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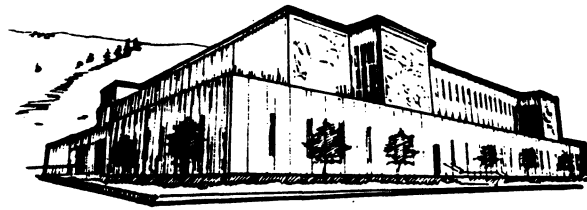
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University of
Montana

MILES ROMNEY JR.

CHRONICLER OF THE NEGLECTED TRUTH

By

Christine L. Johnson

B. S., Montana State College, 1958

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

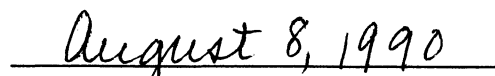
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1990

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Johnson, Christine L., M. A., August 1990

Journalism

Miles Romney Jr.,
Chronicler of the Neglected Truth (294 pp.)

Director: Robert C. McGiffert *RCM*

Miles Romney Jr. served as editor of the Western News, a small western Montana newspaper, for 45 years--most of the time from 1922 until his death in 1976. Romney was enthusiastically partisan, championing all kinds of democratic and progressive viewpoints. He was also fiercely independent--openly critical of the abuses of big business interests in the state, especially those of Montana Power Company and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, which owned most of Montana's daily newspapers until 1959. Romney suffered both financially and personally because of his strong stands.

Romney served in both the Montana House and Senate. His legacy included being instrumental in the passage of a law providing for a quick, inexpensive method for a husband or wife who had lost a spouse to settle the estate without court intervention. He was also largely responsible for a constitutional amendment requiring that a certain percentage of all coal severance tax funds be put in a permanent trust fund. Romney was also a delegate to the Montana Constitutional Convention and an avid outdoorsman--working in the field, in the legislature, and at his typewriter to promote numerous conservation projects.

Research for this project centered on the bound volumes of the Western News from 1895-1977, and a series of interviews with Romney's widow, friends, journalism and legislative associates, and some Montana Power Company representatives who remembered Romney's sharp editorial voice.

Appendices include samples of Romney's work plus copies of memorial tributes to him at the time of his death.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to Ruth Romney for so generously spending many hours with me sharing memories of her husband and their life together.

To Erma Owings, Director of the Ravalli County Museum, my gratitude for her valuable research assistance.

Thanks also to my committee members, Professors Robert C. McGiffert and Jerry R. Holloron, both of the School of Journalism, and Professor H. D. Hampton, Department of History. Their willingness to be transoceanic participants in this project is greatly appreciated.

A final salute to the late Professor Warren Brier, who guided me through the important first steps of this paper with graciousness and good humor.

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INTRODUCTION

Miles Romney Jr. served as editor of the Western News, a Hamilton, Montana, weekly newspaper, for 45 years. His father bought an interest in the paper in 1895, became sole owner soon after, and turned it over to Romney in 1922. Except for several interruptions in the early years, Romney continued as editor until his death in 1976.

Early in his career Romney adopted a slogan to express the crusading spirit that surrounded much of what he did and was--"Chronicler of the Neglected Truth." The Western News, under the two Romneys, was one of the few papers in the state to consistently call attention to the slanted viewpoints presented by the Montana newspapers owned by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company.

It would be a mistake, however, to make this research project simply the study of a newsman, for Romney was more than an observer writing pungent and sometimes witty editorials. He believed that a true concern for good government or a healthful environment demanded in-the-field participation. When he did participate, he made contributions to the state of Montana that are still being felt.

For example, Romney was an active member of the Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association. Through that group, and with the cooperation of the Montana Fish and Game Department, he organized and made numerous pack trips into high mountain lakes to plant fish. The progeny of those fish are still being harvested by sportsmen.

As a member of the Montana House and Senate, he was one of the first to campaign for a significant tax on coal mined in the state, because he believed the natural resources of the state were meant to benefit all citizens and not just corporate investors. But approval of such a coal severance tax was not enough for Romney. Late in the 1975 legislative session he was able to convince his colleagues to pass a bill calling for a constitutional amendment that would assign one-fourth to one-half of a coal severance tax to a permanent trust fund. The principal of that fund could be appropriated only by a three-fourths vote in each house of the Legislature. Voters approved the amendment in 1976, nine months after Romney's death.

He was also instrumental in the passage of a law providing for a quick, inexpensive method for a husband or wife who had lost a spouse to settle his or her estate without court intervention.

In 1971 he served as a delegate to the Montana Constitutional Convention and distinguished himself as an excellent source of information about state history and

government. He also gained a reputation as an outstanding orator. Examples of Romney's wit and storytelling abilities, both written and oral, are still shared with enthusiasm, and I will continue that pleasant tradition here.

Miles Romney Sr. was inducted into the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1968 and his son, in 1982. They are the only father and son to be so honored, and their pictures and biographies are displayed with other inductees in the halls of the School of Journalism at the University of Montana.



Miles Romney Jr.
(Photo courtesy of Ruth Romney)

CHAPTER 1

"DEATH HAS PUT HIS FINGER UPON ME"¹

In June 1974 Americans were hotly debating whether Richard Nixon ought to resign in the wake of the Watergate scandal or be subjected to an impeachment proceeding.

In Montana, citizens were arguing whether the new state constitution, ratified in 1972, was bringing more openness and responsiveness to government or represented a loss of some important safeguards. They were largely unimpressed with the first mandated annual session of the Legislature and expressed a general wait-and-see attitude about the strange new phenomena called Local Government Study Commissions.

In Western Montana's Ravalli County, and especially in the county seat, Hamilton, people argued heatedly about whether the old county courthouse should be torn down or preserved as a museum.

Miles Romney Jr., long-time editor and publisher of Hamilton's weekly, the Western News, was concerned about all

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Death Has Put His Finger Upon Me," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 19, 1974, p. 2. See appendix 1 for full text of this editorial.

those subjects and had been expressing his opinions about them in his usual lengthy editorials. He was also completing a year as state senator, having been appointed to the position in July 1973 when Senator W. A. (Bill) Groff became Deputy Director of the Montana Department of Revenue.¹ Romney had just won the Democratic nomination for the position for next term and was looking ahead to a stiff general election battle with the Republicans' candidate, Steve Mills.

But this June more personal concerns were primary in Romney's life. Health problems had led to his hospitalization for exploratory surgery. Doctors diagnosed diverticulosis and cancer of the colon. They removed a tumor, but because of the proximity of the malignancy to his liver the chances for recurrence were high.²

Years later Romney's wife, Ruth, remembered her reaction to the news. "I didn't want him to run (for the Senate) or tell anybody (he was sick)," she said. She even swore the hospital's surgical nurse to secrecy. "I imagine the things that happen in this hospital are sacrosanct, and that they never leave," Ruth said to the nurse. "You can be

¹"Romney and Mann Named to Ravalli Senate and House Legislature Seats," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 20, 1973, p 1.

²Romney, "Death," p. 2.

sure of it, Ruth," the nurse replied. "It will never be told."¹

Several days after the surgery Romney asked his wife to bring him a typewriter from home so that he could do a little writing. She did so and soon after returned to find him at work.

It was a hot summer night, she remembered, and Romney was seated at a small table dressed only in his hospital gown. He was pounding away at the little black portable Smith Corona, rarely pausing for thought. Ruth stayed in the background until he finished.

About that time Jim Whitlock, a long-time friend, arrived to visit. Romney removed the last page from the typewriter and asked his wife and friend to listen to the editorial he had written:

For more than a half century, most of the time I have been each week writing editorial comment covering an astonishing number of subjects the total of which I cannot now even compute. Never until tonight have I been faced with the task of contemplating my own dissolution. . . .²

Ruth Romney and Whitlock were startled then when Romney proceeded to describe in specific detail in his editorial his cancer surgery and uncertain prognosis.

I can find comfort and discomfort in statistics. But nobody is fooling anybody. The matter will have to

¹Interview with Ruth Romney, Romney home, Hamilton, Montana, April 8, 1985.

²Romney, "Death." See appendix 1 for full text of editorial.

be confronted and fought out. Ruth and I have been meeting all of our problems all of our many years together and we are not fazed by this one.

I may live six months, a year, four years, five years, twelve years, and die of a heart attack at the end of those spans. Now, aged 73 years, expectancy gives me at least five years. But I could live longer than some of you readers who are 53 or 63. . . .

I could probably keep my mouth shut and perhaps win election without most voters knowing of my trouble. That is not my style. I considered resigning the nomination. But I might have ten years! If I die before the election, a year or two years after it, what then? I determined that the best thing to do would be to confide in the public what my situation is, and then trust in the electorate, as I always have, even when I knew it was going wrong. . . .¹

Romney, who had his back to his wife and friend while he read, did not hear the frantic whispers between the two. Whitlock, who first learned of Romney's cancer during the reading, remembered the scene vividly. "I knew immediately that that (the editorial) was a classic and needed to be said," he recalled, but Ruth disagreed. "Through the whole thing she's shaking her head 'No' and I'm saying 'Yes.'"

"You've got to print it," Whitlock whispered.

"No, you can't," she responded.

"It's got to be printed."

"It took a lot of guts" for Romney to write about his cancer, Whitlock said years later. "Most people now understand and can talk about cancer and it's no big deal. But it was a big deal then. You didn't talk about it. . . ."

¹Ibid.

It was like a venereal disease, for Chrissake. . . . He was running for the Senate and decided he had to tell everybody."¹

With his friend's support and despite the strong misgivings of his wife, Romney ran the editorial in the June 19 issue of the paper under the heading "Death Has Put His Finger Upon Me."

Wire services picked up the story, and the editorial appeared in various newspapers across the United States.²

An editorial that Romney had written 15 years earlier turned out to be strangely prophetic.

As a newspaperman I have notice [sic] a marked reluctance upon the part of some good people to have printed factual matter pertaining members of their family or friends who have passed away due to cancer. . . .

At one time the same reluctance to admit that a person was afflicted with tuberculosis existed as is now at times found with respect to cancer.

As the efforts to eliminate tuberculosis proceeded and the causes and effects of the disease became more understandable, the effort to hide the existence of such a disease disappeared. . . .

So it is better that when cancer strikes, that the facts be known. This knowledge will lead those acquainted with the deceased individual to redouble their efforts to the end that the scourge will be

¹Interview with Jim Whitlock, Whitlock home, Hamilton, Montana, July 24, 1989.

²Interview with Ruth Romney, Romney home, Hamilton, Montana, June 10, 1989.

finally overcome. . . .¹

Romney healed well after his surgery; so he donned his green eyeshade and went back to work, with chemotherapy the major change in his regular routine. He referred to the medication as his "hemlock" or "Molotov cocktail."

Long-time Western News printer Gil Jelinek remembered the routine. "Every Tuesday after lunch he'd go to the hospital or doctor's office, drink his 'hemlock' and then come back and go to work as though nothing was wrong. He'd take his necktie off, sit down at his old Underwood typewriter and carry on. I don't know how many times I heard it: 'Gil, by God, right on that label is a skull and crossbones, and that's what she's feeding me.'"²

The first editorial Romney wrote after his hospital discharge reflected his great interest in the conservation of natural resources. He called for good land-use planning with strict enforcement. During the 1970s Ravalli County experienced a frantic land development boom. Romney was concerned that the drive to provide building sites for homes was often being carried out by "fast buck" artists at the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Publicity Can Be Helpful," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 23, 1955, p. 6.

²Interview with Gil Jelinek, Jelinek home, Hamilton, Montana, April 10, 1985.

expense of important resources.¹

In August Richard Nixon resigned, Gerald Ford became President, and Romney lamented the fact that Nixon would probably not be made to answer for his crimes. He advised editorially that Ford "not be repudiated without being given a chance," even though he had been appointed to the vice presidency by Nixon.²

About that same time the U.S. Board of Geographic Names in Washington announced that a ridge in the Bitterroot Mountains west of Hamilton would be named "Romney Ridge." Members of the Bitter Root Valley Historical Society and the Resource Conservation and Development Cultural Improvement Committee had suggested that the ridge be named for the Romney family in recognition of their service to Ravalli County and the State of Montana. The east end of the ridge was once part of Romney ranch property.³

As the state election drew closer, campaign issues heated up. In mid-October Romney urged voters to defeat a proposed state constitutional amendment that would return the Legislature to the biennial sessions prescribed in the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "We Must Accept Responsibility," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 26, 1974, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "A New President," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 14, 1974, p. 4.

³"Ridge Named for Newspaper Founder," Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, August 18, 1974, p. 14.

original constitution.

This antiquated method of operation of state government is advocated by the same corporations which have attempted, and often succeeded, in running the state government for years. These giant corporations do not want effective state government, they want a dippy doodle state government they can control for their various uses. . . .¹

In his personal campaign advertisements Romney stressed that as a member of three state legislatures he had never been absent. He said that he had fought the general sales tax, originated the coal severance tax plan, and was working for joint tenancy legislation to simplify the transfer of property to a surviving spouse after death. The advertisements said Romney had voted against more appropriations in the 1974 session than any other member. "He can say 'No,' but will work for any enactment he considers beneficial to most Ravallians and Montanans," they said.²

Romney's Republican opponent, Steve Mills, a relative newcomer to the state, accused him of favoring confiscation and registration of firearms, and of being rated by the Montana State Chamber of Commerce as having the poorest voting record in the Senate on business issues. Romney, who had hunted all his life but had never been timid about his

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Vote Against Biennial Legislatures," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 16, 1974, p. 2.

²Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 30, 1974, p. 3.

support of some kind of gun control, replied that he had not and would not vote for registration or confiscation of anyone's firearms. To the second issue Romney reported that the State Chamber informed him that no such rating of business voting records had been made.¹

Election night was rather quiet at the Western News that year as Romney and his cousin Clarence Popham waited for returns. For many years the office had been the major center in the county for collecting election results, and was always knee-deep in candidates, news people, and noisy bystanders. In 1974 the Ravalli Republic, Hamilton's daily paper, was serving as the center for returns, although Romney was passing on some results to the wire services.²

As the last returns trickled in the next morning it became apparent that the voters had given Romney a vote of confidence, returning him to the Senate. The tally was 3,584 for Romney and 3,248 for Mills.³ Romney's efforts to get Ravalli County citizens to vote against the constitutional amendment to return to biennial legislative sessions were successful but could not overcome the general statewide trend of approval. In Ravalli County 48.98 percent voted

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Clarence Popham to Christine Johnson, letter, January 30, 1990.

³"Ravallians at Polls Vote for Favorites," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 6, 1974, p. 1.

for the amendment, while statewide 51.4 percent approved.¹

In the remaining 15 months of his life, Romney was able to complete some of the most important legislative work of his career.

¹Ellis Waldron and Paul B. Wilson, Atlas of Montana Elections 1889-1976 (Missoula: University of Montana, 1978), pp. 271 and 276.

CHAPTER 2

FAMILY HISTORY

One of Romney's greatgrandfathers was an Englishman who was also named Miles Romney. He and his wife, Elizabeth Gaskell Romney, became acquainted with a Mormon missionary from America at a religious gathering on a street corner in Dalton in Furness Lancaster, England. They were attracted to the religion, and in September 1839 a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints baptized them. That decision had a profound effect on the family for years to come.¹

In 1841 Miles and Elizabeth Romney and 233 other passengers sailed for America. During the 51-day voyage from Liverpool to New Orleans there were three deaths and a mutiny. The Romneys took a river boat up the Mississippi to Nauvoo, Illinois. Romney was very sick on the journey, but recovered enough to act as master mechanic during the

¹Unless otherwise noted, facts in this chapter about the Romney family history were obtained from an account written by a cousin of Miles Romney Jr.'s: Clarence Popham, "Romney's [sic] in the Bitter Root," Romney Papers, Ravalli County Museum Library of Northwestern History, Hamilton, Montana; and Clarence Popham to Christine Johnson, letter, April 12, 1990.

building of the Mormon Temple in Nauvoo. In 1846 dissenters expelled the Mormons from Nauvoo. They headed west toward Salt Lake City, but because they were too poor to purchase suitable outfits, the group got only as far as Burlington, Iowa. They traveled slowly across the country, stopping for a season when necessary to work and build up supplies. In Council Bluffs, Iowa, they were able to refit, and set out again for Utah with 260 people, 100 yoke of oxen and 67 wagons. Over the next several years they traveled to St. Joseph, Missouri, and then St. Louis, finally reaching Salt Lake City in 1850.

The Romneys' first home in Salt Lake consisted of a wagon box and tents, and Miles Romney continued to carry out important responsibilities in the construction trades for the church. Twelve years later, Brigham Young asked the Romneys to move to St. George, Utah, where Romney supervised the building of the Mormon tabernacle and later the Mormon temple there.

Thomas Romney, Miles Romney Jr.'s grandfather, was the seventh of the nine children. During the years the family lived in Utah, Thomas attended school, learned carpentry and cabinet making, and married Annie Wood, a gentle Englishwoman. Annie had been two years old when the family sailed for America. Her mother died aboard ship and was buried at sea, but the family continued on to Utah.

Thomas and Annie Romney lived in Beaver City, Utah,

where Thomas assisted in the design and supervised the building of the Mormon temple. They had four girls and four boys: Naomi, Jane, Miles, Thomas, Vernon, Annie, Kenneth, and Winnifred.

About this time, Thomas became disenchanted with the Mormon religion and the political associations of his family and decided to move his wife and children away from Utah. They loaded their possessions into a covered wagon, with livestock trailing behind, and headed north. They arrived in Missoula, Montana, in 1881, at the height of the spring runoff. Flooding kept them from continuing on to eastern Washington where they had planned to settle.

A. B. Hammond, founder of the Missoula Mercantile, convinced Romney that western Montana's Bitterroot Valley to the south had everything he would want, so the Romneys traveled to the Bitterroot and settled on Gird Creek flat east of what was to become the town of Hamilton. They negotiated with the squatter occupying the property and finally purchased 160 acres for \$200 and a team of mules.¹

The family traded at Grantsdale south of Gird Creek, and the children, including Miles Romney Jr.'s father, attended Gird Creek School. They all worked to develop the ranch, living in a log cabin and bringing water onto the

¹"Miles Romney, A Free Man, Is Taken by Death, Funeral Saturday," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 1, 1943, p. 1.

land from nearby creeks and ditches.

At this same time, Marcus Daly, one of the territory's mining magnates, was buying land in the Bitterroot to establish a stock farm. Eventually the Daly property completely surrounded the Romney ranch, cutting off the irrigation and forcing Thomas Romney to sell out to Daly for \$4,000. Romney then bought a farm north of Corvallis, but his bitterness about the Daly incident lasted for many years.¹

The hardships of the family may have been a factor in the death of Annie Romney in 1904 at age 58. Soon after that, Thomas Romney told his family he was going to do some traveling and relieve his loneliness. He left the Bitterroot and was never heard from again. The youngest child, Winnifred, was in high school at the time. She and her brother Kenneth were taken under the wing of their brother Miles, who helped them with their further education. Winnifred graduated from the University of Washington and Kenneth from George Washington University.²

Thomas Romney was an intelligent and well-read man. He subscribed to the New York Times and read it completely, even though it reached him many weeks after it was printed. His oldest and youngest sons, Miles and Kenneth, developed

¹Popham, "Romney's [sic]," p. 2-3.

²Ibid., p. 3; and Popham letter, April 12, 1990.

the same interest in reading and learning.

Miles Romney Sr. was born at St. George, Utah, December 18, 1872, and received a meager education in schools at Beaver City, Utah, and the Bitterroot. He worked as a laborer on the Bitter Root Stock Farm, then being organized by Marcus Daly, for \$25 a month plus board. He also worked for the Missoula Mercantile at Victor, hauling supplies by stage to the nearby Curlew Mine. For a time he also clerked in Ziegler's Cigar Store in Hamilton. He finally saved enough money to attend Ohio Northern University at Ada, where he completed a short business course. After returning to Montana he taught school for a time at Bannack, an old mining camp and former territorial capital.¹

About this time Romney became interested in the Western News. The weekly had been founded in Stevensville, Montana, in 1890. The owners, James T. Farris and R. L. Davis, were also the first editor and associate editor. For the next few years there were a confusing series of ownership and personnel changes. In 1892 A. B. Weisenflue became editor and publisher, but in about six months Farris took back those positions. For a time James E. Stevens was his

¹Facts about Miles Romney Sr.'s early days were obtained principally from his obituary ("Romney, A Free Man.") and a tribute by his son 25 years later (Miles Romney Jr., "Late Editor of WN Honored," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 28, 1968, p. 2.). There is some discrepancy between the two describing the sequence in which Romney held certain jobs before and just after college.

partner. By August 1893 Stevens was no longer a partner, and Farris moved the paper from Stevensville to Hamilton. L. A. Woodward became the Western News editor late that year. Early in 1894 Farris left the paper, and in July 1895 Woodward and Davis were listed as co-publishers.

In September 1895 Woodward announced the sale of his interest in the paper to Miles Romney.¹ A notice in the September 27, 1895, issue of the Bitter Root Times reported the transaction this way:

A. L. [sic] Woodward's half interest in the Western News has been purchased by Miles Romney who will become an active partner and assume editorial charge of the next issue. Mr. Romney is a bright young man and will undoubtedly get out a good paper. We wish him success and welcome him into his new field of work.²

By November 13, 1895 the Western News no longer listed Davis as a partner.

In April 1897 Romney married Elizabeth (Bessie) Rosetta Robbins at Corvallis in a small wedding. She was the sister of a school friend, Fred Robbins. Bessie was born at Dodge Center, Minnesota, in February 1877 and had come to the Bitterroot with her family in 1882. Her parents, Albert E. and Susan Robbins, homesteaded one of the first ranches in the Grantsdale-Hamilton district. Bessie and her two sisters, May and Emma, were each sent to Butte or Anaconda

¹L. A. Woodward, "Good-Bye," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 25, 1895, p. 2.

²Hamilton (Montana) Bitter Root Times, September 27, 1895, p. 4.

to take music and painting lessons. Bessie also liked to write short stories, and she taught school for a time. The three girls were especially popular in the community because there were many more young men than women, and they entertained suitors Sunday afternoons by playing the organ.¹

A column called "Flowery Projectiles" in the May 12, 1897 issue of the Western News contained copies of notices from twelve area newspapers announcing the marriage and passing along good-natured wishes to the newlyweds. One from the Missoula Messenger read this way:

There it goes again. A few weeks ago Editor Stevens, of the Ravalli Republican, committed matrimony. He was shortly followed by his associate, Fred Collins, who copied the example. A few days ago, Editor Hoss, of the Deer Lodge Silver State abandoned the bachelor club and took unto himself a wife. Now comes Editor Romney, of the Hamilton Western News and boldly announced that he has taken a companion in life in the person of Miss Bessie Robbins an estimable lady of the Bitter Root valley. We cannot account for this matrimonial begira (hegira) unless it be the near approach of the meeting of the Montana Press Association and the desire of the new benedicts for companions who will keep them sober on the occasion of the journalistic jaunt.²

When the Western News office was moved to Hamilton, it is believed to have been in a frame building in Block 30 near State Street, between South Second and Third streets,

¹"Mrs. Miles Romney Dies in Coast City," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 8, 1925, p. 1; and Bitter Root Valley Historical Society, Bitterroot Trails, Vol. 1 (Darby, Montana: Professional Impressions, 1982), pp. 441-445.

²"Flowery Projectiles," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 12, 1897, p. 8.

almost directly west of the final home of the paper. Romney and Bessie lived in the back room of the print shop, and it is probable that this is where their son, Miles Jr., was born December 6, 1900.¹

¹Clarence Popham, "History of the Western News," Romney Papers, Ravalli County Museum Library of Northwestern History, Hamilton, Montana, p. 2, and interview with Ruth Romney, Romney home, Hamilton, Montana, January 24, 1985.

CHAPTER 3

GROWING UP YEARS

Some would say that Miles Romney Jr.'s destiny as a newsman and politician was fixed at birth. Besides being born behind a print shop, he was reared by a father who knew Augustus Heinze, Marcus Daly, Thomas Carter, and W. A. Clark, some of the giants who struggled for political and economic control of Montana. The elder Romney participated in those battles both as a politician and newsman, making the Western News the official spokesman for the Democratic party in Ravalli County.¹

Years later, young Romney wrote that it was no little tribute to his father's character that he "emerged from those titanic battles as one of the few who had not been irretrievably smeared in those wars."²

From the beginning the Romneys undoubtedly had dreams of their son carrying on his father's work, and young Miles

¹Miles Romney Jr. to Warren J. Brier, letter, November 9, 1968, Romney Papers, University of Montana School of Journalism files, Missoula, Montana.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Summing Up and In Retrospect," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 1, 1943, p. 4.

did help at the newspaper some, but not enthusiastically. He was an athlete and his dreams were of coaching, and for a time in college he may have thought about government service or law. He did not make a commitment to journalism until late in his college career, and was 63, nearing retirement age, before he reluctantly ran for public office for the first time.

