

Masthead Logo

**The Palimpsest**

Volume 53 | Number 2

Article 6

2-1-1972

# As Others Saw Him

Enoch A. Norem

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest>

Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Norem, Enoch A. "As Others Saw Him." *The Palimpsest* 53 (1972), 71-76.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol53/iss2/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Palimpsest by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## As Others Saw Him

By ENOCH A. NOREM  
Retired Associate City Editor  
*Mason City Globe-Gazette*

It was my privilege to work for and with Earl Hall for 40 years as a reporter, city editor, and associate editor of the *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. I was there when he started as a young editor and rose from one achievement to another in community, state, and national affairs.

Those were exciting, fruitful years. Earl Hall was a great editor to be with. He had boundless energy and a capacity to get things done. He was a power to be reckoned with whether on the handball court or in a political battle for better government. When it came to matters of community improvement he placed his newspaper in support with a bang.

Lester Milligan, long-time secretary of the Mason City Chamber of Commerce, said of him: "I remember him for his persistent and unfailing support of public causes such as the United Fund, Family Service, or the building of a YMCA. He was always pleased when an associate was named as a board member or officer of such organizations. No other newspaper I know of had such credentials."

Charles Schaffer, a businessman, said: "He was one of the greatest ambassadors Mason City ever had. Many of the good things we enjoy in our community were sparked by him. I found in my travels over the country that both Earl Hall and Mason City were well-known."

Dr. Raymond Kunz voiced the conviction of many when

he said: "He was the best friend I ever had." Dr. Kunz and Hall were members of the famous Rusty Hinge quartet which spread good will for Mason City far and wide.

Many events come to mind when looking back. I remember one hot day in August, 1932, we were huddling over the telephone to catch the first word on the race for state commander of the American Legion. Our press deadline was nearing and Earl Hall was having a tough battle for the office at the state convention at Fort Dodge. Finally the word came: "Hall elected." The big type was already out so it didn't take long to get the presses running. The next year he was constantly on the go, visiting most of the Legion posts in the state and dashing home to pursue his editorial work.

One time, when Earl was traveling in Europe sending us a story every day by airmail, we noted one installment was missing. We got word of this to Hall and—would you believe it—along came a carbon copy. Be ready for any contingency—that was the Hall motto.

Earl Hall was as proud to call himself a reporter as editor. In fact, some of the most interesting things he did were on his travels. His description of the first Allied troops to enter Paris after the occupation was a masterpiece.

His travels took him to all parts of the world. He once expressed regret that he never reached Mecca. He could tell you the whereabouts of the world's finest harbor: Rio de Janeiro; the world's most beautiful women: Vietnam; the best place to live: Mason City, Iowa.

Hall kept up an amazing amount of correspondence with persons in all walks of life, including many prominent in government and business. He was in close contact with every former Mason Cityan who had distinguished himself—such as Meredith Willson, Hartzell Spence and Bil Baird. When we started the historical museum here he

was the one who contacted such persons and got them to donate exhibits.

The good will he created in this is still bearing fruit. Bil Baird has just sent the museum a shipment of marionettes. The little performers are Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, and Dostoevski. This will be one of the top exhibits for the coming season.

I am sure Earl Hall, himself, would regard as the ultimate accolade of his life's work this simple but powerful sentence: He was a dedicated editor!

---

By AL EFNER

Retired Editor-Publisher, *Ottumwa Courier*

It is especially appropriate that an issue of the Iowa history publication, *The Palimpsest*, be dedicated to Earl Hall. Few have done as much to carry the word about Iowa—and his beloved Mason City—to the rest of the world.

I recall a Pacific crossing in 1951 on the Battleship *Iowa* during which Earl and several others of us from Iowa were guests. Few of the 2,000 sailors aboard were Iowans, however. But "Iowans" they became, because of the enthusiasm—and teaching and singing—of one, Earl Hall. Hundreds of male voices, under the Pacific night sky on the ship's fantail, sang the "Iowa Corn Song" until King Neptune himself must have joined in to compete with the booming Hall bass that carried the lead. That, plus the hundreds of right arms raised in the appropriate Iowa salute, make up a memory that few other Iowans have. It's a delicious one, too, especially for one who associated for years with Earl and who knew of his dedication to his state.

Earl Hall was just as dedicated to honest newspapering. He was editor and, at the close of his career, publisher of

the Mason City *Globe-Gazette*. But first, he was a reporter to most of us in the business—and one of the best.

The Mason City editor covered more than a score of national political conventions across the country from 1924 until the close of his career—just about as many as any newspaperman anywhere. He seldom had difficulty arranging interviews with the most important political figures. The press sections were filled each time with hundreds of writers. But Earl Hall stood out in these crowds—and not just because of his shaggy white mane. He had a reputation for asking intelligent questions and listening to and recording the answers the way those interviewed intended them to sound. Earl never sought to trap a politician. He wanted the individual to get his ideas over, and he gave him every opportunity to do so. He reported them honestly and then if he disagreed, Earl went to the editorial page to say so.

Earl knew the highest and the lowest on the political party totem poles—and they knew him and trusted him. This trust is one of the highest marks a newspaperman can earn.

Earl was more than fair to his fellow reporters, too, as we struggled to develop news at these unique American institutions—national conventions. Because of his ability to reach and to talk to the news makers, and because of his great vigor at a typewriter keyboard, Earl Hall turned out great quantities of interesting and often significant copy. It filled his daily column in the *Globe-Gazette*, found its way into page one stories, and provided excellent speaking prose for his radio commentary, "One Man's Opinion."

But it was never "exclusive." He never harbored a copyright thought. He turned out carbon copies of everything, and offered the Hall "press service" free to the rest of us "if you find any of it useful." There were instances of

convention correspondents who "went out on the town" instead of covering the activity, and then mailed Hall carbons home.

We recall one instance. Earl came up with a bright story involving the "Young Turks" of the Democratic party, at the war-time Chicago convention in 1944 when FDR was nominated for the fourth time. These "Young Turks" included the President's son, Franklin, Jr., "Soapy" Williams, the governor of Michigan, and Senator Hubert Humphrey. Earl interviewed them all, then tossed the carbon into the "help yourself" pile. A Chicago newspaper writer, drooling a little, still hesitated to convert it to his own use. "Oh, go ahead," said Earl Hall with a twinkle. "Your paper doesn't bother us in Mason City."

That was a point Earl also liked to make.

---

MEREDITH WILLSON

1950 CBS Network Radio Program

To me Earl Hall will always be the William Allen White of Iowa. He's made his paper the community looking glass and for 30 years now Earl has been holding it up while Mason City looks in to see her good points and her bad . . . and by the way, though it hurts me to admit, in Mason City things aren't always perfect, and whenever Earl finds something wrong with the old girl, he comes right out and says it to her face.

Thirty years an editor—isn't that something? Just think the exciting things that go across his desk every day. Think of being able to read Dick Tracy a whole day ahead of anybody else. But even at that I don't envy the editor his job. He sees so much trouble and sorrow, so much intolerance and crime and pettiness and selfishness.

But if you ask Earl how he stands it, he just says, "Oh

well, people are like news—there'll always be more good than bad."

What I want to say is that I never knew a town that wasn't richer for having an editor like Earl Hall. If you've got an editor like Earl in your town you're lucky, because like the town clock he keeps the old burg awake. Like a wise father he compliments it when it's right and spansks it when it's wrong. He never makes the money your Wall Street stockbroker does, but he never treats the community like stock, either. I mean he never sells it short.

We offer tonight for American approval the name of Earl Hall, editor—he certainly is one of the good guys.