

The Nine Taylors

Remarks at the Boston Globe, May 15, 1979

Mr. Davis Taylor, Mr. John Taylor, Mr. William Taylor, other members of the Taylor family, benefactors, directors, staff and friends of the Globe — and General Charles H. Taylor whose presence at every Globe function must be presumed.

It is a great pleasure to be here at the dedication of the Globe's new Goss Metroliner Offset Press. It is no accident that the printed media is known as "the Press", for we are the creatures of that incredible instrument of enlightenment, its acolytes and attendants, wherever we work in newspapers. The dedication of a new press is an occasion on which more than a piece of machinery is committed to its task; it is an occasion in which, symbolically, all of us are recommitted to the tasks that will be completed on its cylinders on down through generations. Who here tonight can foresee what will come from this press in the decades ahead as thousands of writers and workers finish the plates that will be placed upon it, to make the record of generations yet unborn?

But for presses, we must reflect, only a handful of us would know much more about the past than we can foresee about the future. The multiplication of copies of the written work made possible

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since Gutenberg has become the chief tie to past, present and future. Without that facility, knowledge of past, present and future would be a monopoly of a privileged few scholars with access to a few precious, rare written records. The press has made the multitude privy to what otherwise would have been the possession of a few learned men in each generation. The press dedicated here tonight continues that long contribution to human enlightenment.

That "the press" is more than just a piece of copying machinery is nowhere more apparent than in these precincts where generations of thoughtful, energetic, careful and gifted men have labored at the tasks of newspapermen. General Charles H. Taylor, the redoubtable founder of the Globe, not only made more and more copies of the Globe — he was responsible for making a lot of copies of Taylors. It intrigued me to note in the geneological table in "Taylors of the Globe", Louis Lyons fine book, that there were "nine Taylors" on the Globe. The nine Taylors on the Globe, like the "Nine Tailors" in the Peter Whimsy book have, over the years rung a lot of changes. The bell ringers present (and probably there are not many) will remember the "nine tailors" as a celebrated "change" rung on English bells. A change that was so deafening that a sought-after felon who had the misfortune of hiding in the bell loft was killed by the sound when the bell ringers rang "the nine tailors". It is, incidently a curious fact of history that the Taylors of Loughborough, England in 1895, revolutionized the tuning of bells. One hopes they were the antecedents of Boston's Taylors.

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The Boston Taylors, in any case, have been ringing bells in these precincts ever since 1873.

What alterations have been made in this newspaper, in Boston, and in the world, since the day Charles Taylor started this now venerable publication in 1873.

One of the most remarkable changes of all is the change in the lot of the newspaper worker. In 1873 City Editor Sears warned Arthur Fowle, then 26, who applied for a job at the Globe that he would not be bettering his life to leave a good job at the tanning factory to work for a newspaper. There may be moments when newspapermen would sooner be in the tanning factory, but they do not last. The Globe, it is hard to believe in these prosperous surroundings, did not break even until 1879. As Louis Lyons notes, that was the year after General Taylor turned it Democratic.

When you peruse the old files of The Globe, one is struck by the difficulties with which it had to cope. Also, I may say, by the prescience of its early editors. How unknowingly prophetic was the editor who placed on the front page on April 17, 1889 when the Globe was fighting the 18th amendment to outlaw liquor, the declaration "It would be just as rational to suppress tobacco by a constitutional amendment as it is to suppress drink".

Newspapers are made great by thousands of unremembered and unrecorded acts of hundreds of men and women for whom journalism is a secular church, and are seldom as largely the creatures of single individuals as the brief compressions of written history indicate. Those of us on the outside of any newspaper can not

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know of or become acquainted with all these contributors to a newspaper's greatness; and even those on the inside of the paper may not be fully aware of or long recall these unremembered makers of the press. For those of us in my generation outside the Globe family the Globe meant Davis Taylor, John I. Taylor and Larry Winship. Each made his own unique contribution to the Globe. They will be reflected in it as long as it exists.

John I. and Davis Taylor have for the past 20 years shared the same office at the Globe and have worked tirelessly for it.

John I., a skilled reporter turned promotion manager of the paper for many years, will always be remembered fondly as The Globe's roving ambassador of goodwill.

He has a gift for knowing everyone's problems, from those of the janitor to those of the advertising director and editor. He is a people problem-solver. Outside the Globe, few Boston leaders have given more time than John I. to helping the black community and other minorities in Boston.

The fourth of General Taylor's grandsons to join the paper, he came to the Globe directly out of Harvard in 1933. Louis Lyons said of him: "John was a natural liaison between news and management from his long news-side experience and proved a popular figure with the staff. Genial, handsome, a good mixer, he combined the qualities of a thorough journalist, a good businessman, and an effective public speaker — a resource when awards were to be bestowed or received and for talks to advertising clubs. But Globe editors valued him as "a great morale builder," as one of

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them put it. "He's a walking spreader of good will as he cruises around the news room with that relaxed slouch and a pipe hanging out of his mouth. He has news ideas and is good at personnel problems and he's a great salesman for the Globe."

Of the Taylor family, I have known Davis Taylor the best, over the more than half century of my career. The Chairman of the Board of Affiliated Publications, has been with the Globe for more than 50 years. He has been Treasurer, General Manager, and was the third in the family line to be publisher — the post now held by his son William O. Taylor.

His notable achievement, in my own view, has been the enlargement of the Globe's field of vision. In the days of Charles Taylor, the Globe's world was Boston; when Davis Taylor left the publisher's post, the Globe's Boston was the world.

Despite of this wider view, when Davis Taylor received the Lovejoy Award at Colby in 1975, he took occasion to emphasize the indispensable relation between a newspaper and the economic health of the community served by the newspaper. The Globe keeps an eye on the world better than it once did; but it does not take its eyes off Boston and New England. In keeping with his philosophy Davis Taylor, as publisher and as private citizen, has devoted himself to the economic and social health of his area. It is hardly necessary in these precincts to dwell on these lifelong efforts. It is pertinent and appropriate, I think, to renew your recollection of his notable contributions to his profession.

He has helped shape not only the Globe, but the press of

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America, by his contributions as President of the American Newspaper Publishers Association; Member of the Board Metropolitan Sunday Newspapers, President of North American Newspaper Alliance, Director Million Market Newspapers, fund raiser for the Neiman Foundation, and other newspaper organizations.

All these things he has done for the Globe and for his profession will, I am sure, be long remembered; but it would be an imperfect and incomplete recollection of his imprint on our times if he were not remembered as well for a quality that is found less and less frequently in our society. In the words of Dolly Parton's celebrated song hit: "For he's a gentleman — and a gentleman is getting mighty hard to find". It is a privilege to be here tonight and pay tribute to that gentleman, Davis Taylor, and all the members of the Taylor family and the Globe family of newspaperpeople.

If I may, I would like to conclude with some lines of my own I think appropriate wherever a press is dedicated. These are lines to the English Common Press, progenitor of the mighty machine we have unveiled here tonight:

From this ancestral frame has sprung
Each press that gives a paper tongue
To mortal cry.

Because of it, the printed word
Will make the voice of freedom heard
And never die.

The iron sons of wooden sire
Print millions where it printed quire;
But printing power
Does not derive from force and speed
But from response to human need
In every hour.

The Hoe and Scott and Goss and Wood,
In minutes, print more that it could
In day on day;
But thudding platen put to stone,
With spindle's clank and carriage groan,
Had things to say.

Let men who in these latter days
Lift up their voice in freedom's praise
Take pause to bless
This foe of tyrants, never budged,
This oaken fortress, ink-besmudged,
The Common Press.