From Miles' earliest years, his father was in public service and politics. He was a member of the State Democratic Central Committee, and in 1902 was elected president of the Montana Press Association as well as mayor of Hamilton. In 1904 he was the Democratic candidate for Montana Secretary of State on a ticket headed by Joseph K. Toole, who was seeking his third term as governor. Toole won, but Romney lost by 910 votes to Abraham Yoder. Romney served as state senator for Ravalli County from 1906 to 1910.¹

During these same years, while Miles was in elementary school, his father used the Western News to boost land development in the area. He vigorously supported construction of a large irrigation system, The Big Ditch, by the Bitter Root Irrigation Company and the accompanying national promotion of sales of Bitterroot lands for apple

¹Miles Romney Jr. letter to Warren Brier, Romney Papers, University of Montana School of Journalism files, Missoula, Montana; and "Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame," Montana Journalism Review, 1969, inside front cover.

orchards. In May 1910 he published a magazine supplement that was filled with articles, advertisements and photographs about the get-rich-quick opportunities. He is reported to have planted 40 acres of orchards on his own 200-acre farm west of Hamilton.¹

Ruth Romney's parents, D. C. and Emma Mallory Gray, were two of those who moved their families to the Bitterroot to farm. They bought 160 acres west of Hamilton in 1898, and 45 acres of it were in apples. They found that a good living could be made at first, but that eventually competition from growers in New York and Washington states, rising freight costs, uncertain weather and other natural problems made the venture risky.

Despite the problems, land speculators continued to promote development of the Bitterroot in glowing terms and sponsored trips to the area for Easterners who were potential buyers. Ruth Romney remembers that in about 1910 a developer who was trying to sell an unirrigated "rock pile" on the east side of the valley wanted to bring a group out to see the Gray orchard on the west side as an example of what was possible. "My father refused to let them come on his place," she said. "He said he would come after them with a shotgun if they did." He did not like the fact that

¹Mark Sharfenaker, "Apple Boom 'N Bust As Seen Through the Eyes of the Editors," Reflections supplement, Hamilton (Montana) Ravalli Republic, March 30, 1979.

developers were misrepresenting the valley.¹

In 1916 Romney Sr. became somewhat disillusioned with the operation of the irrigation company under wealthy absentee private investors and called for local landowners to form an irrigation district and operate the system themselves. That occurred in 1920 when the Bitter Root Irrigation District was formed, and it still exists today. The apple boom began to turn to bust about this same time, though, and in another fifteen years would be over.²

At the time of his father's death in 1943, Romney looked back on another very important event of those years:

"In 1912 Miles Romney organized the Peoples Power League, an organization of farm and labor organizations and independent political workers, and as its leader initiated the Direct Primary Law, the Corrupt Practices Act, a Workmans Compensation Act and the first state Farm Loan Act. The first two laws were favored by the electorate in a referendum at the 1914 election but the other two were defeated. The agitation, however, resulted in enactment by the Montana legislature the following winter of a workmans compensation law which in amended form is in force in Montana today (1943)."³

Young Miles grew up in this stimulating atmosphere, a lively and adored only child. Ruth and Miles met when they were about 10 and 11 years old. "I thought he was the cutest kid and also maybe the orneriest kid I ever knew,"

¹Recorded interview with Ruth Romney, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana, October 5, 1982.

²Sharfenaker, "Apple Boom."

³"Romney, a Free Man," p. 8.

she said. "He was full of mischief."¹

He also had a good imagination. He and two cousins created a cartoon featuring three Chinese characters, Ging, Gang, and Wong, and Miles became "Ging" to his family and friends. His dad also called him "Maginn" and other pet names, while Miles and his father both referred to Bessie Romney as "Little Mamma."

About this time Miles' mother joined the Presbyterian Church, because she thought that was the proper thing for a young mother with a son. She sent Miles to Sunday School, even though he protested. When he came home one day she asked what he had learned. "Something about the Day of Petticoat," was his reply. Bessie decided that if that was all he was going to get out of Sunday School she would not make him go.²

Miles loved the outdoors and spent hundreds of happy hours playing at the Anaconda Copper Mining Company lumber mill pond on the Bitterroot River. He wanted to be able to hunt ducks, but his father would not let him have a shotgun until he was 12. When he finally did get one, his mother would not let him go hunting unless he was with someone older. An arrangement was worked out whereby Miles could go hunting with two older boys who were friends of the family.

¹Interview with Ruth Romney, Romney home, Hamilton, Montana, January 24, 1985.

²Ibid.

Since Ruth Gray lived in the country and came to school in a horse-drawn buggy, she was not able to spend much time in town with friends. Because of this, she and Miles did not get to know each other well until they were in high school, and there they became sweethearts. "He always had to sit up in front in the assembly hall," Ruth said, "because they had to keep an eye on him." He usually was put in "solitary confinement" once during the year and suspended once, but his misdeeds were more mischievous than awful. "And in the morning when he'd come sit at the desk," Ruth remembers, "and I was back several rows, he'd look at me and say, 'I love you' (mouthing the words)."¹

Ruth remembers one time in high school going duck hunting with Miles and his dog. Ruth stayed overnight with a friend in town, and Miles came by at 5 A.M. and whistled for her. The three spent the morning in a boat on the mill pond and brought home some ducks.

Miles adored his parents, but the consensus was that he was spoiled. His cousin Clarence Popham summed up the situation this way: Miles' mother spoiled him terribly and blamed his father; his father spoiled Miles and blamed his mother; and later Ruth spoiled him.

His father could not bear to discipline Miles, Ruth remembers, so he would send the boy into the bathroom, shut

¹Ibid.

the door, and then stand outside it and scold him.

Ruth says Bessie Romney gave her son not "mother love," but "smother love." "She wasn't even sensible about it," Ruth said. As an example, it was Miles' job to fill the wood box, but one day he came to Bessie and said, "Little Mamma, I wish I didn't have to fill that wood box any more." "All right, Ging," she replied. "I'll do something about that." So she hired neighbor boys to do it.¹

Miles' reluctance to fill the wood box apparently was not an indication of a general unwillingness to work. He peddled both the Western News and Missoulian around town on his bike; he worked in the Regal Clothing Company as a clerk on Saturdays and after school; and during the summer he worked in the orchards.

When young Miles started to chew tobacco in high school his parents were very upset, but could not bring themselves to say anything to him about it. They approached Ruth and asked her to do so. "I laid him out in lavender," she remembers. "I don't know if I succeeded or not. When he went hunting or fishing he probably still chewed."²

Miles' dearest friend was Robert McCulloch, whose father was a district judge. Miles, Robert, and their dogs, Diogenes and Socrates, were together almost constantly.

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

²Interview with Ruth Romney, Romney home, Hamilton, Montana, June 10, 1989.

They spent many hours at the mill pond but also enjoyed less physical pursuits. They would draw maps of fictitious countries, name them, and then plan mock battles.

Sometime during their senior year Robert was scolded by his father for some offense, became despondent, and shot himself upstairs in his room. Miles was deeply affected by the tragedy because he and Robert were like brothers, Ruth Romney said. Strangely enough, young Romney could not or would not talk about it. In fact, he did not mention much about Robert after that, Ruth Romney said, "but after all, we were just kids." Ruth said that throughout her husband's life there were lots of things he could not talk about, because he probably felt his private feelings were his own. "He certainly wasn't bashful about expressing himself in his editorials, though," she said.¹

Athletics was another important part of Romney's life in high school, and he was a great admirer of two second cousins, Ott and Dick Romney, who were to become coaches at Montana State University and Utah State. Miles had played baseball when he was younger and spent one season as regular halfback on the high school football team, but track was his real love. He specialized in the dashes and hurdles and won many ribbons. At the annual Ravalli County track meet in April 1918, Miles earned 21 of Hamilton's 43 points with

¹Ibid, and phone interview with Ruth Romney, April 24, 1990.

first-place finishes in the 50-, 100- and 220-yard dashes and the low hurdles and third in the broad jump.¹

During these years, Miles' Uncle Kenneth worked off and on at the Western News. In 1914 he became bill clerk at the U. S. House of Representatives in Washington, and was able to continue his reporting at the same time.²

Despite the family journalism tradition, young Miles had no desire to follow in that field as he neared high school graduation. When his father would ask him to help out in the print shop, Miles did so reluctantly. He wanted to be a coach.

In 1916 the elder Romney filed as a Democratic candidate for governor but lost in the primary to the incumbent, Sam V. Stewart, who was eventually re-elected. Romney blamed his defeat on "the venomous opposition waged by subterranean Amalgamated agencies."³ The next year, on April 6, 1917, America declared war on Germany, and Romney enlisted in the army that same day. It was not his first military experience as he had formed a company of men during the Spanish-American War of 1898, but they had not been called to active duty. In World War I, Romney was

¹Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 25, 1918, p. 1.

²"Kenneth Romney Goes to Washington, D.C.," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 27, 1914, p. 1.

³Miles Romney, "In Appreciation," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 5, 1916, p. 2.

commissioned a captain in the Quartermaster Corps and served in Washington, D.C., and then in Atlanta, Ga., as head of all supply depots in the southeastern United States. He left the service at the war's end with the rank of major in the U.S. Army Reserve. Bessie Romney ran the paper while he was away.¹

Ruth Romney remembers the patriotic fervor that spread through the nation at the time, some of it ridiculous. Anyone of German heritage was apt to be threatened with tar and feathers and a ride out of town on a rail. German was no longer taught in schools, and sauerkraut was to be called "liberty cabbage."²

Few were caught up in the fervor more than Hamilton's young people, and when an Army recruiter came to the high school in the spring of 1918, Miles and some of his close friends signed up. Miles would not be 18 until December and so lied about his age to qualify. "His father put the kibosh on it," Ruth said, but told his son, "Don't worry, Ging, you're going to get your military service, because you're going to go to West Point." Miles was eager to serve in the military for the duration of the war, but was appalled by his father's vision of a lifetime military

¹Miles Romney Jr. letter to Warren Brier, and "Romney, a Free Man."

²Romney interviews, October 5, 1982, and January 24, 1985.

career. In June, despite his feelings, Miles became the first person appointed to West Point by a woman, Montana Representative Jeannette Rankin.¹

For a young man used to a lot of freedom and no discipline, the regimentation of the academy was unbearable. The bugle called reveille at 5:30 A.M. with assembly four minutes later, and taps sounded at 9 P.M. Because lights-out came so early in the evening, Miles had a hard time getting to sleep. To fill in those wakeful hours, he read the whole Bible. His choice of reading matter was not an indication of religious devotion, however. Cadets were required to attend chapel, but Miles chose the Catholic service since it was a half hour shorter than the Protestant. Although Romney never became a church goer, Biblical quotations and allusions can be found sprinkled through a lifetime of his writings.

That part of Romney's personal library still in existence includes four textbooks he used as a plebe: Infantry Drill Regulations, The English of Military Communications, Elements of Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, and Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry of the Army of the United States. The manual includes information about the Springfield rifle, military discipline and courtesy, rations and forage, and

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

personal hygiene. Memos and tickets stuffed into the manual also show that for the cadets' leisure time there were ten-cent movies and cadet hops several weekends a month.

While at West Point, Miles began keeping a scrapbook. Snapshots show spartan barracks, an imposing chapel, formal drill formations, and cadets posturing and clowning in their trim new uniforms. There are also scenes of the cadets tent camping. One section of the scrapbook is set aside for autographs, and comments added by those signing give more impressions of life at the academy:

Report that man! Report 'im, report 'im. Give 'im a zero.

How many days? 1149, Sir.

Sherman said, 'War is Hell' and the government located it on the Hudson.

Heads up! And chins drawn well in!

Yea, furlough and the femmes!

Who appointed you, Mister?

First call for Reveille! Yankee Doodle! Turn out Romney!!!

Are you hungry? Yes, sir. Well sit up then.

We'll be Lieuts together in 1920, if we pass all the writs.

Saddest words of tongue or pen are those sad words 'I've flunked again.'¹

¹Miles Romney Jr., scrapbook, in Ruth Romney's possession, Hamilton, Montana.

Bessie Romney struggled to think of ways to help ease her son's homesickness. As one effort, she had a formal photo studio portrait taken of Miles' beloved dog, Diogenes, and sent it to him. It became part of the scrapbook.

The armistice was declared November 11, 1918, and Miles became even more disillusioned with life at the academy. In December his father visited him while on leave. An article in the Western News cheerfully reported that Captain Romney "spent a day at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., with Miles Jr., who is making excellent progress as a cadet."¹ Romney signed his son's scrapbook during the same visit, but the comment he added indicates he was worried about the young man's attitude: "Here's hoping you will stick and graduate with High Honors."²

Despite his father's high hopes, young Miles decided on a course of action that would release him from his commitment to the academy. He deliberately flunked a math test, gained his freedom, and never went back.³ Years later when Miles and Ruth were traveling in the Washington, D.C., area, she suggested they visit the academy; he adamantly refused.

Romney was furious at his son for throwing away a

¹"Captain Romney Home on Furlough," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 12, 1918, p. 1.

²Romney scrapbook.

³Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

military career, and told him he was no longer welcome at home. Miles' uncle Kenneth Romney came to the rescue by obtaining a job for the young man as a night guard at the Capitol and helping him enroll at George Washington University. Kenneth also insisted that Miles pledge his fraternity, Kappa Sigma, and an unidentified newspaper clipping in his scrapbook about the event refers to Miles as a law student. Miles was very much opposed to the exclusive nature of fraternities, but may have joined because of gratitude or a sense of loyalty to his uncle. In 1922 there was a similar occasion when Miles' father urged him to join his Masonic lodge. To please his father, Miles went through initiation and later kept up his membership, but never attended another meeting.¹

Items in Miles' scrapbook indicate some of the things he did and people he spent time with during his months at George Washington University. There are an autograph from Jeannette Rankin, passes to the House of Representatives visitors' gallery and a collection of cigar bands ("El Recipro Extra Fina").

The conflict between Miles and his father had a bad effect on Bessie Romney's health. When the elder Romney realized how hard it was on her, he relented and sent for his son. "I don't know if they went so far as to kill the

¹Romney interview, June 10, 1989.

fatted calf," Ruth commented later.¹ Young Miles then began making plans to transfer to the University of Montana in the fall.

When Miles had gone off to West Point, Ruth lost interest in finishing her last year in high school and looked for a way to become part of the war effort. She knew nursing was not for her, so she decided to enroll at Butte Business College, which had a high school equivalency program as well as business courses, and she could live with a married sister. Her aim was to become trained so that she could get a clerical job in Washington, D.C. Ruth remembers that it was exciting to live in Butte in 1918 because of the miners' strikes and other events, but that she was shielded from the violence.

After completing one term of school, Ruth worked until 1925, first for a prominent Butte attorney, then for a merchant in Missoula, Fox Movie Studios in Hollywood, and finally the registrar's office at the University of Montana.

A Montana Press Club membership card in Miles' scrapbook indicates that as a sophomore at the University of Montana in 1919-20 he was at last preparing himself for a career in journalism. According to the school yearbook, the 1920 Sentinel, the School of Journalism had outgrown a tent and bicycle shed and moved to the upper floor of the Marcus

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

Cook barracks that year. Journalism classes used no textbooks, but instead newspapers from all over the country.¹ Miles undoubtedly worked on the school paper, the Montana Kaimin, but the issues of that year do not mention him as a staff person.

One of the most unusual items in Romney's scrapbook is a lock of medium brown hair labeled "Frosh hair night of 10/1/19. U of M." An unidentified news clipping explains:

Early in the evening the frosh hoisted their battle colors on the big flag pole on Higgins Avenue. It remained there unmolested for sometime until Miles Romney, a soph, attempted to take it down. He was spied by the foe and a lively chase ensued. Romney is a sprinter of no mean ability. Also he was frightened, but a lengthy frosh brought the fleet sprinter to earth a few miles south of Higgins avenue bridge and soph fell a victim to the keen edged shears and slippers [sic] of the frosh. The flag remained on the pole for about two hours until Night Chief Henry Morris advised them to take it down, fearing that the tugging at rope might cause the end of the pole to be broken off. The boys obeyed. . . .²

The highlight of Romney's sophomore year did not have anything to do with journalism or class antics, but instead occurred at a track meet. Because he was a transfer student and there was controversy over his eligibility to participate in Northwest Conference athletics, it was mid-April before Romney was made a member of the track team. The team's attention was focused on the Pacific Coast Relay Carnival, sponsored by the University of Washington, to be

¹University of Montana, 1920 Sentinel, p. 61.

²Romney scrapbook.

held April 24 in Seattle. It would be the first all-relay meet to be held west of the Missouri.¹

As of April 20 the executive committee of the Associated Students of the University of Montana had not given its final okay for Montana's participation, but it was generally believed to be a certainty. It would be the farthest trip west any Montana athletic team had taken. Three men had been named to the team: Harry Adams, Jack Sterling, and Steve Sullivan. The fourth place would have been taken by a student named John Toole, but he sprained a ligament. Romney and several others were being considered for the final slot. On April 22 when the team left for Washington, Romney was Coach B. W. Bierman's choice.

The combination proved to be the right one, as the team electrified the crowd by winning the 400-yard relay in 40 2/5 seconds, fifteen yards ahead of the Oregon Agricultural College team. According to the Montana Kaimin, the time became a world record since it was the first time in the history of athletics that the event had been made one of the official races of a meet. A short time later the Montana team won third in the half-mile relay in spite of the fact that Adams was suffering from a badly strained tendon.

¹"Relay Team Will Enter Classic Northwest Event," Montana Kaimin, April 20, 1920, p. 1.

Montana finished third overall in the meet.¹

The Montana Kaimin ran a story headed, "How They Did It," written (tongues firmly in cheeks) by the team members:

Well, yuh see, it was this way. Romney, he started the race and he gained a little on his man. Then Romney give the old stick to Adams and he gained a little on his man. Then Adams give the stick to Sullivan and Sullivan gained a little on his man. Then Sterling got the stick and he gained a little on his man--and that's how we came in ahead.²

In the same issue, the Montana Kaimin also quoted Romney as saying the team would be out for as much or more next year, but something happened to change his mind. That summer Kenneth Romney and his wife came to Montana on vacation. Kenneth wanted Miles to follow him in a career in government service and persuaded the young man to transfer to George Washington University again in the fall. The coaches there tried hard to interest Miles in their program, but without success. Apparently Miles never again participated in athletics nor had much interest in being a spectator except for a brief stint as sports reporter during his senior year.

Regardless of his uncle's hopes for him, Miles reaffirmed his commitment to journalism, and was back at the University of Montana in 1921 to begin his senior year.

Ruth remembers that he was not a very good student and

¹"Romney, Adams, Sullivan, Sterling Take Sprint Event in Record Time," Montana Kaimin, April 26, 1920, p. 1.

²Ibid.

just skimmed through the courses he did not like, not caring about grades. He took a Spanish class, for instance, without bothering to get a textbook. The things he was interested in he pursued enthusiastically, though. Miles greatly admired A. L. Stone, journalism dean, and felt fortunate to be able to take classes from him.

As his father and grandfather before him, Miles was an avid reader, and spent much of his time that last year in school reading widely. One of his favorite books was H. G. Wells' Outline of History. He told Ruth, "If anyone would read that book from cover to cover, it's the equivalent of a college education."¹

Miles was also gaining a reputation as a rebel. When the University was going to make ROTC compulsory, Miles helped organize an assembly to object, although he would have been exempt from the requirement himself because of his time at West Point. Then, at graduation, Miles refused to wear a cap and gown. He told his startled parents and friends that when the other graduates moved the tassels on their caps he would take his hair and move it on the other side of his head. "Ging," his father replied, "you carry your eccentricity too far."²

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

GETTING STARTED

Young Miles kept adding to his scrapbook until he was about 25 years old. Its contents profile a young man who enjoyed life, but who also read widely and thought seriously about the world's problems, especially those dealing with a violations of social justice. Short quotations, often written in purple ink, headed many of the pages:

For five years there has been no free play of public opinion in the world. (Frank J. Cobb, 1920)

A nation is as great and only as great as her rank and file. (Woodrow Wilson)

Can the tariff question be decided in favor of the people, so long as the monopolies are the chief counselors at Washington? (Woodrow Wilson, 1913)

The flames of hatred burn fiercest in the fagots of ignorance!

I love America, but I love her with my eyes open. (Emma Goldman)

The strongest bond, outside the family relation, should be one uniting the working people of all countries regardless of national boundaries. (Abraham Lincoln)

One book in Romney's personal library was The Cry For Justice, an anthology of social protest literature edited by Upton Sinclair with an introduction by Jack London. It was

signed by Romney in June 1921 when he was completing his sophomore year in college. One excerpt that he copied in his scrapbook was "The Internationale" by Eugene Pottier--a hymn of the revolutionary working class:

Arise, ye pris'ners of starvation!
 Arise, ye wretched of the earth,
 For Justice thunders condemnation,
 A better world's in birth.
 No more tradition's chains shall bind us,
 Arise, ye slaves! No more in thrall!
 The earth shall rise on new foundations,
 We have been naught, we shall be all.

'Tis the final conflict,
 Let each stand in his place,
 The International Party
 Shall be the human race. . . .¹

Marginal notes indicate he used quotes from the book for editorials a number of times during the next fifty years.

Another book he added to his library at about the same time was The Inside of the Cup, by the American novelist Winston Churchill. The theme of the book is the failure of the church in the face of modern social problems.

The scrapbook also contains evidence that young Romney may have been a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. There is a "One month due stamp" from the organization and also a sticker with the slogan: "Join Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500 I.W.W. In the woods, in the mills, on the drive. Get the 6 hour habit."

¹Upton Sinclair, ed., The Cry For Justice (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1915), p. 800.

A long-time friend of Romney's, Kelsey Milner, said Romney told him he had joined the organization when he was young, but Milner said Romney left that radicalism behind and became more conservative as he got older.¹

Ruth Romney says she does not believe Miles was a member of the I.W.W., but that he held many Socialist ideals. "It was a stigma to be called a Socialist," she says. "He was years and years ahead of his time. A lot of his editorials probably shocked people. His father was also interested in social concerns, but was not as radical." He probably considered himself a Jeffersonian Democrat, she said, and thought his son went too far sometimes.²

Romney also enjoyed poetry, and some poems by W. R. Service, Kahlil Gibran and others are copied in his scrapbook and on the inside covers of his books. He also kept a studio photograph of his mother with a sentimental poem about motherhood next to it.

Young Romney went directly from college to the Western News, and the issue of July 6, 1922, lists him as editor and his father as owner. In that issue, Romney wrote an impassioned editorial extolling the virtues of Dean A. L. Stone of the University of Montana School of Journalism, and calling for the school to be renamed the Stone School of

¹Interview with Kelsey Milner, Milner home, Hamilton, Montana, June 14, 1989.

²Romney interview, June 10, 1989.

Journalism:

A man handsomely endowed with noble ethics and unbounded sentiment so seldom to be found in the field of the fourth estate, he stands head and shoulders above all other instructors in the hearts of those who knew him. On the campus of Missoula he is beloved by the student body as no other man and we believe the feelings held by the student body for him have been judiciously placed. Pre-eminent among Montana newspaper folk through no accident he heads the faculty which instructs our nascent journalists in ideals that no man can give askance to."¹

The next week, Romney had a strange event to report on the front page. One night two Ku Klux Klansmen paraded down Hamilton's Main Street in full regalia, proceeded to the front of the newspaper office, where they made "various mystic signs, unintelligible to those persons who witnessed the affair," and then pushed a letter under the office door. The letter praised the Western News editor for his stand on "clean government and righteous living" and said, "You have our support and hearts and hands to assist you in any way that we can."² Apparently a number of other individuals and businesses in the area received similar letters. It is unclear how they were chosen or why the Western News was included. In an editorial in the same issue, Romney expressed suspicion of the Klan's motives and was critical of its methods. "When our people so transgress our laws as

¹"A Suggestion," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 6, 1922, p. 2.

²"Klan Makes Debut in Hamilton," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 13, 1922, p. 1.

to make officials powerless, then it is not time for a minority to enforce through violence the law as it sees it, but it is time for us to change our laws."¹ He suggested a wait-and-see posture with regard to the Klan.

Other more light-hearted events reported that summer were the opening of the Hamilton Chautauqua and announcement of a special premium to be awarded at the Ravalli County Fair for "the flappiest flapper." The competition was to consider "the bobbiest hair, the shortest skirts (knickers and bloomers barred), the rolliest stockings, the largest amount of kalsomine scientifically and evenly distributed (high power talcum users barred), age limit from 10 to 70 years."²

That summer and fall the Western News was very much concerned with the state election, and many editorials called for the election of "a free Legislature," one not under the influence of the big corporations that controlled the copper mines, timber, water power and banking in the state.³ That call was begun by the elder Romney years before and continued by his son throughout his life.

A November 2 editorial complained about how the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Time Will Tell," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 13, 1922, p. 2.

²"Step Out Flappers Here's Your Chance," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 3, 1922, p. 1.

³"For a Free Legislature," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 20, 1922, p. 2.

Anaconda Company, one of those corporations, used the newspapers it owned to control politics and to continue to "dodge" its "fair share of the tax burden." By 1929 the company owned eight daily newspapers, which constituted 55-60 percent of the daily press circulation in the state.¹

Since Romney's discharge from the Army he had not worked at the Western News with as much enthusiasm as before, but instead had spent more time working his ranch and orchard and pursuing his political career. Making his son the paper's editor in 1922 seemed to be the final break, but apparently Romney had a change of heart. In the summer of 1923, young Miles' father and Uncle Kenneth decided he needed to broaden his experience, so they arranged for him to take a job as a purser on a passenger liner sailing to Europe. Somehow, though, he ended up as purser on the S. S. Edgfield, a freighter bound for the Far East.

