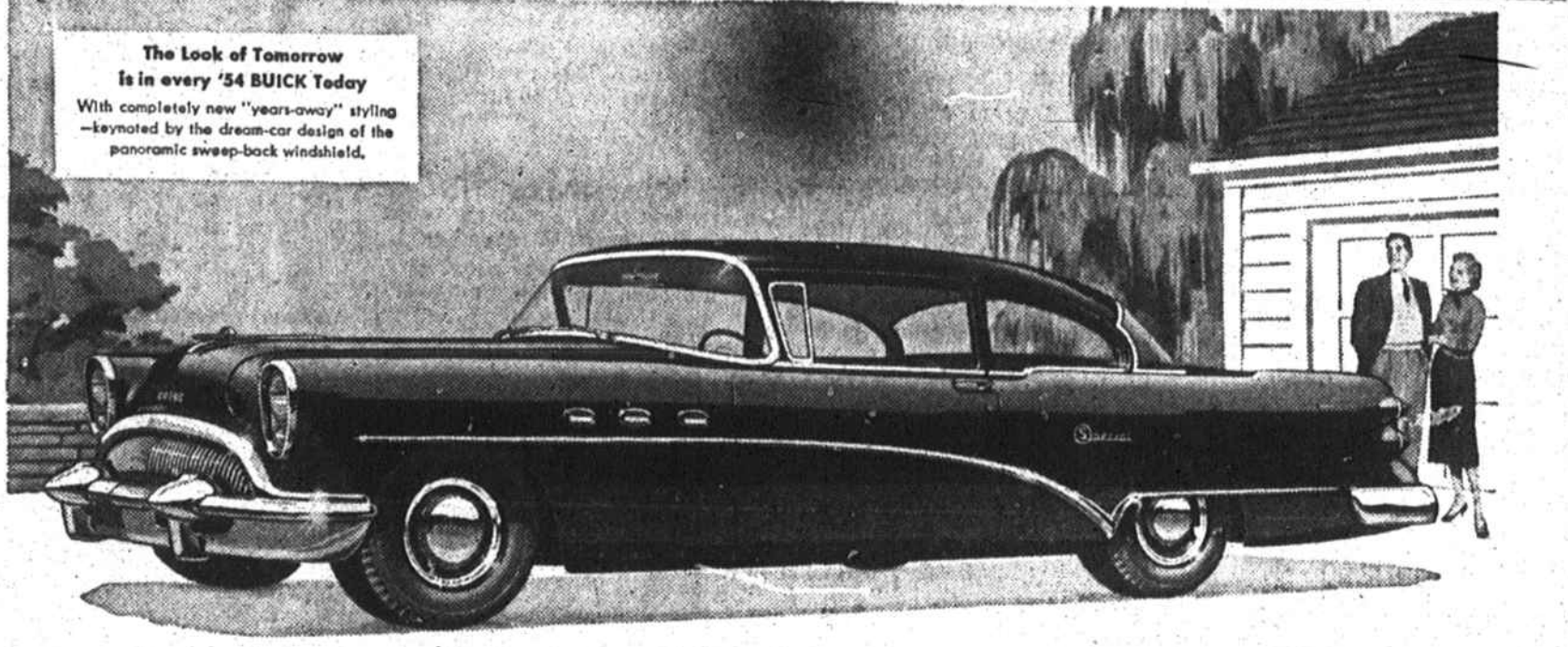
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