



The Courier staff in 1897 consisted of, from left, Edna Parker, Mr. Smalley, Miss Brooks, Amos Voorhies and Miss Scovill. A sign on the office wall admonished workers to avoid unnecessary talking.

Amos Voorhies left his mark on the paper and the town

By Kathleen Alaks
of the Daily Courier

Amos Earle Voorhies was born on a farm near Greenville, Mich., on June 6, 1869. He attended high school in Greenville and graduated in 1888.

For a year or more, he clerked in a grocery store and later he became an unpaid apprentice in the office of the weekly Greenville Independent.

Voorhies came to Oregon in 1891, a time when work was scarce, but he managed to apprentice in several Portland job-printing offices. When he joined the Portland Sun, a daily morning newspaper, his work day started around 4 p.m. and ended around 2 a.m. In the afternoon, he would walk the four or five miles from home to save the nickel street car fare and then he would walk back home because the street cars didn't run at that hour.

On Aug. 12, 1895, Voorhies arrived in Grants Pass, going to work as foreman of the weekly Oregon Observer. He did all manner of work around the office and solicited subscriptions, which he did throughout the county on horseback.

In July 1896, Voorhies returned to Greenville to marry Clara Emma Grabill, the daughter of the publisher of the newspaper where Voorhies had served an apprenticeship.

Back in Grants Pass, the Observer could no longer afford to pay him and Voorhies lost his job, so he planned to return to Portland. Because he couldn't afford the railroad fare he bought a bicycle for the trip.

The day before Voorhies was scheduled to leave, though, and at the urging of friends, Voorhies took his bicycle and rode the 40 or so miles to Ashland to try to persuade former Grants Pass school principal C.S. "Champ" Price, to join him in partnership to buy the Rogue River Courier, then a struggling weekly. Price, who was

operating a peach orchard, agreed and mortgaged his property.

Their first issue came off the press on July 1, 1897.

Price was editor, doing most of the reporting and writing. Voorhies, respectfully and affectionately known as Boss, was the printer, handling everything mechanical.

"Boss' father was a cabinet maker, and passed down his woodworking skills and tools," recalled John Voorhies, Amos' grandson and the current president of Courier Publishing Company. "Boss was good with his hands ... dexterous and quick."

In 1899, Voorhies bought out his partner and continued as publisher. That same year, on Oct. 19, his son Earle Elliott Voorhies, was born. Clara died in 1910, and in 1926 Amos married Lulu Benedict.

Voorhies had just turned 28 when he and Price bought the Courier. He remained publisher, and later co-publisher with his son Earle, for nearly 64 years, longer than any other publisher in Oregon.

After resigning from active management of the paper, he continued to work regularly in the newspaper office filing newspaper clippings for historical records. He supervised the publication of the paper's diamond anniversary edition, published on April 3, 1960.

He worked until just two weeks before he died, Oct. 27, 1960, suffering a stroke while raking leaves at his home at 421 N.W. B St. He was 91.

Voorhies was a well-respected newspaperman. He was president of the Oregon State Press Association in 1917 and for several years was state vice president of the National Editorial Association.

He was an honorary member of Sigma Delta Chi, a professional journalism fraternity, and was a living recipient of the Oregon Newspaper Roll of Honor, established in 1938 by the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association.

In recognition of his 50 years in Oregon journalism. In 1979, he was one of the first eight men named to the newly instituted Oregon Newspaper Hall of Fame.

Besides his active newspaper career, Voorhies was active in the community as well. He was secretary and director of the Oregon Caves Company for more than 35 years and a past president of the Redwood Empire Association.

He was a charter member of the Hillah Shrine, the Grants Pass Elks Lodge and the Grants Pass Rotary Club. He belonged to the Grants Pass Chamber of Commerce and was an associate member of the Oregon Cavemen.

He was one of the founders of Company H in the Oregon National Guard in 1899, and rose to the rank of captain.

He never held public office, but in the Nov. 7, 1916 election, he campaigned as the Republican candidate for state representative from Josephine County, Seventh District. He lost by a vote of 2,020 to 1,299.

He was active in the Presbyterian church, sang bass in the church choir and served as clerk of the congregation for some 50 years.

He also chartered the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Grants Pass.