"I didn't want him to be so far away," Ruth Romney remembers. "I didn't think it was a very good idea at the time."²

During the nine months he was at sea, Miles wrote long descriptive letters to his parents, greeting them as "Dear Mamma and Daddy." Excerpts appeared in the Western News.

¹"Look Before You Jump," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 2, 1922, p. 2; and Malone and Roeder, Two Centuries, pp. 280-281.

²Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

"Every day at sea is more or less the same as the one just preceding it," he wrote. "One thing, however, is worthy of notice. I have to do my own washing. Imagine me washing clothes. It quite gets my goat."¹

In the same letter he said:

Most all of the crew have traveled extensively. I being the only one aboard who does not make following the sea my business. Then having so much leisure time most of them read considerably, few are unable to speak authoritatively on the relative benefits of the climate of Kamchatka and Finland, or the attractions of Helsingfors and Bangkok. Also a good per cent are I.W.W., so you see I am more or less in my element.²

In January 1924 the ship docked in Shanghai, and Miles described some of the things he saw:

The stevedores and transfer men are the most hardy creatures I ever looked upon. You understand that practically no motors or horses are used to transport stores, cargo, and the like about. All the heavy and light baggage, merchandise and freight is placed on one or two-wheeled carts and pushed or pulled to its destination. You see in the faces of these men the same dumb look of suffering and resignation that one fancies to find in the face of a hard-driven horse. They utter a sing song monotonous cry as they work and the harder the work the louder they holler. I tried from several sources to find what they were crying, but the answer invariably is to such a question, "Oh, they are hollering just because their ancestors hollered before them at the same job," or some similar facetious remark. . . .³

¹Miles Romney, Jr., "Bitter Root Boy Bound For Japan and China," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 13, 1923, p. 3.

²Ibid.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Glimpses of Tsingiau, Shanghai and Hong Kong Where Chinese Coolie is Beast of Burden," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 28, 1924, p. 2.

In March he wrote from the Philippines:

It will not be with any excruciating regret that tomorrow morning, with the arrival of the dawn, I shall sail out of the harbor of Iloilo, facing to the east, and leaving behind the orient, for though I shall always relish its memories I need it not. Likewise I imagine it fails to feel the dire necessity of keeping me to prolong its passage down the stairsteps of the ages. . . .¹

In May, on the last leg of his journey, Romney gave his poetic impressions of Kingston, Jamaica:

White-tassled [sic] waves stretching themselves forth from the green depths of the harbor waters--a blue sky crowded with phantastically [sic] shaped clouds of unadulterated white--ships with diverse colored stacks--sailors in overalls and dungarees painting our ship's stack black and red--colored Jamaica harbor policemen promenading the ship's deck twirling their long black magohany [sic] sleep-producers--sloping, steep, mysterious hills lying lazily on three sides of the harbor; their color a perfect verdure and their sides lacerated with long, trailing chutes of yellow down which at some date, perhaps not so remote, logs from the mountain forest crashed--colored officials predieating [sic] verisimilitudes with an unmistakable English accent--baking heat waves rent and tossed cantankerously against one another by brisk breezes that dart in from the adjacent ocean distances--enchantment engendered in one's bosom by an atmosphere of indolence . . . such is the lay of things as words and events wrestle and strive with one another in the endeavor to unravel for your eyes the reactions that struggle, like panting breaths, across the fields of my thought.²

When Miles arrived back in Hamilton that June he had with him a young German sailor named Walter Rothe. Rothe

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Independence Chief Topic In Islands," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 10, 1924, p. 1.

²Miles Romney Jr., "In Quarantine At Kingston Jamaica," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 22, 1924, p. 1.

had jumped ship, and with Miles' help was able to join the Edgefield crew. Young Romney then arranged through U.S. Senator Thomas J. Walsh to have Rothe admitted to the United States. Walsh had been a Helena attorney and a member of the People's Power League with the elder Romney before being elected to the Senate. Once settled in his new country, Rothe began learning the printing trade at the Western News, and embarked on a successful career.¹

Ruth Romney says the incident was characteristic of her husband. Time after time during his life he would set aside what he was doing to help someone who needed it, she said.

On Miles' return to Hamilton in 1924 he resumed editorship of the paper and plunged into helping his father in a second bid for governor. Romney ran third in the Democratic primary behind John Erickson and Roy E. Ayers, both former district judges. Erickson, who "enjoyed lavish and widespread support of mining and utilities interests and of the 'Company' press," finally beat Republican candidate Joseph M. Dixon.² Romney was elected state central committeeman by the Ravalli County Democratic Central Committee, and young Miles was elected secretary.

It had been more than seven years since Miles had left

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985; and Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, Montana A History of Two Centuries (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), pp. 200-201.

²Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 97-98.

Montana for West Point, and for most of that time he and Ruth had carried on their courtship through the mail. At last the two were able to be together, and they were married February 18, 1925, at a small gathering at her parents' home. One reason for the smallness of the affair was that Ruth's mother was ill with cancer.

Ruth called Miles "Ging"; he called her "Caloutch" (squaw) or "Monkey," but Ruth remembers those years of courtship as stormy, and problems continued after the wedding. "I don't think Miles was ready to get married at all," she said later. "In my mind I was years older than he was. I don't think he was ready to settle down. He never shirked his responsibility, but there were little things. It was tough on me. This 'marriage is made in heaven'-- that's a lot of malarkey. You have to work at making your marriage work. He had to and I had to. But we did it."¹

One of the problems was that Ruth was raised in a very structured family and Miles was not. Bessie Romney had said to her daughter-in-law, "I don't care what it takes, Ruth, I want Miles to be one person that is free. . . ." ² Apparently that ideal was often expressed in the Romney home during Miles' growing up years. When the elder Romney died in 1943, the headline his son wrote for his obituary was:

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

"Miles Romney, a Free Man, Is Taken By Death, Funeral Saturday."¹

Religious differences also caused problems in the marriage. Ruth was raised in the Christian Science faith and attended services regularly while she was growing up. Miles had no affiliation. Before they were married, Miles agreed to go to church with Ruth once, but she said later that she decided she would not make a "martyr" out of him, so from then on she never asked him to do something he did not want to do. She continued to attend services for several years after their marriage, and Miles never interfered.

"Although he was not affiliated with any church, I've never known a more Christian person than Miles Romney," Ruth said later.²

In the months after Miles' and Ruth's wedding, both their mothers died, Emma Gray of cancer and Bessie Romney of influenza. Miles' father had begun investing in Florida land development with Kenneth and spent much of each year there. During the next several years those deals went sour, and Romney headed back to Montana. One day in June 1927, he told Miles and Ruth, who had taken over the Romney family home, that a friend from Florida would be going through

¹"Romney, a Free Man," p. 1.

²Romney interview, January 24, 1985. More information about Romney's personal values and motivations in Chapter 7.

Montana and he planned to go to Missoula to greet her. The next day Ruth and Miles read in the Missoulian that Romney and Beatrice Singer, a Chicago resident and Florida real estate investor, had married in Missoula. When the elder Romney introduced Beatrice to the family for the first time, it was as his wife. Apparently Miles kept most of his feelings to himself, but Ruth Romney says he was very hurt by what his father did. Ruth says she was not shy about expressing her own anger.

Unfortunately the newlyweds came not just to visit, but to move in. Romney announced that his son would continue to run the paper but that the two couples were to share the income. Ruth Romney recalls that she and Miles were already "scraping the barrel," and so she moved out in protest, finding refuge with her brother on the Gray family farm. A few days later Miles also moved out, and the couple found their own apartment.¹

Miles continued to run the paper, although relations were somewhat strained, and things were tough financially. About 1929 Romney told his son that he would have to find another job because the Western News would not support two families. It was a blow to the younger couple, but they managed to get by. Ruth got a clerical job at a public health research laboratory in Hamilton, but the area had

¹Romney interview, June 10, 1989; and phone interview, April 24, 1990.

become quite depressed and Miles was forced to sort apples, work as an irrigation ditch rider and do other menial jobs. "It was very hard on our marriage," Ruth recalls, "but I never blamed him for any of it."¹

About this time Uncle Kenneth came to Montana on vacation from Washington, D.C. He had been building a successful career in government service there and persuaded young Miles to come back with him. In 1931 Kenneth won election as Sergeant at Arms of the House. He helped Miles win appointment as Clerk of the Public Land Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, and then Information Clerk of the House Document Room. The work was confining and boring and Romney hated it.²

In 1932 he worked in Montana on Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential campaign and probably also on his father's third bid for the governorship. The elder Romney campaigned hard on a platform of helping rid state government of corporate influence, but did not make it past the primary. John Erickson, the candidate of business interests, won election to his third term by a plurality of only 3,814 votes against Republican Frank Hazelbaker. The state was feeling the effects of a depressed economy and Erickson

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

²Ibid.

refused to take action to provide relief for workers.¹

Miles returned to Washington and his former job. Kenneth helped Ruth find work in a bank, and they got along. One of the high spots of those days, however, was Miles' re-introduction to Jeannette Rankin, who lived in the same apartment building. Ruth recalls the pleasurable times they had together, and that Rankin tried unsuccessfully to interest her in becoming an activist in the peace movement.

With Roosevelt now in office, Miles hoped to win a job appointment in Montana. It eventually came in the form of a position as a deputy collector for the Internal Revenue Service. He was stationed in Billings and had to cover seventeen southeastern counties. Ruth remembers his "trying to collect taxes from those poor people that were feeding Russian thistle to their cows during the Dust Bowl."²

It is ironic that young Miles was working in a government job he did not like because his father "fired him" from the family newspaper. At the same time his father was losing interest in the paper and seeking out government jobs. For a time Romney leased the Western News to Walter Rothe, the young German refugee, and Rothe acted as publisher from February 1935 through January 1937. In 1936 the elder Romney resigned as Montana director of the

¹Roeder and Malone, Two Centuries, p. 228; and Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, p. 126.

²Romney interview, October 5, 1982.

National Emergency Council, a New Deal position, and once again entered the race for governor. Miles quit his job with the IRS to work on the Western Progressive, a small Helena paper that supported Romney's candidacy. Once again Romney failed in the primary, placing third behind two-term Eastern District Congressman Roy E. Ayers and Governor Elmer Holt who had been appointed when Governor Frank Cooney died in December 1935.¹ Ruth Romney suggests two things that contributed to her father-in-law's defeat. One is that Romney was very independent and conducted his campaign as almost a one-man operation. Secondly, he did not have the means to counteract the corporate influence against him.²

After the election, Miles was once again without work. His father was able to get him a job with the Railroad and Public Service Commission in Helena through his friendship with Jerry O'Connell, a former Butte Democratic legislator who had been elected to the Commission in 1934. The job did not last long, however, as O'Connell was elected to the U.S. House in 1936, and Commission staff appointments changed with changes in commissioners.

At this same time the marriage of Miles and Beatrice Romney was falling apart. Money problems were probably a factor. Ruth Romney says one of the turning points in the

¹Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 140-141.

²Ibid.

couple's relationship occurred when Beatrice wrote "a terrible vitriolic letter" to young Miles, accusing him of "milking his father dry." Ruth says she sent a copy of the letter to the elder Romney, and that his attitude toward his wife was never the same after that.¹ In November 1936 Romney filed for divorce, contending his wife deserted him in February 1934 by moving to California. In her court deposition Beatrice Romney denied the charge, saying Romney had failed to provide a home for her from the time he moved to Helena to become head of the National Emergency Council. She said that because of poor health she had lived temporarily in California waiting for Romney to make housing arrangements. At Romney's request Beatrice accompanied him for a time while he was campaigning for governor. Beatrice accused Romney of having an affair with a woman who was to contribute \$10,000 to his campaign. The case dragged on for a year with Beatrice arguing for her right to a part of the family home and the Western News. Her efforts were unsuccessful, though, as Romney had already made arrangements for both properties to go to his son. The divorce was granted in November 1937 and Romney ordered to pay \$25 a month alimony.²

¹Romney interview, April 24, 1990.

²Montana, District Court of the Fourth Judicial District in and for the County of Ravalli, Miles Romney vs. Beatrice Romney, November 18, 1936.

By now the elder Romney had lost all interest in the Western News. He stepped aside one last time and turned both the business and the family home over to young Miles and devoted full time to his work as a local organizer of New Deal programs. He was state director of the National Recovery Act, organized the Federal Housing Administration in Montana, and was re-appointed director of the National Emergency Council for Montana. The latter became the U.S. Office of Government Reports.¹

Ruth Romney found it hard to forgive Miles' father for forcing them from the home when he remarried, so she refused to come back to it. They rented it out instead, and for a time it even stood empty. She changed her mind in 1942, however, and they borrowed money to refurbish it. Fourteen years after her husband's death, Ruth Romney is still living there.²

Ruth also opposed her husband's return to the Western News, but Miles did so anyway in 1937, and he continued as editor and publisher until his death 39 years later.

By 1940 the elder Romney was 67 years old and unemployed. He convinced the court that his ex-wife, Beatrice, who was about 15 years his junior, was in better

¹"Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame"; and "N.E.C. Director," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 28, 1938, p. 1.

²Romney interview, April 24, 1990.

financial shape than he because she had a profession plus income from investments. The divorce decree was modified so Romney no longer had to pay alimony. The last tie was cut.¹

¹Romney vs. Romney.

CHAPTER 5

MATURING AS AN EDITOR 1937-1959

Between 1922 when young Miles graduated from college and 1937 when his father finally turned the Western News completely over to his son, Romney had worked on the paper for only short periods of time. His father had given him the title of editor at least twice, but each time was reluctant to relinquish control of the paper and changed his mind. Romney may not have felt the paper was entirely his until his father died in 1943.

Starting in 1937, when he was 36 years old, Romney was at last able to concentrate on being his own man--developing his own style as editor and publisher, and deciding the future direction of the paper.

The Western News is usually described as an independent weekly. That was particularly true and significant from the late 1800s until 1959, during which time big mining investors manipulated the press to further their own interests. Soon after 1900, the Anaconda Company began systematically buying up daily newspapers, until by 1929 it owned and editorially controlled eight in Montana. The company was also able to influence many weekly newspapers

and independent dailies, because of its vast statewide business connections, including the Montana Power Company.¹ The company could order advertisements withdrawn or eliminate an important part of a paper's revenue by arranging for a competitor to underbid it for contracts for printing legal notices.

Until the late 1920s the company papers favored a freewheeling style of mud-slinging at politicians and others whose policies they did not support. Then they changed their tactics and began ignoring their foes and all controversial issues in the state. They "dwelt instead on problems far from home--a tactic men in the trade called 'Afghanistaning.' . . . In its March 1957 issue, Quill, the monthly magazine of the journalism honorary society Sigma Delta Chi, ranked the states on the basis of news coverage of their legislatures. Montana stood forty-seventh among the forty-eight states."²

The Western News made a point of ferreting out examples of the bias of the company press. The People's Voice in Helena, under Harry and Gretchen Billings, also strived to report that news. Because so few others followed their lead, the two papers carried out a lonely crusade for many years. In 1938, for example, Romney wrote that company-

¹Malone and Roeder, Two Centuries, pp. 280-281.

²Ibid.

owned newspapers in Montana gave bold headlines and detailed coverage to a certain speech by U.S. Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a company favorite, and ignored a speech given at the same time to a much larger group, by U.S. Representative Jerry O'Connell. The Montana Standard of Butte, owned by the Anaconda Company, described the athletic events held at the picnic at which O'Connell spoke, but added only that "there was speaking at the bandstand."¹

In a 1941 editorial Romney reported that the Montana Standard printed an article on Page 2 about an important U.S. Supreme Court decision that made it unnecessary to amend the Constitution in order to put an end to child labor. On Page 1 the Standard printed an unimportant story about a ruling by the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that was unfavorable to a National Labor Relations Board ruling. "In other words, the Standard 'played down' the big story by tucking it inside, and 'played up' the rather unimportant story which was against the spirit of the reform legislation," Romney wrote. "This merely goes to demonstrate that people must guard the news potions they swallow. They must read between the lines because wise men and women know that their news is poisoned at the source."²

¹"Speaking at the Bandstand," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 18, 1938, p. 4. See appendix 1 for full text of editorial.

²"Concerning Methods of Handling News," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 6, 1941, p. 2.

In late 1943, U.S. Senator James E. Murray, a Democrat, issued a statement to the Montana media, calling attention to the influence the Anaconda Company exerted over its newspapers in the state and its policy of giving him the silent treatment. He charged the company with maintaining a press in Montana to serve its special vested interests and using various means to get public support of the press in order to poison the news. E. G. Leipheimer, editor of the Montana Standard, responded for the company, saying that on certain occasions Anaconda Company papers had printed pictures of Murray and articles concerning him. Romney said that was no answer:

. . . It does not touch the heart of the controversy, and even if it did, it must be admitted that the Company press has accorded Senator Murray very shabby treatment. Activities of a U.S. Senator from the state in which a newspaper is published are bound to be news, whether the management of the paper is in accord with the senator's viewpoint or not. As much as the Western News disagrees with and scorns Senator B. K. Wheeler of Montana's neighboring Glacier Park area, we are always careful to publish any and all pertinent facts with respect the unmitigated scoundrel. If the Company press doesn't like Senator Murray, as it is very apparent it does not, it should at least report his activities as a senator, as they affect the state and nation. There are but 96 senators in the entire country and such potent individuals are not to be overlooked by discerning men, such as alert editors who are not gagged.¹

He went on to say that control of the press by a special interest group is in the best interests of neither

¹"Senator Murray and Montana's Kept Press," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 25, 1943, p. 2.

the public nor the corporation. The public is bound to become suspicious of the corporation's motives, Romney said, and eventually angry at the contemptuous treatment of Montana by companies exporting the state's natural resources to the benefit of outsiders. The public might then be driven to take vengeance in excess of what was merited, Romney concluded.

Throughout his career, Romney wrote about other violations of freedom of expression, and some of the cases that interested him the most were those originating in the state university system. One example was that of Professor Phillip Keeney, a University of Montana librarian, who was fired by the Board of Education in 1937 on the recommendation of University President G. F. Simmons. According to Professor H. G. Merriam's book The University of Montana, A History, Keeney was fired without a hearing because of his outspoken objections to what he considered acts of censorship by Simmons. A few months later, when a new journalism building was dedicated on the campus, Romney wrote this:

We applaud the addition of the new modern plant to the other facilities for education at the Missoula university. But we also desire to warn against harboring any idea that the most modern of plants can prove efficacious in promoting education. Our universities, if they are to be real educational factories, must have competent instructors unafraid, who will always keep the scholastic atmosphere factual, true, and inquiring. No progress in education will be made in palaces where freedom is banished. These statements are necessary in view of the recent dismissal of Prof. Kenny [sic] from the university

faculty and because of the undeniable fact that most instructors at the State University are today afraid to speak out openly unless they are speaking the language of those currently in control of higher education in Montana. When a professor at a university must hold clandestinely his rendezvous with Truth educational possibilities in his classrooms are a hollow mockery.¹

In June 1939, Romney was able to report that Keeney had been reinstated to the faculty as the result of a successful appeal of his case to the Montana Supreme Court.²

Along with his continuing interest in the state's university system, Romney was also a determined watchdog of the Legislature, and he wrote often of efforts by the Anaconda Company and Montana Power to exert influence there. In March 1941 he gave a glum appraisal of the recently adjourned Twenty-seventh Legislative Assembly: "The committees in both houses were packed with Company stooges," he wrote, and "it became a 'do-nothing' session. . . . In all the sorry history of Treasure State legislatures there never was one the equal of that of this year in consummate subservience to vested interests."³

Romney was especially unhappy with the Legislature's failure to pass the Equal Valuation bill, which would have

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Tribute to Stone; What of Tomorrow?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 16, 1937, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Keeney Vindicated; Simmons in Bad," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 29, 1939, p. 4.

³"A Rehash of a Hashed Job," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 20, 1941, p. 4.

required utility corporations to use the same set of valuations for purposes of paying their taxes as they did when they imposed rates on the electricity, gas or other services they vended. Montana Power's taxpaying valuation was about half that of the valuation upon which that corporation's electrical energy rates were fixed, he said.¹

Legislators introduced two bills providing benefits to silicosis sufferers, but the "phony" one passed, Romney reported. As a result, the help for victims "will come from all the people of Montana instead of from the corporation which is responsible for this industrial disease," he wrote.²

Through the years the Montana Power Company alternately bought and withdrew advertising in the Western News because of the paper's editorial policies. In 1946 Romney wrote that three years before, the company had suddenly started buying advertisements in his paper. Now it had stopped suddenly and without notice. The company's advertising was being continued in other state publications without interruption, Romney said. He drew this conclusion:

It would be a suspicious soul who would hazard the view that the four to five hundred dollars a year in advertising had been used as a lure to make us "see the light." It is noteworthy, however, that the WN was one of the very few papers in Montana which printed full accounts of the hearings conducted by the Federal Power Commission during this period; hearings which resulted

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

in an order by the FPC that the Montana Power Co. should write off about 50 million dollars of watered stock. . . .¹

Because Romney strongly supported the concept of publicly owned utilities, he objected to the ownership of Hamilton's water and power systems by Montana Power. In a March 1939 editorial Romney told his readers, "As you have no doubt observed the Western News has been singularly neglected by this concern (Montana Power) in the matter of advertising. That is not strange because the Western News fails to follow the philosophy of the kilowatt kings who are gouging Montana citizens."² He said that because of this his readers would have to look in Hamilton's other newspaper, the Ravalli Republican, to find an advertising notice describing restricted watering hours.

He also criticized the high water rates: "God never placed the water in our rivers that it should lead down to a financial benefit to any individuals; that water and the power resulting therefrom should be the property of the state and should be used without restriction for the benefit of humanity without any idea of profit for any individual--just like the air you breathe."³

¹"Montana Power Under A Microscope," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 10, 1946, p. 6.

²"Free Ad For Kilowatt Kings," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 30, 1939, p. 4.

³Ibid.

According to Western News printer Gilbert Jelinek, Romney "enjoyed" fighting with Montana Power. T. M. Skinner, power company manager in Hamilton, "took a lot of punishment from Miles," yet because they both loved duck hunting, "Monday morning he'd (Skinner) come in, and they'd compare their luck shooting ducks over the weekend. . . . They might even have gone hunting together," Jelinek said.¹

During the late 1930s, Romney created the slogan "Chronicler of the Neglected Truth." It appeared on his stationery and pencils, but not regularly in the paper itself. "The slogan puffed him up a little," Jelinek says. "He probably thought it was good advertising, at least for the people who agreed with him."²

A short editorial section in a September 1939 paper illustrates the Western News' tight finances. In it Romney urged his readers to pay their \$2 annual subscription fee:

"We will gladly take good clean wheat at one dollar per hundredweight; good dry wood, chickens or other produce at prevailing prices in payment for subscription although good old American dollars are the chief targets for this article. We will also be glad to take Canadian money--currently undesirable in some quarters--at par value in payment for subscriptions. You see we are not too particular . . ."³

¹Jelinek interview.

²Ibid.

³"Notice to Subscribers," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 21, 1939, p. 4.

Ruth Romney remembers that her husband's stance against big business caused personal problems for them, too. The rivalry between the Western News and the Ravalli Republican, which supported the policies of the Anaconda Company, affected the social atmosphere of the town, she said. "I'm not complaining about it, but the Romneys were never part of the Establishment. . . . I felt disincluded to a certain extent." The Establishment consisted of the Chamber of Commerce, Republicans, and people who did not want to upset the status quo, she said.¹

About this time, Romney met Harry L. Billings, an outspoken young progressive editor. Year later Billings remembered their association:

I was editing the Exchange at Camas Hot Springs and periodically we of the weekly press would meet, most times in the Elks Club in Missoula, to see how we could improve our revenues via national advertising, embellished at the end of each meeting by some fine good fellowship for a couple of hours at the Elks' bar. Invariably, there would be two liberal editors at these get-togethers--Miles and myself. And, there were a couple of very conservative guys, one the late Charley Doherty of Missoula Times, and Jack Coulter of the Ravalli Republican. Needless to say, opinions were strong on both sides and grew stronger as the 'happy hour' went on. Editorially, it always seemed that Miles and I marched to a different drummer than Charley and Jack, as well as Howard Hazelbaker of Flathead Courier, Polson."²

¹Romney interview, October 5, 1982.

²Harry L. Billings to Christine Johnson, letter, April 21, 1985.

Billings was managing editor of the progressive labor-oriented People's Voice in Helena from 1946 to 1969. Just like Romney at the Western News, Billings and his wife, Gretchen, took strong and often unpopular editorial stands on social, political and economic issues that often needed big business.¹

For a brief time in the Western News' early history, the elder Romney published the paper two days a week, instead of just one. It did not work out. Jelinek says young Romney thought a lot about making the paper a daily, but when Jack Coulter made the Ravalli Republican a daily in 1941 it was too late. "The area couldn't support two dailies," Jelinek said. "I think he regretted it. The 'might-have-beens' were always there."²

Ruth Romney says she does not believe her husband ever seriously considered making the paper a daily, because of the costs involved. Also, making money was never a big priority for him.³

The threat of war was a primary concern of the Western News during 1941. In January of that year Romney said, "It is hoped that we of the United States can stay out of the terrible nightmare of war that blights most of the rest of

¹"UM Honors Seven Outstanding Alums," University of Montana Montanan, December 1983, p. 12.

²Jelinek interview.

³Romney interviews, October 5, 1982 and April 8, 1985.

the world. . . ."¹ In the months that followed, Romney's attitude about the war and the country's participation in it began to change, and that change was reflected in his editorials.

By August Romney was advocating "any and all action that is necessary to eliminate Hitler and his Totalitarian scheme for a 'New Order' from the international scene."² In response to a friend who questioned his liberalism because of this stand, Romney replied:

Liberalism! Talk to us about liberalism that finds its fount in a Hitler victory or a compromise settlement whose negotiated terms permit such a menace to exist! Nay, you will find no crumbs of liberalism there. Better to seek the Holy Grail among the flaming fagots of hell. Liberalism will never be found within the scope of oppression and such Wheelberghs deciples [sic] of appeasement as would embrace the Oppressor in hope of escaping the opportunity to fight for principles of liberalism or conservatism or what-have-you falsely serve the standard of Liberalism or Conservatism.³

On December 11, four days after the Japanese attack on Hawaii and the Philippines, he wrote: ". . . War, with all its means, is upon us. It is not that we are surprised. It is more a matter of relief that at last the issue is

¹"Past, Present and Future: And a Happy New Year!" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 2, 1941, p. 4.

²"Salvation, Not Liberalism, Is the Problem," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 21, 1941, p. 4.

³Ibid. "Wheelberghs" referred to Burton K. Wheeler and Charles Lindbergh.

determined. . . ."1 He said the nation was united in its determination to win, and was showing the world it was not going to stand for any more "international nonsense," but he also warned against overconfidence.

Not long after the United States declared war, H. V. Kaltenborn, a nationally known radio commentator, began a vigorous campaign to extend the 40-hour work week by law. He contended that the limited work week was causing a lag in defense production. The campaign failed, and a short time later Kaltenborn announced that he was cutting back the number of his broadcasts. Romney jumped all over the commentator in an editorial titled, "He Can't Take His Own Medicine":

After Kaltenborn's effort to extend the work week of industrial workers it came as something of a shock when Kaltenborn announced the other day that hereafter he would broadcast but five times weekly instead of seven. He declared he had not had a vacation since the Munich affair and that he could not continue to stand up under the strain! Picture this fellow who wants industrial workers to put in ten hours per day, six or seven days per week, unable to stage a 15-minute daily broadcast seven days each week! . . .²

In March 1943, wartime problems were set aside when a personal sorrow struck the Romney family. Miles Romney Sr. suffered a heart attack while visiting young Miles and Ruth, and died soon after. In an emotional editorial eulogizing

¹"America Goes to War United," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 11, 1941, p. 4.

²"He Can't Take His Own Medicine," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 7, 1942, p. 4.

his father, Miles wrote:

Because he was true to his ideals and would not deviate from them, even when opposed by insurmountable obstacles, he suffered like few men in Montana have suffered. Because he would not bend the knee his Western News was boycotted by controlling influences and every endeavor was made to run him out of business. Somehow he confounded his adversaries. This writer can hardly comprehend how he accomplished it but he maintained his publication and fought the good fight until he was accepted, even by most of his political foes. Though many opposed him always, few of them but respected him.

Inevitably Romney's pathway led into the field of politics because you cannot correct social and economic and political evils without taking part. Those folks who disdain politics because it is dirty seem to fail to comprehend that it will never be cleaned up by remaining out of it. . . .¹

Then one night in March 1946 another personal event made the news. Two men attacked Romney on a downtown street. They hit him on the head, knocking him down but not unconscious. The assailants fled when Romney yelled for help. Romney said it appeared the men had been looking for him, which would rule out robbery as a motive.² John Driscoll, who later served in the Legislature with Romney, said the editor told him that he believed it was Anaconda Company people who attacked him, although he never made that accusation publicly.³

In 1947 Romney's differences with Montana Power Company

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Summing Up."

²"A Few Personal Words by the Editor of the WN," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 21, 1946, p. 4.

³Phone interview with John Driscoll, July 27, 1989.

centered on a local issue. In a lengthy editorial titled, "Do You Want to Pay More Unnecessary Taxes?" Romney blasted a proposal by the power company for a new system of street lights for Hamilton. Montana Power was to own, maintain and operate the system. The cost of operation of the system was to be shared by all property taxpayers in the city. Romney argued that more lights were unnecessary and taxpayers' money would be better spent on a sewer system. He reminded his readers that the city was paying significant sums of money to the owner of the local water system for fire hydrant rentals, and that for a time the owner had been Montana Power:

You cannot blame the Montana Power Co. for wishing to vend more electrical energy at a profit. That is its business. Certainly it has a right to expect cooperation from the City of Hamilton which paid it, its predecessors, and successor, between \$90,000 and \$100,000 during the life of Hamilton for rental on fire hydrants!! If the people of Hamilton are suckers enough to throw their money away like that the Montana Power Co. has every right to expect them to go overboard for a street lighting proposition that has a one-armed bandit slot machine cheated to death.¹

The project was turned down, but in 1958 the Hamilton City Council proposed street lighting improvements once again, and again Romney argued that the project would mean increased taxes that could better be spent for sewer improvements. He announced that he would be helping

¹"Do You Want to Pay More Unnecessary Taxes?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 27, 1947, p. 4.

circulate petitions to protest the proposal.¹

Bob Gilluly, who was on the Ravalli Republican staff at the time, wrote an editorial accusing Romney of opposing the project because of a personal bias against Montana Power. Years later Gilluly said, "Miles had a very strong genuine feeling for laboring people, particularly in the Bitterroot where incomes were so meager. I think his concern for people on fixed and low incomes was valid," but, Gilluly went on, Romney's bias against Montana Power resulted in "blind opposition" to something as essential as street lights. Because of protests, the City Council turned down the project, but several years later the council approved the project with little opposition.²

John E. Corette, who went to work as legal counsel for the Montana Power Company in 1934 and retired as chairman of the board in 1978, saw Romney this way: "Practically all of the country newsmen, except Romney and the short-lived 'Pink Reporter' of Three Forks, were favorable to Montana Power. When they criticized, it was constructive and helpful, and not negative." Romney's opposition to the lighting project indicated his negative attitude, Corette said. "To be modern and safe it (Hamilton) certainly needed street

¹"First Things Should Always Come First, Street Lighting Is For the Birds," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 8, 1958, p. 4.

²Bob Gilluly interview, author's home, Hamilton, Montana, April 6, 1985.

lights," he said. Corette described Romney as a "very poor" newsman, "out of step with his contemporaries," and "at least a partial socialist."¹

During the '40s and '50s Romney also editorially chided Montana Power for advertisements presenting what he believed was biased information about public utilities; he objected to elections with any kind of property qualification for voting; he called for the banning of slot machines, and advocated the right to print the names of juvenile criminal offenders. He also expressed strong feelings about another aspect of crime--the flood of FBI "Wanted" posters that came in his mail:

It appears that the FBI wants me to help them run down an appalling number of assorted yeggs, motor vehicle stealers and porchclimbers that evidently infest the land left to Americans by the founding fathers and our redskin aborigines.

Upon each of these white bristol broadsides is printed the finger prints of some scoundrel-at-large, together with two or more views of the character's face. Usually the hunted homo sapien looks or leers from broadside straight into your eye in one view, whilst the other is from the side. A surprisingly large number of the fellows have their faces ornamented

¹John E. Corette to Christine Johnson, letter, September 14, 1989. According to Erma Owings, Director of the Ravalli County Museum, the Pink Reporter was sort of a political gossip tabloid started by J. D. "Tip" Reynolds in Butte in 1930. He published the paper in Three Forks from 1938 to 1951 and in Hamilton from 1951 to 1952. During the year in Hamilton, the Western News printed the paper although Romney had nothing to do with its editorial content. Because of the controversial nature of the Pink Reporter, Romney and his printer Gilbert Jelinek always read it over carefully before they printed it so they would not become embroiled in any legal problems. Source: Erma Owings, phone interview, April 25, 1990.

by scars and I have a feeling that the pictures have not been retouched by the photographer. This leads me to the conclusion that it will not be the intent of the subjects to return for another set of photographs unless such action is the consequence of compulsion.

. . . I think it is too much for the FBI to impose upon the citizens the job of finger-printing everybody that passes our places of business, comparing the fingerprints which are gathered with those upon the FBI broadsides and carrying on correspondence with the FBI sleuths. I do not think citizens who pay their taxes and move their lips when others are singing the national anthem should be compelled to gaze wistfully into the optics of strangers on the thoroughfares, mentally comparing the unknown characters with assorted FBI-advertised murderers, rapists and other odd ilk who have come into conflict with the federal statutes. . . . I am inclined to refuse to play cops and robbers. Let the bloodhounds run down their quarry; that's what they receive their remuneration for, and I want them to earn their money. . . .¹

In about 1950, Romney had a chance to become actively involved in a project close to his heart--improved care for the elderly. He often urged county officials to increase their portion of financial assistance to the aged. Governor John Bonner, concerned with the deteriorating condition of the state's custodial institutions, offered to make a home for the senile aged in Hamilton if the heirs of copper king Marcus Daly would donate the family mansion, which was not being used. A committee of Hamilton businessmen offered to pay Romney's way to New York if he would broach the subject to Daly's daughter Mary and her husband, James Gerard. Gerard and Romney were friends. Ruth Romney accompanied her

¹"I'm Going to Peddle My Papers," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 31, 1951, p. 2.

husband on the trip, and remembers that Mary Gerard refused to donate the mansion, but offered 10 acres of land south of it on Marcus Street. Ruth Romney said it was not nearly enough space, and so the home was built in Lewistown instead. "I think Jimmy (Gerard) would have agreed to (donating the mansion)," she said, "but Mrs. Gerard had the say."¹

Through the years Miles Romney had a special interest in another group of state institutions also--the University system. He followed its ups and downs carefully, and was a vigorous supporter of freedom of expression for students, faculty and university administrators. He had no patience with those who would try to muzzle them when they spoke on unpopular issues.

Nathaniel Blumberg, Dean of the University of Montana School of Journalism from 1956 to 1968, remembers that Romney had a particular interest in that school. During the '50s the school was part of a great philosophical debate going on in journalism education circles, Blumberg said, and Romney was actively involved. Some educators and professional newsmen saw the role of journalism schools as emphasizing communications research, while Romney and others believed they should be developing practitioners. "It was chi square versus green eyeshades," Blumberg said, "with

¹Romney interviews, April 8, 1985, and June 10, 1989.

Miles Romney and the Montana J School on the side of green eyeshades."¹

As the decade of the '50s came to a close, announcement of the pending sale of the Anaconda Company newspapers caused some stir. Although a buyer had not been announced, Romney expressed doubt that a change in ownership would make a real difference in state news and politics. In an editorial headed, "Wanted: 'Responsible' Buyer," this is what Romney said:

A sale of the papers by the "Company" to some "friendly" purchaser might prove valuable to the "Company." If the purchaser were just "friendly" enough that it would "see things" in the eyes of the "Company" and "pull chestnuts" from the political gravy in behalf of the "Company" just as the "Company" newspapers have been "pulling chestnuts" from the political gravy boat for the Montana Power Co. the Anaconda might be able to continue for a long time to maintain its political hegemony which provides it with a favored tax position, with the ability to turn its cast-off silicotics over to the people of Montana to support, and the other favored positions it possesses by virtue of political control of the state legislature, or some of the state officials, or both. It could thus afford to permit the Oil Interests, the Utility Monopolists and other foreign corporate bodies to fight their own battles at their own peril, without the stain of the conflict largely rubbing off upon the toga of the Anaconda.

To sum up the effect of such a sale of its actually-owned newspapers, it might not be amiss to notice that the "Company" has always found most of the remainder of the state's newspapers sufficiently servile to sit up and beg like good pooches, roll over and speak for odd bones tossed in their direction and never speak out of turn. That trend might be even more conspicuous if the "Company" got itself out of the

¹Interview with Nathaniel Blumberg, University of Montana, Missoula, April 16, 1985.

newspaper business?¹

In June 1959, Anaconda announced that it was selling its entire press operation to Lee Newspapers, a midwestern chain. Lee began making changes right away, such as expanding news staffs and establishing a state bureau in Helena,² but for Romney the 1961 Legislative session would be the test of whether there were any real improvements.

¹"Wanted: 'Responsible' Buyer," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 26, 1959, p. 2.

²Malone and Roeder, Two Centuries, pp. 281-282.



Miles Romney Jr. and Gilbert Jelinek, circa 1940.
(Photo courtesy Bitter Root Valley Historical Society)

CHAPTER 6

COVERING THE NEWS

The appearance of the Western News changed very little during its 87 years of publishing history. The front pages of the February 1916 papers, for instance, looked about the same as those of February 1976. In both months, the paper's name ran in a bold Medieval type face; there were seven columns across the page with column rules between; headlines were written in lines of three in the early years and later, four; and a "---30---" indicated the end of each article. For many years the paper's flag included Hamilton's elevation and Ravalli County's square mile area. Each issue had either four or eight pages.

A quotation usually appeared in the ear, or upper right hand corner of the front page. Romney chose it from classical literature, historical figures, contemporary politicians, the Bible, and other sources. Some were undoubtedly first copied by him as a student into his scrapbook or the inside cover of a favorite book. For the February 24, 1938, issue of the Western News, Romney quoted Thomas Jefferson: "The mass of mankind was not born with saddles on their backs, nor were a favored few born booted

and spurred, ready to ride mankind."¹

The Western News was a pocket-size operation. The entire news staff included Romney and Edna Hollibaugh. Hollibaugh spent 25 years at the front desk taking care of routine business matters, gathering local news items over the phone, and trying to protect Romney from unnecessary interruptions. Gilbert Jelinek worked in the print shop 39 years, setting type with a Linotype machine, except for large headlines that were set by hand. When Romney was away at the Legislature, Jelinek sometimes wrote editorials. Violet Strate assisted in the print shop for 27 years, and Ruth Romney worked at home, getting out the bills and doing some typing and proofreading. Over the years quite a few others also worked off and on at the Western News, but it was always a small business.

There were no photographers or camera-carrying reporters on the Western News staff--no on-the-spot pictures of traffic accidents or ground-breaking ceremonies. There were instead a few press association photographs, landscapes by local independent photographers such as Ernest Peterson, Bob Olson, Jim Whitlock and Bernie Cash, plus baby, wedding, anniversary, political candidate and military servicemen portraits provided by eager subscribers. The Christmas issue each year featured many local photographs.

¹Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 24, 1938, p. 1.

Romney worked to get his money's worth from each picture, Jelinek remembers. Someone running for mayor or school board would bring in a photograph, and the paper would make an engraving at a cost of \$1.50. "I'll get at least two shots out of this," Romney would tell Jelinek, "--now when he's running for mayor, and then when we plant him over in the cemetery."

"Sometimes we had the cut around there for 10 years," Jelinek said, "and the guy would die. I'd shake my head and say (to Romney), 'Maybe you'd better see if you can get a more recent one (for the obituary),' and he'd say, 'Oh, this is good enough.'"¹

There was no such thing as sectioning in the Western News. Any type of news article could be found in any part of the paper. Page 1, for instance, always included a mix of government news, obituaries, wedding announcements, school honor rolls, crime, weather, hospital admittances, sports, and club meetings.

Editorial were usually found in the top left-hand corner of Page 2, 4 or 6, but they were never marked as opinion pieces. They were usually printed in double-wide columns and in a larger size type than the rest of the paper, but not always. Other articles surrounded the editorials, with the same kind of column rules for all of

¹Jelinek interview.

them.

There was no clear definition between hard news, opinion, and features in Romney's paper, because he included something of himself in nearly everything. Often it was a headline that told what he thought of the straight news article that followed. For example, an article about an increase in the county poor fund carried this heading:

County Dads Fix
Levy at 10 Mills
To Make Life of
Aged a Bit Better¹

A detailed listing of all the winners in an annual flower show received this head:

Exceptionally Fine
Exhibits and Plenty
Of Them Displayed
At Darby Flower Show²

When Frank Murray was re-elected Montana Secretary of State in 1964, Romney put this head over his picture:

Voters Like the Way
Frank Runs the Store³

Romney gave a lot of coverage to political campaigns. He would usually run a sample ballot showing all the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "County Dads Fix Levy at 10 Mills to Make Life of Aged a Bit Better," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 15, 1943, p. 1.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Exceptionally Fine Exhibits and Plenty of Them Displayed at Darby Flower Show," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 26, 1948, p. 4.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Voters Like the Way Frank Runs the Store," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 4, 1964, p. 4.

candidates, but there were no neat summaries of the candidates' qualifications and views. When his good friend Lee Metcalf, a Democrat, filed for re-election to the U.S. Senate in June 1966, Romney ran a 12-inch story and mug-shot on the front page. The article consisted almost entirely of a prepared statement by Metcalf.

During the 1938 general election, Romney ran a 17-inch front page story about J. Thorkelson, the Republican candidate for western district congressman. Thorkelson was running against Romney's choice, Democrat Jerry O'Connell. The article covered a GOP meeting where Thorkelson spoke and H. H. Hoppe, chairman of the Ravalli County Republican Central Committee, moderated. Romney used this headline:

Thorky and Hoppe
Make Weird Talkee
And It's a Shame
Crowd Was Small¹

In the article Romney ridiculed the speaking styles of both Thorkelson and Hoppe, criticized the Ravalli Republican for overstating the number of people in attendance, and devoted six lines to Thorkelson's plan for national economic recovery. For those readers who had still not gotten Romney's message, he included this very direct passage:

It is rather difficult to write a comprehensive article concerning Dr. Thorkelson's address. It might be said it was a masterpiece of incoherence, a paragon of concentrated verbiage designed to submerge any

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Thorky and Hoppe Make Weird Talkee and It's a Shame Crowd Was Small," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 20, 1938, pp. 1.

attempt at cogitation, or an accumulation of words scattered without reference to meaning or thought.¹

Despite Romney's efforts in O'Connell's behalf, Thorkelson was elected.²

Elections mean a lot of work for any newspaper, but it was especially so at the Western News. Almost from its beginning until the early 1970s, the Western News office, not the County Courthouse, served as Ravalli County's election-central--the place precinct workers reported election results and they were tabulated. In this task, Romney was scrupulously accurate and non-partisan.

Romney arranged for a special volunteer at each precinct to call in vote tallies to the newspaper as they became available throughout the evening. He and Popham, along with several other volunteers, such as Bob Gilluly of the Ravalli Republican, would spend most of the night answering the phone, running up totals on an adding machine, recording the results on tagboard posters, and reporting results to the wire services. Often Romney would be impatient for news and drive out to the precincts to check on results.

The Western News building was always wall-to-wall people that night, with liquor and snacks for all. Reporters from other newspapers and radio stations, plus

¹Ibid, p. 8.

²Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, p. 150.

candidates, political workers from both parties and dozens of others collected there to be part of the excitement.

Jelinek remembers the nights with good humor:

"There would be people with a sandwich in one hand, a bottle of beer in the other hand and a cigar in the other, waving and talking and joking and crying. . . . It didn't matter whether you were a Republican or Democrat, you went down to the Western News on election night, and if you wanted to get drunk that's where you got drunk. And if you didn't want to get drunk, if you just wanted to sit and visit with your friends, why (that was okay too)."¹

Romney reflected on the work involved, in a June 1960, editorial:

This is the seventieth year of The Western News. During all of those years the WN has been gathering election returns. The present management is familiar with such work for the past 42 years.

It is no simple task to gather election returns in the dead of night, from election judges and clerks who are tired and want to go home. It is not easy to secure accurate figures over telephones when there is plenty of noise and confusion about you. . . .

It takes considerable arrangements with election judges and clerks, with friends and enemies. Finally the puzzle is put together, the job is completed, and exhausted workers fall into their beds.

It's simple to hear the news, look at the results on TV, read about it in your paper. Next time it happens please recall that it took a lot of doing.²

The Western News had no wire service to feed it national and state government news, so Romney used very

¹Jelinek interview.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Thanks For the Buggy Ride," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 16, 1960, p. 4.

little in the way of straight news stories in these areas. He read a lot of other newspapers and news magazines and then followed up directly to the source on those stories he wanted to run. Most of his coverage appeared as editorials. When Romney was in the state Legislature and also when he was a Constitutional Convention delegate, he wrote regular weekly news analysis columns that gave detailed information about the work of the bodies.

Romney did not attend county commission, city council or school board meetings regularly, nor did he try to report on all their activities; but he did try to be on hand when there were items of special interest on the agenda.

Ruth Romney says her husband never tried to compete with the news coverage of the metropolitan dailies. She says he saw the Western News as a country paper with a mission of reporting personal community news.¹ Many long columns of local news briefs were part of every paper--who had out-of-town guests, who took a trip, who shot a deer during hunting season, who hosted the hospital guild meeting, who was spending the winter in Arizona, who was moving away. There were names by the hundreds. Also any club, organization, business, school, church or society that had a meeting, bake sale or election of officers was invited to give that information to the Western News. "To Miles

¹Phone interview, Ruth Romney, May 10, 1990.

there was nothing as good as a five-line local," Jelinek says. "He was always after Edna (Hollibaugh) to stay on the phone (collecting that news)."¹ Weddings and anniversaries were given good coverage, often on Page 1, but it was not unusual, too, for Romney to feature a story about a couple who had simply been long-time hard-working members of the community.

"The Western News was one of the best papers for acknowledging the family as the basis of the community," according to Donna Metcalf, family friend and widow of U. S. Senator Lee Metcalf. "Lots of the stories related to whole families, and they helped all the community relate to each other."²

In 1954 and 1955 Romney published a series of pictures of every elementary school class in Ravalli County, plus the high school graduates. The Western News often ran pictures of new babies sent in by readers. In 1946 Romney used a picture of Jan Strate, baby daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Strate. The next year he printed that picture again along with a current one. That began a tradition that lasted until 1964 when a whole page of the Western News was devoted to selected pictures of Jan Strate growing up. Strate's wedding photo in 1965 became the last picture in the regular

¹Jelinek interview.

²Donna Metcalf interview, Edgewater Restaurant, Missoula, Montana, June 7, 1985.

series. In June 1976, four months after Romney's death, one more group of pictures was run by the new editor. It included Strate with her husband and three children. Ruth Romney says the Strates were not close friends or associates of the Romneys, nor were they public figures. She believes the series simply grew out of Romney's commitment to community news.¹

Obituaries were one of the most important forms of community news that Romney included in his paper. Many ran on the front page, and the headlines were unique:

Jas. D. Taylor
Scintillating
Attorney Taken
By Death Sunday

Jim Hears His
Last Verdict²

Romney created this headline in 1970, when a long-time U. S. Forest Service employee died:

Frank Schumaker
Hears Call of
'Timber,' And His
Good Life Ends³

"An obituary today is about as lifeless as a dead mackerel swinging in the breeze," according to Jelinek,

¹Romney interview, May 10, 1990.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Jas. D. Taylor Scintillating Attorney Taken By Death Sunday," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 10, 1952, p. 1.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Frank Schumaker Hears Call of 'Timber,' And His Good Life Ends," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 11, 1970, p. 1.

whereas Romney's obituaries included interesting details about the person's life. "If the person did anything at all, it went into his obituary," Jelinek said. Romney worked hard to get the information without disturbing the bereaved. "You might say he wasted a hell of a lot of time writing obituaries, . . . but that wasn't his philosophy. He'd call you and he'd call me, and he'd call until he found out what he was looking for," Jelinek said.¹

For example, in 1956 Romney wrote an obituary for Luta Pond Kenney who spent her entire married life working with her husband on their orchard and berry farm. The article told how the Kenneys decided to homestead in western Montana, the location of their ranch, how they had celebrated their 50th, 60th and 66th wedding anniversaries, and of the deaths of their two teenage children. The obituary closed this way:

Mrs. Kenney is survived by her husband. But she also possessed numerous friends who admired her ability, her loyalty, her courage. If ever there was a helpmate O. L. Kenney found the lady in Luta Pond, his wife.²

In 1942 Romney reported the death of Guy Ellis Hill who had lived in the area 20 years, but apparently had no family and few ties. Romney reported that Hill had lived in New

¹Jelinek interview.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Luta Kenney Dies Highly Respected Matron Resided Here Since 1890," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 6, 1956, p. 4.