"He didn't touch alcohol until about 1950 when Dr. Russell prescribed two ounces of port wine every night before bed," said John Voorhies. "He wouldn't go into the state liquor store to get it so I had to buy it for him."

In 1957, the Oregon Highway Department and the city of Grants Pass recognized his interest in community progress by naming a street for him.

"I learned a lot from him, mostly by observation," grandson John said. "He was stubbornly honest and stubbornly responsible. Not a lettered man and I have no way of knowing how smart he was, but he must have been wise."

Courier editors through the years

1885-1886 — J.H. Stine
1886-1887 — W.J. Wimer
1887-1888 — A.A. Allworth
1888-1889 — Frank T. Sheppard

1889-1890 — George H. Currey

1890-1897 — Jerry Nunan
1897-1899 — C.S. "Champ" Price

1900-1909 — Frank Mensch, Charles Meserve, T.K. Murray, Ben Sheldon, Ralph Cronise, George L. Drummand (the exact dates for each are uncertain)

1909-1912 — C.G. Coutant

1912-1917 and 1919-1920 — Wilford Allen

1917-1919 and 1920-1926 — gap in records

1926-1929 — Wilford Allen Jr., "Pete"

1929 — Charles Harp

SEPTEMBER 1929-SEPTEMBER 1931 — D.L. Whitehurst

SEPTEMBER 1931-SEPTEMBER 1933 —



WIMER
1886-1887



C.S. PRICE
1897-1899

W.S. Trimble

SEPTEMBER 1933-OCTOBER 1942 — Rex Tussing

OCT. 1-8, 1942 — Frank Swerer

OCTOBER 1942-APRIL 1943 — Esther Bristol

AUGUST 1943-FEBRUARY 1945 — Ned Chapin

FEBRUARY 1945-MARCH 1947 — E.V. Pederson

SEPTEMBER 1947 - MARCH 1957 — Frank B. Streeter

MARCH 1957-FEBRUARY 1959 — Kenneth L. Hicks

FEBRUARY 1959-MARCH 1959 — Gerald G. Acklen (acting editor)

MARCH 1959-JULY 1963 — Paschal Wilson

JULY 1963-MAY 1986 — Harry Elliott

MAY 1986-JULY 1986 — Paul Macomber

JULY 1986-JULY 1990 — Roger Morton

JULY 1990-PRESENT — Dennis Roler

JULY 9, 1886

"Lost. On July 5th at the Picnic Grounds, a German-silver Clarinet key. A reward will be paid to the finder by returning it to F.W. Van Dyke, Grant's Pass."



JAN. 18, 1900

"This week inaugurated a change of ownership of the Rogue River Courier. A.E. Voorhies has purchased the interest of Mr. Price and is at present, sole proprietor and manager. The Courier will be conducted on the same lines as here-to-fore, with constant progress and advancement always in view."

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How it all Began...

We've got to go back many years to unearth our roots in this lovely part of Oregon. Many families in our area have roots as deep as ours; we share a common nurturing from the natural setting we've so enjoyed.

Virgil E. Hull, the founding father of Hull & Hull, moved to Grants Pass with his parents, when he was just 10 years old. After graduating from Grants Pass High School in 1926, he traveled to Ohio to study at the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, earning his degree just two years later.

Returning to this area shortly after graduating, Virgil established Hull & Hull Funeral Directors, at Sixth & I Streets in Grants Pass. His business partner was his cousin, Ben; so you can see that it's been a family-owned business from the very beginning.

In 1931, Esther M. Harmelink married Virgil and together they raised four sons; William Ellsworth, Virgil Frederick, Jerry Edward and Thomas Michael. Their marriage was truly a partnership, as Esther was an instrumental part of the day-to-day business in the funeral home.

Virgil was to serve the community as Josephine County Coroner, beginning in 1932. He was also active in professional and civic organizations, serving as president of the Oregon Funeral Directors Association; as a charter member of the Grants Pass Elks Lodge, a member of the Golden Rule Lodge No. 78 IOOF and Grants Pass Lodge No. 84 AF & AM.

His was a full, rich, spiritually-grounded life as he was also a very active member of First Assembly of God Church. When he was able to get away for a few hours, he enjoyed his personal passion: fishing in our local rivers.

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