York, California, Illinois and Nevada before coming to Montana. In Nevada, Hill had worked as a chauffeur for boxing promotor Tex Rickard during the gold boom days of Goldfield, and in Montana he chauffeured for Margaret P. Daly and Marcus Daly II. Romney added that "in the earlier days of motor vehicles when they were termed 'skunk wagons,' and gasoline was more plentiful if inferior than it is today, Guy was active in auto racing on dirt tracks. He was an ardent sportsman, strictly individualistic, colorful." Romney added that Hill was buried next to a friend he had worked with many years.¹

Romney wrote an editorial in 1955 telling how hard it was to obtain accurate information and up-to-date pictures for obituaries, and urged his readers to put together such material.²

Thomas Koch, a Hamilton attorney, said: ". . . He could write an obituary about any old son-of-a-bitch that died where the guy had some redeeming character. I don't know what it was, but whatever it was, Miles knew it. . . . I'd a loved to have Miles write my obituary . . ."³

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Guy Hill Taken By Grim Reaper Funeral Service Here Yesterday," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 24, 1942, p. 1.

²Miles Romney Jr., "This Is Not a Happy Subject," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 5, 1955, p. 4.

³Phone interview with Thomas P. Koch, July 30, 1989.

Ruth Romney says, "I've heard more than one person say, 'I wish I could die ahead of him (Romney) so that I could know what he's going to say about me.'"¹

Nathaniel Blumberg believes Romney's obituaries are an important part of his journalistic legacy. "I'll bet they have been clipped and put in family Bibles all over the Bitterroot. By God, he caught the memory."²

Erma Owings, Director of the Ravalli County Museum, says Romney's obituaries are much more than just interesting family keepsakes. She says the detailed historical information they contain has been invaluable in numerous research projects carried on by the Bitter Root Historical Society and others. The Western News has proved to be far better for this purpose than any other newspaper in the area, she says.³

Romney would have been pleased to hear such praise, but he probably also would have said that Western News obituaries were even more valuable before they were written. He might repeat a story he once told in an editorial about an event in the early 1930s when a prominent community member was believed near death:

The WN made it a point to secure a photograph of the person and from it an engraving was manufactured. The years passed and the person lived on and on. In

¹Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

²Blumberg interview.

³Phone interview, Erma Owings, May 4, 1990.

fact the halftone became a subject of merriment about the WN plant where it was proudly maintained that if the WN got a halftone of a person in anticipation of his demise, it proved insurance.¹

The insurance was so good, in fact, that the person lived 20 more years.

¹Romney, "Not a Happy Subject."

CHAPTER 7

A MATTER OF STYLE:

PORTRAIT OF A MAN AND HIS WRITING

A description of Miles Romney Jr. sounds like a stereotype: he was a gentleman, had a good sense of humor, and loved children and animals; and all those things showed in his writing as well as his life.

As a gentleman, he practiced traditional courtesies. For example, he always pulled out a chair for female guests at the dining room table. Arlyne Reichert, who served with him during the Montana Constitutional Convention, remembers him this way: ". . . He was one of the kindest and most considerate of the delegates. He was truly a GENTLE MAN! We served on the Legislative Committee together and I cannot remember a single instance when he was rude to anyone. . . ."¹

Bob Gilluly, who disagreed with Romney politically and competed professionally, described him as "unfailingly courteous," and said Romney's ability to listen to people was one of his greatest qualities. "He would give you the

¹Arlyne Reichert to Christine Johnson, letter, June 24, 1985.

impression that your words had some weight and that they meant something."¹

Romney's sense of humor bubbles up frequently in his writing. Donna Metcalf, who, along with her husband the late Senator Lee Metcalf, was a friend of the Romneys, says he also liked to tease. "He would kid people, and they couldn't tell if they were being had."²

Romney and his friends also enjoyed practical jokes. One birthday he and Ruth received red and white striped nightshirts made by a friend. The Romneys sent out pictures at Christmas of themselves in the nightshirts. Another time, friends stuffed a stocking, added feathers and a beak and perched the odd-looking creature on the Romneys' bird feeder, referred to as "the heliport."³

Kelsey and Doris Milner pulled off one of the most elaborate jokes in 1955 when they constructed a life-size dummy, dressed it in jeans, jacket and battered straw hat, carried it across the Bitterroot River and stood it in Romney's duck blind along with a sign, "Help the Blind." Kelsey Milner says Romney always intended to sneak the dummy back into one of their cars, but never found the occasion.⁴

¹Gilluly interview.

²Donna Metcalf interview, Edgewater Restaurant, Missoula, Montana, June 7, 1985.

³Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

⁴Kelsey Milner interview.

It would be a mistake to conclude that since Romney was good-humored, courteous and thoughtful of others' feelings, he was weak--a Clark Kent with no Superman alter-ego. He had a tough and stubborn side also. In school Romney became a successful debater, and throughout his life loved to argue vigorously with friends and enemies. Clarence Popham said he and Romney had some "terrible arguments" that were "probably concerning agriculture, and maybe I knew more but he wouldn't admit it, or about politics, and maybe he knew more but I wouldn't admit it."¹

Bob Gilluly says Romney was "awfully stubborn" and "believed the Democratic Party was correct 120% of the time. He was convinced of it, and you couldn't tell him differently." There were others who believed as strongly about the Republican Party, Gilluly said, when the truth was really somewhere in between. "They were strong people. Why not admire them (for that)."²

Romney loved children, although he and Ruth had none of their own, and he would tease by calling the little girls "Wifey No. 1 and Wifey No. 2," and the little boys, "girls." One young neighbor girl referred to the Romneys as "Mrs. Ronny and Mileses." Some of the youngsters also called him "Squeaks," maybe because his shoes squeaked, Ruth Romney

¹Popham interview.

²Gilluly interview.

says. She remembers going to a shoe repair store in Missoula where the young owner addressed her as "Mrs. Squeaks."¹

The Romneys were animal lovers, and Ruth Romney likes to joke that she often wished she were one of her husband's dogs because he treated them so well. One of their favorites was Pal, a black cocker and Irish spaniel mix, who actually belonged to relatives but kept showing up on the Romney doorstep. They would set her on the car running board and return her home, but she kept coming back, Ruth remembers.²

Pal was Romney's constant bird hunting companion. The two would pile into the 1941 two-door black Chevie, affectionately referred to as The Iron Horse, and head for the hills. Pal also spent many hours at the Western News office. Romney's routine was to return to his office each night after dinner. After some time, Ruth would walk the five blocks there and urge him to come home. She and Miles would drive back home, with Pal racing them on foot using all the shortcuts. Ruth said Miles drove slowly enough so the dog would always arrive first.³

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Bessie K. Monroe, who reported Ravalli County news for several papers for more than 50 years, also filled in as editor of the Western News briefly. At the time of Romney's death she wrote an article describing some of the things she remembered about their long association, and that included Pal:

Miles used to have a scraggy dog named Pal. That friendly pooch had an outstanding custom of visting the neighbors. Not to gather news or trade gossip--but to carry off their dog pans. Pal was a born collector and the Romney lawn near his kennel sported canine dinner plates by the dozen at times. Miles' comment was: "Pal would have made a great reporter."¹

During World War II, the Romneys used some of their food rationing stamps to buy hamburger for Pal. When the dog was 17 years old, weak, and near the end of her life, Ruth slept on the couch so she could help Pal outside at night. "I did everything I could to spare Miles," she said. "He worked much too hard." When Pal died they buried her in the yard with flowers planted over the spot. "We absolutely loved that dog to pieces," Ruth said. "I guess she was our child."²

In the July 8, 1948, paper, Romney wrote an epitaph for Pal. He closed with these words:

Sometimes I wonder about the wisdom of becoming so attached to a dog. The sorrow that overwhelmed us upon losing "Pal" is not a happy load to carry. But the

¹Bessie K. Monroe, "He Was Known as 'Ging' to Those Who Grew Up With Him, B. K. Recalls," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 25, 1976, pp. 1-2.

²Ibid.

happiness that a good dog brings a family is well worth the grief that inevitably wells up within you when the ultimate in life has been reached. We Romneys, and the Gray family, will always cherish the memory of "Pal." She was truly a wonder dog.¹

Ruth and Miles enjoyed hikes and picnics, and The Iron Horse was built high enough off the ground to get them over most rutted mountain roads. Unfortunately it often stalled because of vapor lock. "I walked out of mountains more than once because the car stalled," Ruth remembers. "My brother Clark would drive us back to get the car the next day."²

Although Romney enjoyed the outdoors, his first love was his work. Romney's office was near the front of the Western News building, along with a reception area, while the print shop housing the hot metal system was at the back of the building. According to printer Gilbert Jelinek, Romney planned to put his office in the back, so he could use the alley door as an escape, but decided that would result in too much traffic through the shop. As a compromise Romney put his office in the front of the building but made it a tiny cubbyhole to discourage visitors. It was just big enough for his desk, typewriter, chair, wastebasket and files--no visitor's chair and no standing room. "It was a good idea, but it wasn't worth a

¹Miles Romney Jr., "An Epitaph," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 8, 1948, p. 2. See appendix 1 for full text of this editorial.

²Phone interview with Ruth Romney, August 4, 1989.

lick," Jelinek said. "There would be half a dozen people crammed in there and hanging their necks in the door."¹

The restroom was also unusual, as it was furnished with a gun rack that held the toilet paper as well as an old breechloader, a military rifle from the Big Hole Battlefield.²

Romney arrived at work each day in a suit, but the first thing he did was take off the jacket and tie and put on a green celluloid eyeshade. Ruth Romney doesn't remember how her husband began wearing an eyeshade, nor does she believe it served any real purpose, but it became his trademark.³ The eyeshades wore out and had to be replaced regularly, Jelinek remembers, and that became a problem over the years as they got scarce. "He was always out in the market for them," Jelinek said.⁴

Richard Roeder, who served in the Montana Constitutional Convention with Romney, says Romney's appearance was often deceptive. "He always had a somewhat rumpled look," even when he wore a three-piece suit, Roeder said. "People that didn't know him might underestimate him.

¹Jelinek interview.

²Interview with Jim Whitlock, Whitlock home, Hamilton, Montana, April 15, 1985.

³Romney interview, April 10, 1985.

⁴Jelinek interview.

'Here's a hick I can hoodwink,'" they probably thought.¹

Office manager Edna Hollibaugh's efforts to protect Romney from interruptions during the day were largely unsuccessful because of the editor's kind-hearted nature. "He could never say no to anybody about anything," Jelinek said. "Fellows would come in, and I could say 'waste his time,' but they didn't, because he enjoyed it. Quite often before they left, he had a story."²

"He really cared about people," according to Jim Whitlock, who did some occasional printing work for the paper. "On Wednesday when things were pushed to the gill (getting ready to go to press), and someone came in and wanted to talk, he'd talk." Whitlock admitted he was one of those who visited often with Romney. "I spent a lot of time sitting on his trash can," he said. "I probably still have a ring there."³ The Western News crew inevitably ended up working late each Wednesday, Whitlock said. Romney insisted on putting the front page together himself, while others might do the rest of the paper. On those late Wednesdays Romney would go over to the Signal Bar and bring back hamburgers, french fries and a six-pack of beer for the

¹Richard Roeder interview, Montana State Capitol, Helena, May 3, 1985.

²Jelinek interview.

³Whitlock interview, July 24, 1989.

crew, Whitlock said.¹

It was more than just gregarious visitors who put Romney behind in his work; he was forever being asked for advice and favors. Ruth Romney says her husband told her he tried to do something for somebody every day of his life.² Jelinek says he cannot think of anything that someone would ask him to do that he would not do or at least try to do. People attempting to solve government red tape problems would come to him to find out what agency in Helena they should go to next. They also took advantage of his Internal Revenue Service experience. "Much of March and half of April, instead of doing his own work" he'd be doing income taxes for "everyone and his dog," Jelinek said, and "sometimes they might buy him a bottle of booze or a box of cigars." He spread himself too thin, the printer added. "He was always about one lap or a lap-and-a-half behind where he should have been."³

Romney collected things as well as friends. He filled boxes, file cabinets and store rooms with old photographs, odd size card stock, and worn out printing equipment. Most of the items were inventoried, but Romney was the only one who understood the filing system. When the old equipment

¹Ibid.

²Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

³Jelinek interview.

overran the storeroom, he would sell it to a salvage company. After Romney died in 1976, Jelinek was sorting through boxes and found some canceled checks including his own first paycheck from the Western News, earned in 1937.¹

Romney was also conscientious about saving copies of the paper. Two of each issue were bound, but he also kept 15 to 20 loose copies. University students used them for research, and many citizens were able to establish their eligibility for Social Security by obtaining a copy of the Western News with their birth announcement in it. Romney often took time away from his work to hunt up a requested paper, Jelinek said, and "he never took a nickel" for the service.²

The Western News had a very distinctive character and look; much of that came from Romney's writing style. Bob Gilluly described the style as an "old-time newspaper style" with a "very courtly" use of language.³ Whatever its definition, Romney's style was rich with figures of speech and literary references, poetry and humor.

In 1958 Romney created this headline for an editorial:

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Gilluly interview.

Truth, Its Face Pushed Into the Muck
Will, Forsooth, Rise Again!¹

Ruth Romney says her husband "read his way through college" and then continued through his life. "The bathroom was his library. I had to talk through the door because he did his reading there."²

Romney subscribed to the Washington Post and St. Louis Post Dispatch, and had an extensive personal library that included books on Montana history and politics, Hitler's Mein Kampf, The Blue Book of the John Birch Society, Shakespeare, a Douglas Fairbanks autobiography, Jack London books, Charles Dickens, medieval history, a well-worn pocket medical dictionary, a Latin textbook, books of political cartoons, O. Henry short stories, a King James Bible and a number of books on church history, biblical manuscripts and religious criticism.

In a 1952 editorial, Romney blasted a Republican newsman who had urged Montana newspapers to work for the removal of President Harry Truman. Romney found a relative reference in ancient history:

There is nothing we few Democrat editors enjoy more than a good political brawl in the columns of our publications for there is fun to be found in jousting with adversaries who are as numerous as the arrows of the Persians and Medes of Xerxes upon the occasion of the Great King's invasion of Greece. It was said the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Truth, Its Face Pushed Into the Muck Will, Forsooth, Rise Again!" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 21, 1958, p. 4.

²Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

darts obliterated the rays of the sun. And so do the numberless columns of Republican-Big Business propaganda endeavor to obliterate the truth.¹

In 1958 when campaigning against a proposed lighting system for Hamilton, Romney was particularly critical of non-taxpayers who said there was no reason any individual should not be willing to spend money for street lights. He was reminded of a Kipling poem:

The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth-point goes;
The butterfly upon the road
Preaches contentment to that toad.²

In 1974 Romney urged the Montana Legislature to change the way appropriation bills were handled: "We are not going to make progress by sitting upon our ischial tuberosities twiddling thumbs and embracing yesterday's monumental errors."³

He also had little patience with those engaging in prattle and twaddle: "I am well aware some apologists for the Power Trust will prattle that if any tax is placed on strip-mined coal the coal will not be mined. That twaddle

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Republican Leader Pleads For Chaos," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 7, 1952, p. 7.

²Romney, "First Things Should Always Come First."

³Miles Romney Jr., "You Can Cure the Ailment If You Will Take the Medicine," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 24, 1974, p. 2.

is debatable. . . ."1

When an area couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, Romney prepared this headline for the Page 1 story:

Popular McKennas Drive
Their Golden Spike²

Because Romney attended church regularly only during his nine months at West Point, his heavy use of biblical references in his writing and speeches is surprising. It may be that during those West Point days, when he read the Bible to fill sleepless hours during early lights-out, he came to appreciate its language and imagery. He evidently continued his reading. In a column Romney wrote while in the Senate in 1975, he complained that he had needed a Bible, but was unable to find one at the Legislature. He finally asked a lobbyist to get one for him.³

In a 1974 editorial, he analyzed the coming legislative session. In it he used biblical allusions, but the reader can also see other characteristics of the Romney style-- occasional misspelled words and dropped articles or prepositions:

Preparations are already under way for holding the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Opportunity Knocks," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 17, 1971, p. 2.

²"Popular McKennas Drive Their Golden Spike," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 23, 1958, p. 1.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 19, 1975, p. 2.

44th Montana Legislative Assembly scheduled to start on Epiphany (January 6) and to run for 90 actual working days. It is likely the gifts to be brought to the legislators by the Magi will be trouble and woe in (the) form of difficult if not insoluble [sic] problems. . . .¹

Sometimes Romney's references were obscure. In 1962 the U.S. Senate, bowing to pressure from the American Medical Association, defeated a bill providing hospital care for the aged. Romney wrote an editorial urging passage of such legislation. He titled the editorial "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin," a quotation from the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. The words were written on the wall for King Belshazzar of Babylonia by a mysterious hand. They were interpreted by Daniel to mean that God had brought the kingdom to an end, that Belshazzar had been weighed and found wanting, and that the kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.² Romney included no interpretation or explanation in his editorial, however.

Occasionally Romney became tangled in his metaphors:

Some of these people who have spoken up against Paradise dam are, to my mind, something like the girl character in the musical comedy, "Oklahoma!", they resemble "the girl who cain't say no." When I hear some of these objecting Jeremiahs I remember that "it is the voice of Jacob, but the hand of Essau [sic]," and you don't have to look very far in most instances

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Thoughts on the Next Legislature," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 20, 1974, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 1, 1962, p. 2.

to observe the Montana Power Co. under the woodpile.¹

Romney also enjoyed a reputation as a great storyteller, and that was evident when he wrote tongue-in-cheek:

The other day a truck backed up to the Pearl Pollard residence south of Hamilton and a hoist on the truck lifted a box from the truck and deposited it on the ground in front of the house.

The box, when opened was found to contain one pair of size 16E shoes!

The shoes were received by "Little Pearl" Pollard, son of Mr. and Mrs. Pearl I. Pollard Jr. Because of the size "Little Pearl" is forced to order his shoes made for him. . . .

"Little Pearl" stands 6 ft. 7 in. in his bare feet, weighs 221 pounds without an ounce of fat. He became 15 years of age June 27, 1952 and will be a sophomore at Hamilton high school next year. . . .²

At the age of 65 Romney mused in an editorial about all of his friends who planned to do a lot of fishing once they retired. He looked at it from the fish's point of view:

It seems that as soon as a man gets to the point where retirement is possible, or near at hand, he starts to lay plans for taking out his surplus of time upon the fish.

There is no doubt about it the fish are getting the worst of this retirement deal. Before the benefits of the New Deal, Fair Deal, the Social Security Act, retirement plans, annuities, and all of the other instruments of man's invention which make it possible for him to exist in his later years without toiling

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Opponents of Paradise Dam Struck Out," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 24, 1957, p. 4.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Oversized Shoes Delivered By Hoist," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 17, 1952, p. 1.

all of the time, the fish had a relatively easy time in life. All they had to do was face upstream, open their mouths and gulp down the assorted hellgramites [sic], cadice flies, worms, daphne and other aquatic life which made them big and strong. Now if they dare to open their mouths the cavities are filled with all sorts of hardware embellished with hooks and other tormenting features designed to snare them from the pools, the riffles or whereabouts.

There is no longer any future in being a fish--even a poor fish. No doubt most of them are considering ways and means of retiring so they can evade mankind's strategems [sic] for extracting them from their habitat. But where can a fish retire? Theirs not to plan "to do a little fishing?". . .¹

In 1939 Romney devoted an editorial to the frustrating world of lunch meat:

Just when we get accustomed to one choice (of lunch meat) and call on the butcher for a refill, we are told that that particular model is out, but would we like some ham or spam--to which we usually reply damn--and take the substitute. This in itself would not be so terrible if the process didn't have to go on indefinitely; but as soon as we acquire a little fondness for spam and inquire for it again we find that it has been replaced with "meatwurst" or some other evil sounding concoction. . . .²

Often Romney's humor showed up in a light-hearted headline over an otherwise straight news story:

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Retirement Contemplation," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 17, 1966, p. 5.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Anent Lunch Meat!" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 17, 1939, p. 4.

Price of Lactic
Fluid of Female
Of Bovine Specie
Up 2 Cents Quart¹

When someone broke into a gas station in the town of Darby and took money and merchandise, including 40 cartons of cigarettes, Romney created this headline:

Burglars With No
Fear of Cancer
Rifle Gas Station
Of Cash and Fags²

Recipes were another popular feature in the Western News, but these were not gathered from some news service and clumped together in a so-called "Women's Page." Instead they were personal favorites of Romney's and were printed from time to time in his editorial column along with comments about where he had enjoyed eating the dish and with hints on ingredient substitutions and preparation techniques.

In 1958 Romney turned a national problem into a recipe exchange. In an editorial, he said President Dwight Eisenhower had no understanding of what to do about the country's economic problems, as evidenced by his continual changes in policy on "recession, depression, and obsession."

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Price of Lactic Fluid of Female of Bovine Specie Up 2 Cents Quart," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 27, 1952, p. 1.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Burglars With No Fear of Cancer Rifle Gas Station of Cash and Fags," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 6, 1965, p. 1.

Romney compared Eisenhower's ineffectual policies with those of Marie Antoinette, whose recommendation for helping Frenchmen with no bread was to "Let them eat cake." Romney then proceeded to print a recipe for German Chocolate Cake "because we expect to have something of the nature offered the millions of unemployed Americans soon." He also added that "the cake is good enough for any Montana university president, before or after his salary is raised in depression times from \$15,000 per year to \$16,000 per year."¹

Recipes for peach melba and scalloped clams, plus very graphic directions from Captain Meriwether Lewis' journal on how to make white pudding from buffalo intestines, were all included in Romney's editorials. He also had printed a plum cake recipe on some of the campaign cards he distributed while running for the Legislature in later years.

According to Ruth Romney, her husband loved good food and was a joy to cook for, "but he couldn't boil water." She says it was another example of "smother love" or spoiling by his parents. "It was marvelous he survived it," she says. Once Ruth returned from a month-long trip to find a strange odor in the house. She discovered that it came from a thick layer of grease that covered the bottom of the oven. Miles had broiled a steak each night for his dinner,

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Let Them Eat Cake," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 17, 1958, p. 4.

but had not known enough to put a pan under it.¹

Romney may have been a naive and fumbling cook, but he was a thoughtful and confident editorial writer. He once wrote:

It has been said that a newspaper without editorial comment is like a person without a soul. It makes no difference whether the readership applauds or is aghast at the editorial opinion, the theory is that stimuli should be presented in a publication which could induce thought on the part of the reader. What conclusions that thought produces is not so important as simply that thought be born. The rest takes care of itself.²

Romney felt so strongly about the importance of that stimulus reaching his readers that he hated to raise subscription or advertising rates. The annual subscription rate was \$2 from 1893 until Romney raised it to \$3 in the 1940s. In 1969 the price rose to \$4; and in 1974 to \$5. Those kinds of decisions were particularly hard during the times when Montana Power and possibly other businesses withheld advertising dollars because of his outspoken editorials.

"Money was not his goal by a long shot," according to Whitlock. "Doing what he felt needed to be done, the way it needed to be done was very, very important. He was willing

¹Romney interview, June 10, 1989.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Scientists Get On the Ball," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 6, 1972, p. 4.

to lay it on the line."¹

Harry Billings looked back on Romney's work this way: "He disturbed the establishment mightily, but no matter how the screws were turned he always managed to survive. He had sound liberal principles, was a liberal Democrat, and plowed fearlessly forward in the rich Republican soil that was (and is) Ravalli County."²

"We were always solvent, but it was tough pickings," Ruth Romney said. "I just said that there were lots of things in life besides earning a lot of money. We loved living here (in Hamilton) and we loved our independence. It's kind of nice not to be beholden to anybody."³

It was not unusual for a Romney editorial to cover an entire page, a fact that caused both supporters and critics to moan. He felt such an urgency about his message, though, that he was driven to long-windedness. In a full-page editorial he wrote in 1946, he talked about what he saw as the dismal failure of the private power industry, and described Montana Power Company as a vampire "sucking the life-blood from Montana's economic resources." He added this reference to his father:

My late best friend and advisor often pointed out that my editorials were too, too long. Certainly that is the truth in the instance in your hand, but there is

¹Whitlock interview.

²Harry Billings letter.

³Romney interview, October 5, 1982.

so much to say, so little time and space to say it, and so few who will voice that which I consider pertinent. I think people must concern themselves with these vital problems or everything will go to smash. . . .¹

Romney wrote a number of editorials discussing the news business, and one of his concerns was educating people to be discriminating newspaper readers and radio news listeners. In March 1946, he urged them to read advertisements and articles with a critical eye, giving serious thought to what financial interests are behind them and if there are legitimate viewpoints on the other side of the issue.²

Later that same year he wrote that he did not believe in censorship of advertisements, and therefore faced a dilemma whenever inaccurate political advertisements were submitted to him for publication. He used his editorial column to point out what he saw as lies and misrepresentations in certain Republican advertisements that appeared in that issue of the paper.³

In another editorial, Romney chastised newsmen who quoted unnamed sources. He said it was a favorite method of the Company-controlled press in Montana to "direct a stream

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Montana Power Under a Microscope," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 10, 1946, p. 6.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Consider the Fountain From Whence Your Information (?) Springs," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 14, 1946, p. 2.

³Miles Romney Jr., "I Find Myself Wondering," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 24, 1946, p. 4.

of calculating propoganda without any responsibility whatsoever." He concluded with this thought:

It seems to me it would be a keen idea to enact one more statute which would provide excruciating [sic] penalties to be inflicted upon any newspaper, or radio station or system, which allows what purports to be news, to be presented to the public without revealing its source. If the source is of a type which cannot stand the light of publicity, its publicity is likely to be more deadly than the hemlock Socrates quaffed.¹

At one time, Romney even found the People's Voice guilty of such a practice. That was in 1943 when Harry Bruce was editor. This is what Romney said:

The People's Voice, a weekly newspaper published at Helena, founded on the idea of promoting a much needed free press in Montana, has fallen into a similar deplorable practice of printing a column of comment in which the anonymous author habitually publishes attacks and smeary inuendo [sic] concerning various persons in Montana public life. From our viewpoint sometimes this writer's comment hits the bulls-eye; more often not. It is not that we disagree so often with his diatribes and petty calumnies but we dislike to see a publication founded upon so noble a premise debase itself by shooting poison darts from ambush and then being able to say, "It's not the policy of the paper but merely the view of our columnist." Take the mask off and the work will be much more effective whether we agree with it or not. It is an axiom in American life that the accused should be permitted to confront his accuser.²

In a similar vein, Romney had nothing good to say about newsmen who were lazy enough to use "canned editorials" distributed free by special interest groups and

¹Miles Romney Jr., "All News Sources Should Be Labeled," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 3, 1945, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Take Off the Mask," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 3, 1943, p. 4.

organizations, especially if the newsmen passed them off as their own words.¹

Each fall near the anniversary of the founding of the Western News, it was Romney's custom to write a special editorial discussing his philosophy, the events of the past year and hopes for the future. In 1938, the idealistic young editor called for a redistribution of wealth through nationalization of industries, utilities and resources. He also called for reinstatement of the Agricultural Adjustment Act or some other measure for putting agriculture on a parity with industry.²

The Western News started its 55th year of publication in 1944, and Romney said this:

During the past year the WN has tried to maintain its position as an independent publication. The success of our continued efforts has proved gratifying and we are more convinced than ever that real independence is an asset that no crumbs from the moneybags of Big Business, the fond pat on the back by our banker, or the hocus-pocus of outstanding position in what some consider the high places, can equal. We are going to try to keep the same course as in the past.³

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Extra, Extra, Read All About It!" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 16, 1963, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Our Birthday," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 22, 1938, p. 4.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Some Anniversary Thoughts," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 21, 1944, p. 2.

In 1957 Romney announced that the paper was the oldest continuing business in Hamilton, and starting its 68th year.

He added this:

Merely being old is not necessarily a matter of consequence. Some things become old and wither and pass away and in a short time few recall the former existence. . . . On so many occasions the WN has wrestled with adversity, overcome costly disasters, lived through boycotts, undertaken espousal of unpopular causes, overcome loss of faith in faded heroes and convictions, that I cannot help but marvel how somehow the paper has survived! Thus, in these comparatively tame years, there exists a danger of sedentary and lethargic decay. I can think of nothing worse than for a paper, hitherto alert and unafraid of battle, becoming lifeless and fruitless for the common good. Better let such an instrument die.¹

Romney was nearing the age of 72 when he wrote a nostalgic editorial for the paper's 83rd anniversary:

Will those who must one day take over the reins at the WN derive as much satisfaction, as much pleasure, and will they find the toil and road-blocks encountered worth the effort, as have those of us who have endeavored to serve our subscribers, and the community, in the past? . . .

It comes to the point where you weigh the good against the bad, the desired against that which is repugnant to you, and arrive at an answer. That is why so many people in newspaper work accept the difficulties involved and return every next day to follow the lure of that which is developing of utmost interest around the news corner.²

¹Miles Romney Jr., "The WN Is 68 Years Young," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 5, 1957, p. 4.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Ruminating About An Anniversary," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 13, 1972, p. 2.

CHAPTER 8

ROMNEY, THE OUTDOORSMAN

"When the sun comes up these mornings over the Sapphire range, it marches down the sides of the Bitter Root mountains until all of the valley is aglow with brilliant golden life. The birds in the trees cease their early morning chirping and enter upon the business of gathering food for themselves and their young ones. If you are up breathing the clear, clean Bitter Root air on such a morning you know it's good to be alive."¹

When Miles Romney wrote those words in 1952, he was expressing a love affair with the out-of-doors that began when he was a boy with his dog at the mill pond, and continued to the end of his life.

Romney worked long hours at the newspaper, and when he took time off it was usually for fishing or duck hunting. Jelinek remembers that on Sundays, Romney liked to drive out by himself into a mountain canyon, hike five to eight miles to a lake or stream and catch a mess of trout.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Cooperation Can Save Birdlife," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 5, 1952, p. 4.

Occasionally someone would come into the office and say, "There's a flight of ducks coming in," and Romney would drop whatever he was doing and say "I'll see you when I see you."¹

Now and then, Ruth accompanied her husband on his fishing trips, and she remembers that he sometimes had to carry her piggyback over rough places. "I'll bet that graveled him no end, but he never said."²

The Romneys also enjoyed picnics with friends in the mountains, grilling steaks over the fire. Two of those friends were retired Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor G. M. Brandborg and his wife, Ruth. They shared the Romneys' love of the out-of-doors as well as conservation and environmental concerns. Ruth Brandborg says Romney and her husband were "bosom pals," thoroughly enjoying long conversations with each other on "politics and whatever." "They were different in many ways," she said, "but had confidence in each other's integrity." She described her husband as more buoyant and enthusiastic than Romney, while Romney was "absolutely fearless" and was unruffled by the threats he sometimes received for taking unpopular stands. Brandborg and Romney stood together on many important

¹Jelinek interview.

²Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

environmental controversies over the years.¹

Romney was much more than just a sportsman. He understood the importance and interdependence of all natural resources. According to Doris Milner, another long-time environmental activist, "He knew you had to have good water to have good fishing, and you had to have good wetlands for duck hunting."²

In April 1955, Governor Hugo Aronson proclaimed Montana Conservation Week. In an editorial, Romney said that no one should quarrel with the concept, but that people have different ideas about the proper use of natural resources:

Conservation includes not only the saving of the top-soil, the estoppage of erosion, the protection of water sheds through prevention of over-grazing and salvation of at least some of the surviving bits of forest, but it also includes the halting of polution [sic] of our streams, the checking of the carry-off of soil by rampaging flood waters, the avoidance of floods.

Natural resources cover a wide field. They embrace not only the soils for crops and for animal husbandry, not only the water in the streams, but also the water within the ground, the minerals below earth's surface, and the oil reserves, coal deposits, hydro-electric potentialities.³

Never much of a "joiner," Romney did belong to the Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association and worked

¹Phone interview with Ruth Brandborg, May 4, 1990.

²Interview with Doris Milner, Milner home, Hamilton, Montana, June 14, 1989.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Consider Conservation Week," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 28, 1955, p. 4.

vigorously on many of the group's conservation projects. Association members honored him at their annual banquet after he died.

The conservation project Romney is best remembered for is the planting of fish in mountain lakes and streams. He would scout out remote areas to find promising sites, the Montana Fish and Game Department would contribute the fry from hatcheries, and Romney would provide the muscle to deliver them to their new home.

Thomas Koch, a Hamilton attorney and Wildlife Association member, remembers a planting trip he and Romney took in the early '50s to Canyon Creek Reservoir in the Bitterroot Mountains west of Hamilton. Glen Hackney, an old-time Bitterroot packer, was the third member of the party. The trio traveled by horseback, with the trout packed in two milk cans strapped to a mule. The trail was very difficult, almost perpendicular, and they had to cover the last precipitous incline on foot. The fish were dumped into the lake, and the men reached home after an all-day excursion. Koch said the group agreed that the hero of the day was Hackney's "magnificent little brown mule."¹

Jim Whitlock remembers Romney telling about another planting excursion, when after a grueling trip to some remote lake, the milk cans were emptied into the water and

¹Koch interview.

it was discovered the trout were dead. "I can see him sprawled out on the bank . . . the fish all belly up and he (Romney) laying there mad as all get out. . . . And then every once in awhile one would flip over and bob away, so he knew some of them had made it."¹

In 1952, 120,800 trout from the Yellowstone were planted by Association members and state Fish and Game representatives in 21 high mountain lakes and eight streams. In August 1969, Romney reported that the Association had arranged for a Fish and Game helicopter to transport fish to six mountain lakes for planting.²

The aim of the Association was to plant several lakes every year. Bob Gilluly says it was a project just about every sportsman supported. "It went beyond political bounds. Even Republicans liked to go fishing."³

Romney also worked hard to get improved public access to national forest lands and to fishing streams. He described the problem this way:

What good is a blue ribbon river, chock full of gamey trout, which is bottled up with closure signs? This is a problem which the next legislature must consider in an effort to halt the rapid trend to fence up in tight corrals Montana's fish and game to a point where only those who own the access territory can enjoy the

¹Whitlock interview, July 24, 1989.

²"Helicopter Used to Plant Trout In Eleven Lakes In High Country," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 27, 1969, p. 1.

³Gilluly interview.

privileges of hunting and fishing.¹

Gilluly says Romney was one of those instrumental in obtaining the opening of Blodgett Creek and Canyon Creek canyons west of Hamilton for forest access. He helped bring "wilderness or semi-wilderness to the fingertips of everyone."²

Romney, Brandborg and Milner were all concerned about clear-cutting on national forest land, especially those areas west of Hamilton that were easily visible from the heavy population areas on the valley floor. In 1969, Romney wrote:

The forest lands of the United States are supposed to be administered under a multiple use program. This means they are to be used for a wide variety of things, such as providing timber for the lumber industry, providing areas for hunters, picnickers, fishermen, and furnishing grazing lands at a very low price to the stockmen.

Where there are mineral deposits the forest lands are open to prospecting and mining; they provide avenues for hikers, mountain climbers, snowmobilers, and camera enthusiasts. They provide a solitude for those intent upon refreshing their spirits in communion with the beauties of nature.

The forested areas furnish a repository for snows which form a reservoir within the mountain soils and woods for the watershed without which America cannot flourish.

If one of these various uses is overused to the detriment of one or all of the others, multiple use is not a functioning undertaking and the law is violated.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "What Good Are Fish and Game If They're Bottled Up Against Use?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 10, 1966, p. 2.

²Gilluly interview.

This is something which should confuse no one as all a person need do is look at the mountain sides where clear-cutting has been used to remove all of the timber, or nearly all, and the remainder reduced to ashes. What other use can such areas be given? Multiple use forsooth!

There are those who aver that clear-cutting of the timber of the national forests--which belong to the people of the United States--is of a sustained yield character. Yes--providing a span of 100 to 300 years is involved. No, if we consider the operation in the purview of a few generations. Most of the people who read this piece will never live to see Bitter Root clear-cut forest producing lumber again.¹

Arnold Bolle, Dean of the University of Montana School of Forestry, wrote a report in 1970 that was critical of the clearcutting (which he called "mining") and other timber policies on the Bitterroot National Forest. Romney thought it was important enough that he published the complete text of the report in the Western News, even though it covered nearly two pages.²

Five years later, Romney wrote an editorial rather tentatively titled, "Perhaps Some Forests Will Be Saved." He said that the "Organic Act" of 1897 allowed only selective cutting of trees on national forest lands, but when timber became scarce on private forest lands

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Multiple Use Can Be a Mockery," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 12, 1969, p. 2.

²Arnold Bolle, "Report on the Bitterroot National Forest," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 25, 1970, pp. 6-7.

National Forest Service personnel began to receive pressure from business interests to significantly increase their harvests. "Clearcutting became the accepted practise [sic] in most places," Romney said, "and foresters (in name only) began to prate about that being the only sensible way to cut the timber." He went on to say that he was heartened by a recent court decision that upheld the provisions of the "Organic Act." This was his conclusion:

The end of the wholesale cutting clearly had to come because eventually the forest supply would have been destroyed. Fortunately there are still remaining some national forests where the water continues to run clear, where fish and wildlife can exist, where essential watersheds for the future benefit of mankind can endure and provide for tomorrow, where cattle can graze and deer and elk propagate for future enjoyment of mankind. But the photo finish was too close for comfort, too much has been sacrificed by the mass of Americans for the financial benefit of the few who had become owners of the engines of forest destruction and who used them with little thought of tomorrow.¹

Another major environmental issue that concerned Romney during the 1970s was land-use planning. During this time the Bitterroot Valley went through a period of intense subdividing. Its citizens were forced to take on the seemingly impossible task of creating a comprehensive land-use plan that would provide good guidelines for development, yet satisfy those people opposed to any kind of government interference in their property rights.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Perhaps Some Forests Will Be Saved," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 3, 1975, p. 2.

Romney argued for strong development regulations with strict enforcement:

Primarily every subdivision must have proved water and waste disposal adequate to the proposed uses of the parcel of land involved. Lacking a conclusive demonstration of such essentials the planning board should be required to oppose approval of such a subdivision and the board of commissioners should not be permitted by law approving such a subdivision by authorizing it if and when some possible eventuality takes place. Such artifice simply is "passing the buck" to state authorities. . . .¹

Many of the people who moved into the new subdivisions were from out of state, and had become acquainted with the beauties of Montana on a fishing or hunting vacation. The state regularly budgeted money to entice visitors to Montana, but Romney didn't approve when, in 1966, Governor Tim Babcock proposed that that appropriation be boosted to \$250,000. Romney believed it was wrong to lure out-of-state hunters to Montana when the number of game animals was diminishing:

The same thing is true of the much vaunted "blue ribbon" streams. We advertise them across the nation as supreme. Anyone who has fished them over the course of years knows that although some good fishing does exist, it is nothing like it was in the "good old days." Perhaps it never can again be so good. But we must face the question of whether we desire to be selfish with that which remains in hunting and fishing, or if we want to share a diminishing resource with people who we lure here in order to garner their tourist dollars. We must decide whether we are being fair, both to our own people and to those who come here

¹Miles Romney Jr., "We Must Accept Responsibility," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 26, 1974, p. 2.

in answer to the advertising.¹

Although Romney worked closely with the Montana Fish and Game Department for years on various conservation projects, he often disagreed with its policies. In the winter of 1954, he sounded off about a regulation that allowed a fisherman to keep one trout in his daily limit, should he catch a trout while fishing for whitefish. "Of all of the inanities perpetrated in the management of fish and game in Montana one of the zaniest is currently decimating the trout population of the Treasure State," he said.²

In 1961, he was annoyed by a series of news releases from the Fish and Game Department that described the poor condition of deer ranges. He responded this way:

The propaganda material has a cure for the unsatisfactory range condition. It is "Deer harvests even larger than the 100,000 plus harvests of the last six years will be needed to achieve the full potential of these ranges."

In other words if the deer are completely eliminated the ranges will improve?

Preparations for setting next autumn's big game seasons are currently under way. The 1961 extended seasons and 2-deer seasons will be hung upon the hunters' antlers before they are hardly aware of it. And then the word will be whispered down from Olympus that nothing can be done about it; that father knows best.

¹Romney, "What Good Are Fish and Game."

²Miles Romney Jr., "Stop Murdering Trout Prior to Spawning," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 30, 1954, p. 4.

It seems that not only are the rangelands and game herds being managed, but also the hunters!¹

Jelinek observed that when Romney was in the Legislature he worked hard to solve a wide variety of problems facing the state; but when he worked on legislation dealing with conservation and the environment, "that came from his heart."²

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Father Knows Best," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 12, 1961, p. 2.

²Jelinek interview.

CHAPTER 9

CHALLENGES OF THE 1960s

During the 1960s, Romney was concerned with a number of important issues such as civil liberties (particularly free speech violations), the place of politics and government in society, out-of-state control of corporations, and gun control. These concerns led to a series of political battles against Republicans, Montana Power Company, the John Birch Society, and those who opposed certain state constitutional reforms he supported. During this decade, Romney did more than write about his concerns, however. He became a political candidate for the first time at the age of 63. He was defeated in his bid for a Montana House seat in 1964 but was successful two years later.

Although Romney was delighted to see President Dwight Eisenhower's term end in 1960 and the Republicans out of the White House, John F. Kennedy was not his personal choice for a replacement. One of Romney's friends and political allies at that time was Leif Erickson, who had defeated Burton K. Wheeler as Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1946, but was defeated in the general election by Zales N. Ecton. Erickson remembered when he and Romney were delegates to the

Democratic convention where Kennedy was nominated. Romney "was a great Adlai Stevenson supporter--loved him; and he was always suspicious of the Kennedys, of Jack," Erickson said. "And in the convention where we nominated Kennedy in Los Angeles . . . and when he (Romney) went by me after the vote, he held his nose. That's how direct Miles was."¹

Romney felt strongly about his politics, Erickson said. "I was with him a good many times in writing the platform for the Democratic Party in Montana, and there was never any equivocation. He wouldn't stand for it. If there was a principle to be announced, it was announced and that's all there was to it," Erickson said.²

Shortly before the 1960 election, Romney editorially attacked the emotional controversy over Kennedy's Roman Catholic faith. Even if the Pope were elected president, he said, the checks and balances in the Constitution strictly limited what he could do. He went on:

If we are to deny any citizen the presidency because of his religious faith we had best repeal the First Amendment to the Constitution.

It is no more fair to deny the presidency to Senator Kennedy because it is affirmed he is too good a Catholic, than to deny it to Vice President Nixon

¹Recorded interview with Leif Erickson, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, June 26, 1983.

²Ibid.

because some charge he is a poor Quaker. . . .¹

About this same time, Romney was also concerned about what was happening on the conservative side of the political spectrum. He was worried about what he saw as the increasing influence of the John Birch Society nationally and in Ravalli County. Romney obtained a copy of Robert Welch's The Blue Book of the John Birch Society, studied it carefully, and then mercilessly dissected it in editorials and debates.

A 1961 editorial that covered nearly a whole page of the paper is an example. Romney used specific quotations to show similarities between The Blue Book and Mein Kampf. He said both Welch and Hitler advocated military action to change government; both demanded followers be directly obedient to one leader; both rejected democracy as a flawed philosophy; both were intolerant of differences of opinion; and both used smear techniques to discredit non-believers. He said the Birch Society, like the Ku Klux Klan, chose to operate under cover. He was particularly upset with Senator Barry Goldwater and Montana's Governor Donald Nutter who he said had supported the group. "It is high time that all good citizens yank these jerks (Birchers) out into broad daylight and expose them to public contempt," Romney said.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Our Decision Should Be Based Upon Reasoning, Not Emotions," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 22, 1960, p. 2.

"It is past time that matters of serious public concern should be tainted with outrageous libels voiced by contemptible characters functioning from the obscurity of the underground."¹

In 1963, Romney drew a political cartoon showing Goldwater (labeled "John Birch Society") riding a wooly mammoth (labeled "GOP"). The caption read, "The Mammoth's Got a Monkey on His Back."²

For a time, the Birch Society was particularly disruptive in the town of Darby, south of Hamilton, where its members attacked the school superintendent for disposing of old Bibles and American flags by burning them. Bob Gilluly says he and Ravalli Republican publisher George Danker, plus Romney, local radio station personnel Dex Dexter and Stan Hooper, and Hamilton School Superintendent Bernie Hughes were particularly concerned about what was happening. "We all joined to bring the community back together," Gilluly said. "We brought in outside speakers and wrote editorials about California Birchers who showed up here. We probably libeled some." After the 1964 national election the Birch movement died down in Ravalli County, but

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Birch Society Reflections," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 4, 1961, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "The Mammoth's Got a Monkey on His Back," cartoon, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 31, 1963, p. 4. See appendix 1.

showed up in some form or other at election time for years to come.¹

Although he strongly disagreed with the John Birch Society, Romney never suggested that its advocates be censored. He always championed freedom of expression. Shortly after John Kennedy's assassination, a New York hotel withdrew permission for use of its premises for a speaking engagement by Birch Society member Major General Edwin A. Walker, because of threats on Walker's life. Romney wrote that he understood the hotel's reluctance to take a chance on violence, but said a way should be devised to let such controversial figures speak with some measure of safety. He suggested radio broadcasts. ". . . Americans cannot permit freedom of speech to be discarded for anyone--even a Walker--for such denial undermines the vital foundations of a nation," he said.²

Romney's interest in freedom of expression cases often centered on events at the University of Montana. In 1966, for instance, David Rorvik completed his year as editor of the Montana Kaimin, student newspaper at the University of Montana. His flamboyant style brought him and the Kaimin statewide attention, and he was accused of voicing views too

¹Gilluly interview.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Even a Walker Should Be Safe," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 4, 1963, p. 2.

far to the left, of being disrespectful of the University administration, being intolerant toward religious views, using improper language, and over-emphasizing sex. Romney evaluated the young journalist this way:

The Rorvik era is over. In balance it can be said it accomplished much more good than harm. It awakened the sleeping, put ideas into hot conflict, got students, faculty members, administrators and Montana citizens to thinking. This achievement alone established a worth beyond calculation. It is to be hoped the "Kaimin" never goes back to sleep. A university is a place where thinking about anything and all things should be the prime objective. If a student newspaper can furnish impetus to such an undertaking more power to it. Rorvik accomplished this much and in so doing demonstrated a capacity to turn out excellent writing, whether you like the viewpoint or not. He was thinking and if he helped to stimulate thought among protagonists and antagonists it was a real achievement.¹

Romney had a lot of experience in using his writing skills to stimulate debate. This was particularly true concerning his old antagonist, the Montana Power Company, which was the subject of numerous Romney editorials during the 1960s. Democrat Thomas Judge, elected to the Montana House in 1960 and governor in 1972, says the power of the Anaconda Company was declining at that time, but MPC was stepping into the vacuum and exercising "enormous control of the Republican Party. They had a majority in the House," he said, ". . . and no question that MPC ran the show."²

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Three Roars For Rorvik," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 23, 1966, p. 2.

²Phone interview with Thomas Judge, July 23, 1989.

In July 1961, Romney devoted an editorial to the news that MPC's president, Jack Corette, was receiving a salary of \$75,000, the same as Teamster President James Hoffa. Romney said there were twice as many Teamsters to pay for Hoffa's salary as there were people in Montana to pay Corette. Years later Corette commented on Romney's editorial. It was "a ridiculous comparison," he said. "My salary was no higher than other power company presidents."¹

Romney was especially unhappy with Montana Power during these years, because of the company's opposition to the construction by the federal government of Knowles Dam on the Flathead River in Western Montana. MPC had its own plans for hydroelectric power projects. Romney believed the construction of a major size dam by a public agency was generally more cost-effective and beneficial than two small dams by a private utility as MPC proposed. This is what his editorial said:

These agents of the Montana Power Co., in the clothes of human beings, are positive there would be no industry which would want nor use the power produced at Knowles.

The answer is plain: No industry is coming to the area involved if Knowles is not built. Montana Power Co. energy is too expensive for industry.²

Joseph A. McElwain, who was a lobbyist for MPC at the

¹Corette letter.

²Miles Romney Jr., "When Will Montana Be Run For Montanans Instead of Nonresidents?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 26, 1963, p. 8.

time and retired as MPC board chairman in 1985, says, "The people of the area involved were very much opposed to this dam (Knowles), as were the Flathead Indians. MPC had proposed two run-of-the-river dams that would not flood any productive farm land. . . . Congress rejected federal construction of Knowles in 1963. The issue has never surfaced since."¹

In October 1963, Romney became impatient with a series of Montana Power Company advertisements he saw in other papers that touted the company as a Montana-owned enterprise that pays lots of taxes. He responded this way:

Actually it (MPC) pays no taxes. It acts as a tax collector for the federal and state and county and city governments. What it hands over to the tax collectors is part of its cost of doing business just as wages, materials, etc. Montana Power, like other private utilities, by law, gets a profit based upon its watered stock investment, over and above all its costs of doing business, which includes the taxes it collects from its customers and turns over to the government. Ordinary businesses have no such guarantee based on law. Maybe they make a profit, maybe not. As a consequence the more taxes they pay the less chance of making a profit. But the taxes collected by a utility, and paid to government, has no bearing upon its profit.

The major ownership of Montana Power is not in control of Montana residents. Control is vested in outside ownership. Montana Power's advertising attempts to get around this fact by saying various corporations which own control of Montana Power Co. also have Montana stockholders. Who is the foolish person who believes that such extremely minor ownership of stock in holding companies, investment corporations,

¹Joseph A. McElwain to Christine Johnson, letter, September 12, 1989.

etc. constitutes control?¹

Years later, Corette called Romney's criticisms "ridiculous." "Montanans always were the largest number of stockholders," he said. "It was a Delaware and later became a Montana company. The company always worked hard to bring new business and people to Montana."²

Colin W. Raff, who retired from MPC in 1979 as senior vice president, was equally abrupt in his reaction:

This accusation, like many of Romney's, was based on his emotional appeal to the readers with no interest in being factual. At the time Romney made statements such as these, Montana Power--like most U.S. utilities at the time--had its corporate domicile in the east but was preparing (or had prepared) to transfer its domicile to Montana. However, Romney did not point out that all MPC's directors were Montanans and that the company had more shareholders in Montana than any other area.³

It seems that Romney should have been happy about one business change in Montana--the takeover in June 1959 of the Anaconda Company newspaper chain by Lee Enterprises of Davenport, Iowa. However, he continued to see the papers as mouthpieces for Big Business.

In an editorial just before the 1960 election he referred to "The absentee-owned Lee Newspapers, who have

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Montana Power Company Advertising," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 2, 1963, p. 2.

²Corette letter.

³Colin W. Raff to Christine Johnson, letter, September 14, 1989.

hardly been in Montana long enough to be legally entitled to vote--but who are busy telling Montanans how to vote . . ."¹

Romney howled loudly in 1963 when the Lee papers echoed Montana Power Company's stand against construction of Knowles Dam:

Why should people of western Montana permit a carpetbagging outfit like the Lee newspapers, owned by non-residents of Montana, tell us what is good for us?
 . . .

If the people of western Montana fail to recognize the opportunity which is found in building and using Knowles . . . then the people of Montana are stupid enough to be the dupes of the foreign carpetbagging newspapers, like the Lee Missoulian-Sentinel press, which are doing the job against the best interests of Montana in behalf of another corporate carpetbagging outfit, the Montana Power Co., the majority of the stock of which is owned by people who do not live in Montana.²

By 1965 he had still not softened his attack:

There is one thing sure. You can never put your finger on the Missoulian's policies except to note that those policies will always lead it to the same bed with Big Business. . . .

You can depend upon it that the Missoulian will never be in the corner with the public interest, unless ultimately the main profit is to be found there.

Montanans long ago learned when the "Company" owned the Missoulian, and most of the other daily papers of Montana, to ascertain what those papers were for and then, in the public interest, oppose that viewpoint. Montanans are learning that under the Lee

¹Miles Romney Jr., "There Is a Real Issue In This Battle," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 20, 1960, p. 2.

²Romney, "When Will Montana."

ownership the same thing holds true.¹

Despite Romney's continued attacks, the Lee papers in Montana were making major improvements. In 1970 Charles E. Hood Jr., an instructor and later Dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Montana, discussed those changes in an article in the Montana Journalism Review. Hood said, "The Company's don't-rock-the-boat philosophy is being supplanted by a policy that invites controversy." He described the creation of the Lee State Bureau in Helena as "one of the most impressive improvements" in news coverage. "In the past decade, Lee editorial-page editors have spoken forthrightly on subjects of community interest," he said, and "when the interests of one Lee community conflict with those of another, so do the editorial views of the respective newspapers." Hood said there were still some problems at the papers, however. For example, some Lee reporters were "highly critical of what they call 'leaderless' newsrooms and the combination of editorial timidity and inefficiency that they say, in effect, discourages deeply penetrating, investigative reporting on controversial issues."²

Although Romney was critical of the stands taken by the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "The Missoulian Is No Enigma," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 10, 1965, p. 6.

²Charles E. Hood Jr., "Lee's Decade in Montana," Montana Journalism Review, 1970, pp. 25-27.

Anaconda and the Lee papers, he never called for a strictly non-partisan press:

There are some people who advocate strict neutrality upon the part of newspapers. They call such newspapers "Independents." But over the course of years I have noticed that this vaunted neutrality or independence is usually a thinly disguised veil behind which the editor--as dexterously as he is able--thrusts the dagger into the back of Democratic candidates.

I think it is far better that publications advocate the party and candidates of their choice rather than hide behind a false facade of independence. I doubt if there are many people in the publishing business who fail to possess real views on public issues.¹

In January 1964, Romney criticized one of the Lee papers, the Missoulian, for an editorial after the November 1963 assassination of President Kennedy. The Missoulian editorial, "Welcome Respite From Political Palaver," said that there had been a "moratorium" on politics since the assassination; and it was a good thing that should be continued. Romney said the Missoulian was insinuating that all politics is bad and should be avoided. He disagreed:

If politics is bad, people should invade it and clean it up.

Politics is the art of government.

Everything you eat, all that you wear, the jobs which bring you your living, your protection from thugs, from weather, from storms, from floods, from foreign enemies of the nation, all are affected by politics.

Without politics we could not survive. . . .

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Looking Backward and Forward," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 23, 1960, p. 2.

So for better or for worse everybody should inform themselves upon matters of public concern and take an active part in politics for their own selfish reasons-- as well as for the good of their country. . . .

You can bet the oil moguls, the utilities, the concentrations of corporate wealth as well as of individual surplus wealth, are working in politics up to their necks. And they are not working for the good of the mass of Americans. They are laboring for their own enrichment. They want the mass of folks to sleep through the ordeal while they skim the cream.¹

That event may have influenced Romney's decision that spring to become more directly involved in politics. As the deadline approached for filing for election to state offices, Norris Nichols, a five-term Republican representative for Ravalli County, was preparing to run again and was considered nearly unbeatable. No Democrats had filed against him. Roland R. Renne, president of Montana State College, was a Democratic candidate for governor and considered to have a good chance for nomination and election. Romney, and other party members, felt strongly about the importance of having a Democratic House and Senate to support Renne. "One night here at the house, Miles got on the phone and I don't know how many people he called (to see if they would run against Nichols)," Ruth Romney said. "They probably thought it was a gesture of futility in this county, so he was turned down right and left." On the last day for filing Romney and May Vallance,

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Not So Good An Idea," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 8, 1964, p. 2.

another active party member, discussed the situation in the Romney kitchen. "Miles has decided he's going to run for the Legislature," Vallance told Ruth Romney. "Oh, no, he isn't," was Ruth's reply. Ruth Romney said that her husband had lots of friends in the county, but because of his outspokenness, he also had lots of enemies. "I don't think he can make it, and I don't want him to be hurt," Ruth told Vallance. "Miles just laughed at that, because in some ways he had a thick skin," Ruth remembered years later. The trio continued their discussion until past the 5 p.m. filing deadline, but in the morning Ruth Romney read in the Missoulian that her husband would run as a write-in candidate. "I'm not going to let it go by default," Romney told his wife.¹

In an editorial a few days later, Romney described his futile efforts to find a candidate to oppose Nichols. Then he went on to offer himself as a write-in candidate and describe his take-me-as-I-am campaign:

Consequently, loath as I am to take such action, I am going to offer myself. If the necessary 250 persons will write my name in as the Democratic candidate for Representative in the Legislature in the June 2 primary election I will pay the filing fee and make the best campaign of which I am capable.

I possess such egotism that I consider myself competent and well enough versed to handle the job if nominated and elected. . . .

If nominated my campaign will not be a back-slapping baby-kissing affair. I will decline to kiss

¹Romney interviews, October 5, 1982, and April 8, 1985.

any babies unless 18 years of age or over and not indulge in gregarious operations rather foreign to my nature. I would conduct the campaign through the WN and perhaps the mails. . . .

It should be entertaining to the public and I trust not too fatiguing to either Mr. Nichols nor myself.

Of course I have no business leaving the WN for two months to go to Helena but if such should transpire patrons of the WN will doubtless be tolerant and the wonderful staff upon this paper will carry out the work.¹

Romney did receive sufficient votes in the June primary, and his campaign continued full swing in preparation for the general election. He told voters he favored achieving more adequate financing of education by shifting part of the burden from local people to the state or nation. He also announced a strong opposition to a sales tax.

Things got hot in September when Romney wrote an editorial supporting construction of a Job Corps Center in Ravalli County and dismissed as insignificant a straw poll run in the Ravalli Republican in which readers registered their opposition to the Center by 175 votes to 105.²

The Republican's publisher, George Danker, roared back a response:

We feel that the opinions expressed by Miles

¹Miles Romney Jr., "It Is Up to You," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 29, 1964, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Let's Not Miss the Target Completely," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 30, 1964, p. 2.

Romney are clearly indicative of the kind of representation Ravalli County would get if he were sent to the state legislature . . . "To heck with the public--Full speed ahead!"

It will be this newspaper's privilege in the near future to endorse without qualification the re-election of Norris Nichols to the state legislature, but this, we hope, will be our last mention of his opponent Romney in that regard. . . .

Replacing Nichols with a man who supports without question billion-dollar welfare programs on one hand and violently opposes street lights and school construction in his own home town on the other would be sheer folly.

Choosing as a representative a political dogmatist--a man who would subvert the will of his constituents to party considerations and the wraith [sic?] of political philosophy doesn't even merit consideration.¹

The next day Romney answered Danker's attacks, justified his positions on various issues, and chided both Danker and Nichols for failing to state clearly where they stood on the Job Corps Center question. He added this:

It seems that George Danker came to town about 1 1/2 years ago from big time newspapers in Denver and Las Vegas for the express purpose of eradicating this country editor, at least from the political scene. Mr. Danker has taken Representative Nichols in tow and proposes to re-elect him. He states that he prefers his editorial will be his last mention of Romney with respect the contest for the legislature. I hope so too, because since George came to town I have cherished his friendship and mourn his attitude which finds me wanting in so many ways!

Danker may well be right. He may join with other opponents in re-electing Mr. Nichols and defeating Miles Romney, but he isn't going to get rid of Romney. Only the Grim Reaper is going to remove me from the

¹George Danker, "To Heck With the Public--Full Speed Ahead!" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Ravalli Republican, October 6, 1964, p. 4.

Bitter Root scene. George, you're stuck with me.¹

When the sun came up the day after elections, both Romney and Renne had lost. Romney lost by just 59 votes, 2,922 to 2,863;² Tim Babcock was victorious over Renne 144,113 to 136,862.³

As the year drew to a close and a new legislative session got under way, Romney wrote several times about the importance of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that state legislatures must reapportion not only their house of representatives but also their state senates upon the basis of population. He said, "The first duty of the current legislature should be to reapportion and quit dragging its feet."⁴ He thought the best method of reapportionment, however, was to switch to a unicameral legislature--abolish the Senate and continue electing the House on a population basis.

There is no good reason for having a two-house legislature. Many nations have a single House for the national legislature and it seems to work as well or better than a two-house parliament. Those who insist upon checks and balances will not agree with this viewpoint but what have they to offer as proof that

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Please Pardon the First Person But I Didn't Start This," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 7, 1964, p. 4.

²"Romney Files For Representative," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 15, 1966, p. 1.

³ Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, p. 229.

⁴Miles Romney Jr., "Reapportion Unicamerally," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 20, 1965, p. 4.

checks and balances ever did any good except to prolong agony?¹

Bob Gilluly remembers how partisan politics affected Ravalli County's two newspapers during the next couple of years. When U.S. Senator Lee Metcalf, an influential Democrat, came to town "he would publicly praise Miles and his newspaper and totally ignore the Ravalli Republican," Gilluly said. Then when Tim Babcock, the Republican governor, "came to check on the Job Corps Center, he invited Republicans to behind-the-scenes meetings and ignored Miles Romney and his Democratic friends."²

A federal court order redefining legislative districts in the state for the 1967 session became an incentive for Romney to run for the House again in 1966. Ravalli County was given a second House seat, opening up the opportunity for someone to serve with Nichols. Romney supporters persuaded him to file; he agreed; and in a June news article Romney described his stand on important issues. He said he would work for the following: Adequate appropriations for education; "legislation designed to provide rural electrification groups with protection from raids of the Montana Power Co.;" securing "effective controls by the people of fishing and hunting, so that at least the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "In Reapportionment the Target Should Be Equity," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 16, 1964, p. 2.

²Gilluly interview.

citizenry can veto procedures they do not in the mass relish," and securing "access to fish and hunting areas without damage to property owners." Those things he opposed were any sales tax and the so-called Liberty Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would abolish the federal income tax.¹

A proposed state constitutional amendment dealing with federally mandated reapportionment of the Legislature was also on the ballot. It provided for redesigning legislative districts across county lines so that the membership of both houses would be based on population. There would no longer be one senator for each county, regardless of population. The proposed amendment had a provision in it, however, that Romney strongly opposed. That provision was that if ever the U.S. Constitution was amended or interpreted to permit apportionment of one house of a state legislature on factors other than population, the Montana Senate would be apportioned once again on the basis of one senator for each county. Romney opposed the whole amendment because of that provision. He explained his stand this way:

The sneaky section concerns providing for some contingency which may, or may not, take place at some future time, four, ten, twenty or a hundred years hence.

Who are we to determine today, what may be the pleasure in such a matter, of future generations--

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Miles Romney Tells of Some Things He Would Endeavor to Do In Legislature," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 15, 1966, p. 8.

perhaps unborn? Approval of such a proposition by us today would be a preposterous presumption. The inequity of imposing a rotten borough representation which would give one senator to Petroleum County with a population of 894 and one senator to Yellowstone County with a population of 79,016 ought to be recognizable to anyone--but it seems such is not the case.¹

In November, Romney and Norris Nichols were both elected to the House. Fifty-three per cent of Montana voters approved the reapportionment amendment, but in Ravalli County it passed by a slightly smaller margin, 50.66%.²

The Western News had always been a shoe-string operation, with staff members filling in wherever they were needed. Gilbert Jelinek was in charge when Romney was away during the 60-day legislative session, but he says the paper "kind of took care of itself."³

Romney kept track of things over the phone and sent back weekly reports on legislative business that were run as a regular column. He occasionally wrote editorials, but depended for the most part on volunteers to do guest editorials. Jelinek says lots of people liked to tell Romney he should write an editorial about this or that subject. Romney decided to give them the opportunity to do it

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Important Matters For State's Future and For Your Pocketbook Learn All the Facts and Then Vote," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, Oct. 5, 1966, p. 2.

²Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 234 and 237.

³Jelinek interview.

themselves, and so he made a list of a dozen people who agreed to write a couple of editorials each while he was gone.

The week after Romney left, the first guest editorial was brought in, and then the second, but that was the last one, according to Jelinek. After that, he says "it was up to yours truly. . . . One guy was always pestering Miles to write editorials and would offer advice afterwards on how they should have been done." Jelinek says the man twice failed to bring in guest editorials, because he was "too busy." When school board election time came the man decided to run, so he brought in an editorial dealing with a related issue. "I think I tossed that in the wastebasket," Jelinek says. That was the last time Romney tried using outside volunteers to do editorials.¹

At the Legislature Romney was named to the committees on Constitution, Elections and Federal Relations; Fish and Game; and Ways and Means. When legislators introduced more than 800 bills and resolutions, Romney wrote about the frustrations of trying to study the materials and make intelligent decisions as to their worth, all within 60 days. He said a plan for annual sessions was one of several proposed constitutional amendments being discussed to

¹Ibid.

alleviate the situation.¹

During February Romney reported on a piece of legislation that received special attention because it affected the Anaconda Company:

One bill would have increased the metal mines severance tax from 1 1/4 per cent to 2 1/2 percent. In the Ways and Means committee we amended this bill by reducing the rate to 2 per cent, and making other changes to reduce the severity. This bill was one of a number of measures introduced by the (Republican House Speaker James R.) Felt machine designed to force acceptance of the Babcock & Felt sales tax. The apparent intent is to punish the Anaconda Company to the extent it will seek relief by favoring the sales tax--which is the core of all the maneuvering. Almost all of the Democrats in the House voted against this punitive legislation which prevailed under weight of the Republican majority. So did I.²

The irony of Romney's support of a measure beneficial to his long-time adversary, the Anaconda Company, was not lost on the members of the House. A group of Republicans had a copper collar made and presented it to Romney as a symbol of his new allegiance. Pat Williams, a young Butte school teacher who was also a freshman legislator and later became a U.S. Representative, described the event twelve years later in a letter to Ruth Romney:

A day or so after the vote, during a morning session, business was set aside and the copper collar was presented to Miles. Not one to be outdone, Miles took the collar in one hand, his microphone in the other, and from memory, recited the following poem:

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, Jan. 25, 1967, p. 3.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 8, 1967, p. 4.

Oh, me old copper collar
 It makes me heart so proud;
 When I'm wearing me copper collar
 I stand out in the crowd;
 Throughout the land there's none so grand,
 I want you all to see
 This beautiful copper collar
 That the Company gave to me!¹

With that quick retort, Miles literally brought down the House!²

The collar and Williams' letter are now part of the collection of the Ravalli County Museum in Hamilton.

In the days following that lively incident, Romney voted against a bill to increase salaries of elected state officials and judges, against a bill to extend the length of truck-train vehicles on state roads from 65 to 105 feet, and for a measure to allow Job Corps members to buy fishing licenses in Montana after a 30-day residence.³

Romney also introduced a bill that would have required private utility companies that provided both natural gas and electricity to the same customers to divest themselves of one of those services. Montana Power would have been covered by such a law. Romney said the result would be more competition and lower rates. In a speech before the House Judiciary Committee, he said this:

¹Dan Cushman, The Old Copper Collar (New York: Ballantine Books, 1957), preface.

²Pat Williams to Ruth Romney, letter, December 4, 1979, Ravalli County Museum, Hamilton, Montana.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 15, 1967, p. 5.

So it can be done, and it must be ultimately accomplished for the good of the Republic and its people. Mankind should not be lashed to the mast of inordinate profit. Neither is it good for the utility corporations. Eventually the people will tire of being exploited and will react as they have in Ontario, in the TVA region, in most of the great cities of America which were forced to take over one or more or all of their public utilities and operate them. Corporate greed can be its undoing, and there is no end to corporate greed as long as it is a tight monopoly.¹

Romney reported later that the bill was given a brief hearing and garroted. In May 1969 he repeated his views in an editorial in the Western News in order to try to stir up interest in the concept again. He was not successful.

As the Legislature neared an end, Romney reported on serious financial matters facing the state. "Montana's legislative situation, centering upon revenue and appropriations, came to a head, like a carbunkle [sic] last weekend," he said.² The Republicans were trying to force passage of a 3% sales tax by defeating all other significant revenue bills in the Legislature, but the Senate killed the sales tax too.

For the first time since 1933, the Governor called the Montana Legislature into special session. During the next 16 days, debate over revenue and taxation measures raged, and in the end the Legislature increased the state's

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Try Free Enterprise!" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 28, 1969, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Details Events Leading Up to State's Financial Mess," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 1, 1967, p. 1.

individual income tax, the corporation license tax and the tax on gasoline.¹

With the adjournment of the state Legislature, Romney turned to national and international affairs. In August 1967, he reported on a vigorous anti-Vietnam War speech given by 87-year-old Jeannette Rankin in Missoula. Romney supported her sentiments, and blamed politicians in both parties for the fighting. He said this:

Miss Rankin is a Republican who apparently fails to approve of the war which the late John Foster Dulles ignited, which President Eisenhower failed to understand, and which the late President Kennedy failed to stop and which President Johnson permits the military to escalate. There are millions of people, perhaps a majority of Americans, who feel the same way as Miss Rankin about it, but who do not speak up against it. Once in the mess it is difficult to extricate ourselves, even though we recognize it as utterly bad.²

In June 1968, Robert Kennedy was assassinated, and Romney wrote a thoughtful editorial about the "sorrow and shame." In it he talked about the frustration of trying to prevent such a mindless act. One of the avenues he discussed was gun control, a concept he supported while acknowledging its limitations. His stand was unusual, because of his love for hunting and because he grew up in an area where the unfettered right to carry a gun was

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 22, 1967, p. 8.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Miss Rankin Against War Again," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 2, 1967, p. 4.

considered almost sacred. It was also an impossible stand for a politician to take. This, in part, is what his editorial said:

Legislation outlawing hand-guns, and possibly other guns, or all guns, or causing owners thereof to register firearms, is proposed and probably will become law in some form. . . .

Of course the Second Amendment (in the Bill of Rights) does provide for the people to "keep and bear arms." But the Congress, in its wisdom can stipulate certain conditions like registration. To this numerous citizens object as an infringement and possible threat.

Never-the-less there is dubious reason for permitting wholesale and retail sale of machine guns, bazookas, cannon, and all sorts of refined instruments of destruction. This includes handguns which are rarely used for hunting purposes. But in these troubled days many people feel they need the protection of handguns in their homes against burglars, against rioters, and other trouble makers. The fact is that more people are killed in the United States with guns than in any other civilized country--by a very wide margin. Very few of these killings are the results of riots or home burglaries.

However, it must be admitted that anyone bent on killing another person, or committing some crime in which a weapon is a needed tool, is not likely to be deterred from such acts by inability to go to a retail store and buy a gun. . . .

While strict regulations may keep guns from the hands of some offenders, and may deter some crime, it is doubtful that it will stop the kind of people who apparently realize some sordid satisfaction from the murderous act of assassination.¹

Jim Whitlock remembers when Romney took a public stand in support of gun control at a sportsmen's meeting in Darby.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Sorrow and Shame Intermingle," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 12, 1968, p. 2.

The group was proposing to send a letter to the Legislature or some other body objecting to any kind of gun control. When the vote to approve the letter was called for, the aye votes filled the room. The call for those opposed brought one very loud "NO!" from Romney. "I don't care if you want to register my gun," Romney told Whitlock. "That doesn't bother me." He said he did not agree with the scare tactics being used to convince people gun control would inevitably lead to taking all guns from private citizens. "They are going to have to change the Constitution to do that," Romney said.¹

One of the highlights of the decade for Romney occurred just two months after Kennedy's assassination, when, in August, the Montana Press Association named his father to the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame. The event meant much to Romney, who always felt that his father had never been fully appreciated as either a newsman or politician. The biography that accompanies Romney's picture in the Hall of Fame says this:

As an editor and as a politician, he is remembered as an outspoken man of unusual energy and force. He has been described as a "free-swinging editor," "a powerful factor in molding public sentiment," "a wheelhorse in the Democratic party" and as "a valuable exponent of local interests."²

¹Whitlock interview, July 24, 1989.

²"Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame," Romney papers, University of Montana School of Journalism files, Missoula, Montana.

That same summer the two major political parties held presidential nominating conventions. Richard Nixon and Spiro T. Agnew were nominated by the Republicans in Miami and Hubert Humphrey and Edmund S. Muskie by the Democrats in Chicago. The Chicago convention exploded into controversy because of extended street violence. Romney made some observations about the two conventions in a September 1968 editorial:

Most of the talk has been concerning the Democratic convention. This is but natural since it was the most recent and because delegates taking part in its deliberations did grapple with a number of Minotaurs, slaying some, wounding some and causing others to run loose like terrified devils.

The Republican delegates, safely ensconced beyond the moat on Miami Beach, away from the populace, did nothing of this sort and were as tame as a spayed polecat. So it deliberated, adopted a platform which would offend or please nobody in this world or beyond the River Styx, and according to program nominated Tricky Dick Nixon for President. . . . The goings-on at the millionaire beach resort left a number of presidential hopefuls such as Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, Gov. Ronald Reagan, et al as sad as wilted flowers in a graveyard, but this was nothing compared with the wrath felt by those who had cuddled hopes of being anointed as the Vice-Presidential candidate. . . .

As you all know the Democratic convention was a tumultuous affair. This writer has attended three national Democratic conventions and here testifies that all such conventions are tumultuous. All such conventions, whether Democratic or Republican, end up with many candidates and delegates going home with feelings injured. There can only be one candidate nominated for each of the two top posts in each convention. There are forty-seven candidates for these posts; many more than ever actually enter the starting gates. And when the lightning fails to strike them, there are objections, recriminations and weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. After all these dislocations have ebbed away the vast majority of the party faithful normally get together and work like

Trojans for the nominee of their party. The rest go out in the political gardens in the north forty and eat worms and in politics you rarely hear of them again. . .

Political conventions are often tumultuous and that characteristic crosses party lines.

This is not to say that justice, chastity and the best ends of the country always triumph. Far from it, you all know we have had some pretty rare specimens elevated to the presidential chair by the election processes. But this is the way the political machine functions and always has performed. If a person doesn't like the music it is best to avoid proximity thereto. There may come the happy day when some new and better method of selecting nominees will be devised, and many of us have been working at it without much success; but until that day comes along there are two things you can do. One is to proclaim that politics is dirty and stay strictly away from it and permit the ship of state to continue to flounder. The other way is to participate, say your piece, whether you are a McCarthyite, a Rockefeller adherent, a disciple of the Nixon mentality, a worker for Humphrey, a protagonist of Reagan, a follower of Robert Welsh [sic], or who. Say your piece and endeavor to your utmost to secure the advocacy of others to it. And having done so, enjoy your victory; or if you lose, feel that you have served your self respect. Or you can start a revolution and try to impose your will by force, but you must pay the consequences if you lose.

But it is not good sportsmanship, manners, or a service to the democratic processes, when you lose to violate, or attempt to violate, the rights of others.

The latter tactic was that resorted to in Chicago by several thousand people who were outside the Democratic convention; who had nothing whatsoever to do with it, but who insisted upon marching, protesting and raising hell by confronting cops and the National Guard. Some of them, unfortunately, had to pay the consequences.¹

¹Miles Romney Jr., "In Retrospect," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 4, 1968, p. 2.

On the Montana political scene, Romney was once again a candidate for the House of Representatives. He promised not to vote for a sales tax, to work for increased support for schools through the School Foundation Fund, and to continue working for ways for the public to gain access to their natural resources.¹

In an editorial in late October he urged voters to support three proposed Montana constitutional amendments: One to permit the salaries of public officials to be increased during their term of office should the Legislature so provide by statute; a second increasing the limitation on the length of a session of the Montana Legislature from 60 to 80 days; and a third that would allow each Legislature to submit six proposed constitutional amendments to the voters, instead of just three.²

Romney and Nichols were both re-elected, but the three amendments Romney favored were defeated, even by Ravalli County voters. Local voters also joined the majority across the state in rejecting Governor Tim Babcock's sales tax platform and electing Democrat Forrest Anderson. The county and state both supported Richard Nixon's election as

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Nov. 5 is a Day of Reckoning!" political handbill, 1968.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Don't Forget to Vote For or Against the Five Propositions Nov. 5," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 30, 1968, p. 2.

president over Hubert Humphrey.¹

In an editorial soon after the election Romney called for dramatic election reforms. He said, "The Electoral College is as obsolete as the Dodo," and election of the president and vice-president should be by popular vote in all the states. He favored outlawing election polls, because he believed they were used as electioneering devices to influence the selection of public officials. He called for banning out-of-state contributions to primary campaigns and having all funds for campaigning after the national conventions come from the federal government. Romney believed the media should be required to provide all political parties and candidates reasonable opportunity to state their views, and that after a national election there should be no announcement of results until the last vote in every state had been cast and the polls closed. Romney said the number of Montana precincts should be increased, and the "Ouiji [sic] Board" Votomatic machines, which used electronically counted punchcard ballots, should be outlawed since they were unreliable.²

Tough financial problems faced legislators when the Montana House and Senate finally convened in January, and in

¹Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 239-246.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Election Reform is Needed," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 13, 1968, p. 2.

the end they were forced into an extended session. In an effort to alleviate some of the pressure for future legislators, Romney helped shape a bill that would allow members of the House Appropriations and the Senate Finance and Claims committees to start meeting a month before the general session opened.

He also introduced a bill providing for reclamation of land disturbed by strip mining of coal and providing for a tax upon the mined coal. Part of the revenue was to go into the state general fund and part for reclamation. Under a 1967 law, reclamation was being done on a voluntary basis. The House defeated the bill, but Romney was encouraged by the 46 favorable votes it received from the 104 members. In a regular legislative report to the Western News he said this:

It (the bill) also generated considerable thought on the subject. Why Montana should permit its land to be wrecked and not reclaimed is doubtful to many? Why Montana should not garner some revenue from stripmined coal is another question? If it is right to tax ore from metal mines why not coal?¹

Romney also introduced a bill requiring property owners to provide public access to streams and lakes. The bill was tied up in committee and never got to the House floor. His efforts to get Votomatic machines banned also failed.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 12, 1969, p. 7.

Romney introduced two other bills that became law. One was a "slow moving vehicle" bill, which required such vehicles to carry a special emblem on their rear. The other was an increase in the license tax on insurance premiums.¹

Donna Metcalf says Romney had certain characteristics that made him an effective public official. "He would state his position openly and clearly but not with great rhetoric," she said. "He was much more direct and not given to flourish or embellishing beyond what was called for to explain his position." To get people to change their minds about something, "he liked to 'guy' them or needle them--kid them a little," she said. "He knew how to be an opponent or advocate without making it a bitter controversy."²

Romney took those abilities that he had developed to meet the challenges of the 1960s and used them in even more important ways during the last years of his life. They were to shape his unique contributions to the Montana Constitutional Convention and to the Montana Senate after that. In both places he became valued as a persuasive orator and as a bridge builder between dissenting viewpoints.

¹Ibid.

²Metcalf interview, June 7, 1985.

CHAPTER 10

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The time Miles Romney spent as a delegate to the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention was one of the happiest and most productive periods of his life, but he got there in a roundabout way--by losing his bid for re-election to the House.

As a convention delegate, his age and legislative experience became valuable assets to the group. He had more first-hand knowledge of state history and politics than most others there and the ability to work with people on both sides of a controversy.

He was especially influential in a number of areas at the convention. Through his membership on the rules committee he was able to convince the delegates to require each standing committee to hold public hearings. They became known as the "Romney Hearings." Some of the constitutional provisions he supported successfully were required open meetings for public bodies, annual legislative sessions, no approval of the death penalty (although it was later approved by the voters), and a provision for limited

gambling. On the reverse side, he was not able to persuade the convention or voters afterward to approve a unicameral legislature. He also said that there was much in the judicial section of the new constitution that he did not like.

In 1970 Romney was completing his second term in the state Legislature and enjoying his work as a member of the Ways and Means, Fish and Game, and the Constitution and Elections Committees. Republican Speaker James Lucas had appointed him to the 12-member Legislative Council, and Romney was working between sessions to help prepare legislation for the 42nd Assembly. In mid-February he filed for re-election, and became one of four candidates for Ravalli County's two House positions on the November ballot.

One of the most important issues in that election was a legislative referendum calling for a constitutional convention. Romney preferred the amendment process for improving the constitution, but conceded that would take too long; so he supported the convention concept.¹

He once again stated his opposition to a sales tax but did favor: Industrial growth that guaranteed no environmental damage; reclamation of areas damaged by economic exploitation; and a severance tax on strip-mined

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Nothing Ventured--Nothing Gained?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 7, 1970, p. 4.

coal, using the taxes derived to pay a Vietnam veterans' bonus and add money to the School Foundation Fund. He also supported constitutional amendments to lower the voting age from 21 to 19, and to continue reorganization of the executive branch of government.¹

Although county voters agreed with him on all the ballot issues except the lower voting age, Romney placed third in the House race behind Norris Nichols, who was elected to his ninth term, and Jack Fitzgarrald, a Republican who had served as mayor of Stevensville for five years. Democrat May Vallance ran fourth.² According to Romney, the reason for his defeat was his stand on gun control.³ He had not actively campaigned for gun control, but apparently voters felt that was not enough and were unhappy that he did not take a stand against all controls.

Sixteen months later, Romney described the emotionalism surrounding the issue of gun control. It was during the Constitutional Convention, when delegates debated a proposed amendment to the Right to Bear Arms section. The amendment

¹"Miles Romney," campaign ad, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 28, 1970, p. 6.

²Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 9, 1970, p. 1. The tallies were: Nichols 3,480; Fitzgarrald 2,837; Romney 2,646; and Vallance 1,716.

³Montana, Montana Legislative Council and the Constitutional Editing and Publishing Committee, Montana Constitutional Convention of 1972, vol. 5, p. 1735, "Verbatim Transcript."

would have expressly forbidden all firearms registration and licensing, and Romney spoke against it:

There is no suggestion of registration or licensing in the committee's (original) proposal--none whatsoever. It is a fear which has been engendered in the people of Montana's minds over the past several years, and it is widespread. It is so widespread that a person who opposes it might as well paint a big target on his back and run for the mountains and find a hole and run in the hole and pull the hole in after him. If he wants to avoid it, he'd better paint himself sky blue and run along the horizon so nobody can find him.¹

Jim Whitlock remembers being at the Western News office the night after the November 1970 election. He was amazed that Romney did not seem upset about losing his seat in the Legislature, although Whitlock was sure it bothered him a lot.

"Miles, how do you handle this?" Whitlock asked.

"That's politics," Romney replied. "Somebody wins and somebody loses. You can't worry about it."

Then, according to Whitlock, Romney said something prophetic: "No matter how dark it seems, . . . things happen for a reason. They work out for the better." And they did, Whitlock said years later. "If he had won that election he wouldn't have been able to run for the Constitutional Convention," because public officials were not eligible. "Ravalli County voters had no idea what service they did to Montana when they defeated Miles Romney (for a third term in the House);" Whitlock said, "because

¹Ibid, pp. 1734-35.

when he got into there (to the Constitutional Convention), he was a major contributor."¹

When the Legislature went into session in January 1971, it faced complicated problems of drawing up enabling legislation and appropriations for the convention, determining who was eligible to run for convention delegate, and redefining district boundaries. The body went into extra session in March, and the convention delegate primary election was pushed back from June to September. On April 8 Governor Anderson proclaimed a second special session to convene June 7.²

Fitzgarrald died unexpectedly about a week before the session was to begin, and the Ravalli County Commissioners had to appoint a replacement. They passed over Democrats Romney and Vallance, and named Republican Robert J. Thomas, a Stevensville businessman.³

By the time the August 5 deadline for filing for the convention delegate primary had arrived, Romney had decided to run. "He thought the constitution should be updated," Ruth Romney remembers. "It was desperately needed, and he wanted to be part of it." It turned out to be the highlight of his career, she said, and more enjoyable for him than his

¹Whitlock interview, July 24, 1989.

²Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, p. 255.

³Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 2, 1971, p. 1.

time in the Legislature.¹

Three Democrats, five Republicans and one Independent candidate had filed for the county's two convention delegate slots, and Romney was top vote-getter in both the primary and general elections. The other delegate elected was Republican Jack Ward, a Hamilton veterinarian.²

Just before the convention body convened for a short organizational session in late November, Romney wrote an editorial that caused a stir. He agreed with most that the work of the convention must be carried out on a non-partisan basis, but added that since the Democrats had a majority of delegates it was their responsibility to elect convention leaders from that majority. To try to organize across party lines when the delegates barely knew each other would be about the same as drawing straws, Romney said.³

He went on:

With that numerical majority goes a responsibility that the Democrats will be unable to shirk. They must see to it that this convention is not a failure, that it draws up a good fundamental law for the state. If this fails to transpire, who do you think will be blamed? . . .

You need not look for gross and unpardonable political pandering at the convention. If you do, you are looking the wrong horse in the mouth. That which must be guarded against is the same thing that found

¹Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

²Hamilton (Montana) Western News, September 15, 1971, p. 1, and Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, p. 257.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Looking the Wrong Horse in the Mouth," editorial, November 24, 1971, p. 2.

its way into the drawing of the present constitution 82 years ago. I refer to the threat of intervention by individuals, cliques, factions, groups or what have you, not dominated by members of either party or the independents, but conceivably participated in by some of them in an effort to implant in the new constitution special privileges favoring various economic groups, at the expense of the entire citizenry. This is the kind of partisanship which must be guarded against, rather than membership in a political party.¹

Romney's arguments for a Democratic slate of officers were apparently not entirely convincing to his fellow party members. Democrat Leo Graybill Jr., a Great Falls attorney, was elected president of the convention over Republican James Felt, but the other four offices were filled by a Democrat, two Republicans and an Independent, each of whom came from different regions of the state. Then Graybill appointed seven Democrats, six Republicans and one Independent as committee chairmen. He assigned Romney to the Legislative and to the Rules and Resolutions Committees.²

The convention convened on January 17, 1972, for a scheduled nine-week session. After the first week, Romney made this observation in a report to the Western News:

The officers are guiding the 100-delegate body through the uncertain processes of a proceedings with which nobody is familiar, upon which too much reliance is placed upon what somebody else did somewhere else, and with a great scarcity of original thinking. On the other hand the dedicated effort of the delegates is tremendous. If endeavor on the part of the delegates can produce a good fundamental law for Montana such

¹Ibid.

²Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, p. 256.

will be achieved.¹

One of Romney's first acts at the convention was to propose a rule that each standing committee hold a public hearing where citizens would be invited to appear and testify on any phase of the proposed constitution being considered by such a committee. Many delegates thought the hearings ought to be set up by a resolution, which would be less restrictive than a rule. After debate and some amendments, the rule was adopted and the hearings became known as the "Romney hearings."²

He was also instrumental in helping organize a Distinguished Speaker Series, where a number of prominent national citizens were invited to address the convention. Speakers included Charles Lindbergh, Jeannette Rankin, John W. Gardner of Common Cause, and Jess Unruh, former speaker of the California Legislature.³

As a member of the Legislative Committee, Romney spent much of his time studying initiative and referendum, recall,

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Con Con Report," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 26, 1972, p. 3.

²Ibid; Miles Romney Jr., to Leo Graybill Jr., letter, December 13, 1971, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena; and George W. Rollins, "A Tribute to Miles Romney," speech to Montana Constitutional Society reunion, Kalispell, Montana, June 26, 1976.

³Interview with Richard Roeder, Montana State Capitol, Helena, May 3, 1985; and interview with Mae Nan Robinson Ellingson, offices of Garlington Lohn & Robinson, Missoula, Montana, May 6, 1985.

the right of the legislature to call itself into session, annual versus biennial sessions, length of sessions, compensation, apportionment, and bicameral versus unicameral legislature. He worked many 12-hour days and seven-day weeks.¹

After a month, the last of the public hearings had been held, and the committees were hard at work trying to reach a consensus on the recommendations they would present to the convention. Romney's report to the Western News said this:

Nobody is entirely happy about the results because the 100 delegates possess 100 sets of viewpoints, often in sharp collision. The philosophies of the individual delegates range widely along social, economic, liberal, conservative lines. I have yet to observe any cleavage along political party lines. . . .²

The General Government article of the constitution dealing with suffrage and elections was one of the first to reach the convention floor for general debate. A proposal defining a qualified elector included the stipulation that no person serving a sentence for a felony in a penal institution could vote. Romney argued that felons released on probation should be denied voting rights until their probation period was over. The convention majority disagreed with him. The next day, however, the body agreed to amend a proposal about eligible office holders that would

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Con Con Report," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 2, 1972, p. 3.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Con Con Report," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 16, 1972, p. 2.

prevent a felon on probation from holding public office.¹

When the convention debated the section of the constitution having to do with voter registration, Romney could not resist speaking against an amendment proposed by Paul Harlow of Thompson Falls that would allow the Legislature to set up voter registration at the polls.

"Mr. Chairman," Romney said. "I had not intended to speak on this matter, but it appears to me that my friend, Delegate Harlow, has led the camel up to the tent and poked its nose under the tent and given it a kick in the rump, and we are right back at the place where we started. . . ."²

When the convention debated methods of calling a constitutional convention, Romney spoke against a proposal that the question of holding a convention would be automatically submitted to the electorate every 20 years. "Constitutional conventions should never be held unless there's a crying need demonstrated," he said. "It occurs to me that it is something like a person taking castor oil every Friday at 9:00 P.M. whether he needs it or not."³

In late February, the convention debated sections of the constitution calling for proceedings of the Legislature, committee meetings and hearings to be open to the public.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Con Con Report," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 23, 1972, p. 4.

²Montana, Constitutional Convention, vol. 3, p. 446.

³Ibid, p. 462.

Romney expressed his support this way: "I suggest that it's easier to find the carpet tack in the floor in the light than in the dark."¹

A proposal to institute an office of ombudsman or people's advocate to hear and investigate complaints relative to government matters was another controversial issue debated by the delegates. Romney supported the concept, but the convention defeated it by a narrow margin.² A somewhat similar proposal was approved by the convention later when it directed the Legislature to "provide for an office of consumer counsel which shall have the duty of representing consumer interests in hearings before the Public Service Commission"³

When the convention voted to require candidates for governor and lieutenant governor to run as a team, Romney was opposed. In his Western News report he explained his stand:

This will rule out many potential candidates: there may ensue difficulties in effecting teams; there could be a situation where wealthy persons, with money but lacking in talent, or with money but lacking in scruples, might get upon the team because their money could finance the principal's campaign. I distrust the requirement thinking that teams can, and have (Nutter-Babcock) run as a team--without any constitutional

¹Ibid, p. 604.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Con Con Report," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 1, 1972, p. 2.

³Montana, Proposed 1972 Constitution for the State of Montana, art. 13, sec. 2.

requirement.¹

During a convention debate on whether the Legislature or a special commission should handle reapportionment of legislative districts, Romney made some revealing personal comments:

Mr. Chairman, there was a time when I thought I was a flaming liberal, but now I've found that I am quite conservative. I still believe in representative government. I think that the tendency in this Convention to delegate authority to commissions and boards and one thing and another, is sapping at the roots of representative government and I dislike it. I think that the closest thing we have to democracy is a representative government and our legislators, whether you have them in a bicameral or a unicameral government, are elected by the people. They are the closest force in government to the mass of the electorate that exists. I think that they should be the first, the initial force in providing for reapportionment.²

One of the issues covered during debate on the judiciary article of the constitution was a proposal to establish an office of probate attorney in each judicial district. Romney disagreed with the proposal and recommended another method of making it easier for people to settle estates:

I find that in the State of Washington, to the west of us, they have to a degree solved the matter--not in the large estates, but in the small ones--not by establishing an office such as the probate attorney, as is envisioned by Delegate (Archie) Wilson, but they have provided a means by statute whereby certain estates, especially the smaller ones where only the decedent and his spouse are concerned . . . can handle it by filing an affidavit with very little cost, very

¹Romney, "Con Con Report," March 1, 1972.

²Montana, Constitutional Convention, vol. 4, p. 690.

little procedure in the court, and that obviates the necessity of carrying out a complete probate.¹

No action was taken on Romney's proposal during the convention, but in the final four years of his life he worked hard on such a plan and it did become law.²

He also had the opportunity during the convention to speak on another subject that continued to be very important to him in his last years--reclamation and the tax on mined coal. He said the Legislature had been handling the problems inadequately for years, and there needed to be something in the constitution to bolster the situation. He continued this way:

We currently have a tax on coal, which is partially used for reclamation of the lands that are molested by the industry which is removing the coal. . . . Unfortunately, to a large extent, this coal is being taken out and transported . . . out-of-state . . . where the generating industry turns the coal into electricity. It was my view, in trying to raise taxes on this, that this resource is a natural resource which, once removed from the earth in Montana, becomes lost to us forever. There are those who say that it provides a lot of employment and money, but the trouble is the employment is very meager and the money that is realized by the state is almost nonexistent. I think that the coal should be more highly taxed; and consequently, the state could then receive considerable money from it for our treasury³

¹Ibid, p. 1134.

²"History of Effort to Improve Joint Tenancy Procedure Covers 40 Months," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 7, 1975, p. 3.

³Ibid, vol. 5, p. 1281.

In early March when the Right to Bear Arms section was scheduled for debate, delegates were flooded with letters from constituents about the subject. Many supported a proposed amendment that would forbid firearms registration or licensing. In his report to the Western News Romney explained why he voted against it:

There being nothing in the proposed constitution text even implying that registration of firearms would be suggested and the inability of mankind to peer into the future to know what might be best 20 years or more in the future, plus the fact that in World War One the government did have us register our firearms, led me to vote against the Berthelson amendment although I do not favor registration.¹

The amendment was narrowly defeated, brought up for reconsideration a second day, and defeated again. On the convention floor, Romney explained why the decision on how to vote was tough for him:

. . . In November 1970, the people of Ravalli County took a plebiscite on me on this very question, and they retired me from the Legislature on that Now I am placed in the diabolical situation of whether I should support my conscience or my constituents. It is a hell of a predicament.²

The convention delegates roared with laughter.

Although convention delegates enjoyed Romney's sense of humor, they also appreciated his eloquence. One of those delegates was Richard Roeder, who says that eloquence was one of the sources of Romney's power, both in the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Con Con Report," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 15, 1972, p. 2.

²Montana, Constitutional Convention, vol. 5, p. 1735.

Legislature and at the Constitutional Convention. "When Miles stood up and took the microphone, people stopped and listened," he said.¹

One of the most dramatic of those incidents, according to Roeder, was when the convention was debating the issue of capital punishment. This is what Romney said:

I don't know whether capital punishment is a deterrent or not, but how many of you have ever seen a legal execution? I have. I've seen two of them. In 1921 or '22, the State of Montana executed a man by the name of Vulkovich in Missoula. Sheriff Houston was in charge of the execution. The county erected a huge pine-board fence around one corner of the courthouse. Imposing invitations were printed and mailed to many people. I was a young newspaper reporter at the time, and I attended to view the proceedings to write the story for my paper. It was during the period of the noble experiment of Prohibition, but most everybody there was drunk on moonshine. They led the condemned man out, and during the proceedings they dropped him three times, and he strangled rather than having his neck broken. It's pretty grisly business, folks. Makes me sick to think about it. There were people who vomited. Some of them were nearly ready to faint; and I felt pretty much that way myself, although I was a pretty flip young buck in those days. About a year later, in early '24, while I was steamshipping in the Orient in what is now Vietnam, I witnessed another execution. The condemned man was--they kneeled him down before a block and with one stroke of a huge knife, the executioner sliced his head off, and the blood spurted up like that. I tell you, I'm not going to vote for capital punishment.²

"When he put that microphone down, it was something," Roeder remembered years later. "At that moment there was no

¹Roeder interview.

²Montana, Constitutional Convention, vol. 5, p. 1806.

one who could have voted for capital punishment."¹

Romney's impassioned plea against capital punishment, which he referred to as "the public lynch law,"² undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the decision of the Constitutional Convention delegates to leave the matter to a vote of the public.

In a Western News editorial in 1942, Romney called capital punishment "a relic of barbarism," and said writings by the late Clarence Darrow had helped convince him that it should be abolished.³ Romney may have read Darrow's article, "The Futility of the Death Penalty," in the September 1928 issue of The Forum magazine. In it Darrow argued that capital punishment was no deterrent to crime, and that "the state continues to kill its victims, not so much to defend society against them--for it could do that equally well by imprisonment--but to appease the mob's emotions of hatred and revenge."⁴

Turning to other matters, the convention debated a

¹Roeder interview.

²Montana, Constitutional Convention, vol. 7, p. 2739.

³Miles Romney Jr., "All Dressed Up But No Place to Go," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 14, 1942, p. 4.

⁴Clarence Darrow, "Capital Punishment Will Not Safeguard Society, 1928," in The Death Penalty--Opposing Viewpoints, eds. Bonnie Szumski, Lynn Hall and Susan Bursell (St. Paul, Minn.: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1986), p. 50. (Originally appeared as "The Futility of the Death Penalty," The Forum, September 1928.)

proposed merit system for employees hired by the State. Delegate George Harper led the support because, he said, so many workers lost their jobs each time a different political party came into power. Romney said the system was not needed, and his explanation brought laughter:

Mr. Chairman, it has been my observation from hanging around this place for a number of years that most of the faces have become very familiar. I think that they've been here for a long, long time. I don't think the spoils system is operating as efficiently as it should be.¹

A proposed right-to-work article was another employment-related issued debated by the convention. Once again Romney was opposed. He argued that nearly every form of activity in the economy is organized into some kind of group or association. He took a model from nature to illustrate his point:

When the birds go south or north in their migrations, they're organized. They normally go in large flocks, and the ones that don't go in flocks benefit by the flight patterns of the flocks. And I say that the people who are unorganized in the Montana and American labor movement are benefiting by the efforts and the sacrifices that are made by the labor movement. It's true that sometimes things go amiss, like when Mr. Hoffa and Mr. Beck carry on peccadillos and get into jail, but that happens in big business. It happens even among our friends. And that does not place a stigma upon the entire movement. I think that we would be very foolhardy if we embraced this so-called right-to-work issue²

¹Ibid, vol. 6, pp. 2346-47.

²Ibid, p. 2366.

The question of whether to add a recall provision in the Local Government article of the constitution brought Romney to his microphone once again:

I've been attending council meetings for almost half a century, and the people who are attending the meetings most of the time are the Mayor and the Aldermen. Unfortunately, the public is so apathetic that it normally doesn't attend the council meetings unless it wants something, and as soon as it gets what it wants or has a request turned down, it packs its tent and silently steals away. I think that in more than 80 years of application of the present method of election of county and municipal officers, we've got along famously without having a recall provision in the Constitution, and I think we can get along until we have another constitutional convention 20 years hence, at which time I will take the matter up again and be against it.¹

In the final days of the convention, the delegates devoted much of their time to the question of gambling. Romney made a tongue-in-cheek reference to the state's "look-the-other-way" enforcement of the ban. "Mr. Chairman," he said, "since 1889 we've had no gambling in Montana and I don't think now is the time for us to start it."² He continued in a more serious tone: "I don't like to see a constitutional provision which is flouted, ignored, contemptuously treated. I think that we should have something in our Constitution that we can abide with."³ He supported a proposal to put the matter to a public vote, and

¹Ibid, vol. 7, pp. 2552-53.

²Ibid, p. 2739.

³Ibid.

the convention agreed.

One hundred delegates signed the proposed constitution in a special adjournment ceremony March 24. The proposed constitution was an estimated 12,000 words long and had 14 articles, compared to 22,000 words and 21 articles in the old one. During the June 6 primary elections voters would be asked to accept or to reject the constitution, choose between a bicameral and unicameral legislature, accept or reject allowing the people or the Legislature to authorize gambling, and accept or reject the death penalty.¹

Romney expressed his support for the proposed document even though he did not agree with all its provisions:

There have been a number of persons asking my attitude on the proposed constitution. I intend to vote for it and would not have signed it had I felt otherwise. This does not mean that I like all of it. As a matter of fact there were many sections which I voted against in the convention. I continue to feel that many sections were ill advised. It must be remembered, however, that writing this proposed constitution was not the work of any individual, nor any cohesive group of individuals. It was a triumph of the art of compromise, with 100 delegates all accepting provisions they as a group put together by a majority vote. Most of the time the majorities were so large that the indication was that major agreement was had; but in numerous instances the voting was close, or at least there were large minorities. Ultimately the majority ruled and that compromise is to be favored or disfavored by the votes of Montanans June 6.²

¹Miles Romney Jr., "More Con Con Report," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 29, 1972, p. 2.

²Ibid.

During the weeks between the adjournment of the convention and the June 6 primary, the pros and cons of the proposed constitution were being hotly defended and attacked in the media, in lodges, on street corners, in bars and in flyers left on car windshields. Romney was one of many of the convention delegates who accepted speaking invitations from groups wanting to know more about the document. In a May 31 editorial, Romney discussed some of the negative comments he had received, chastising those who campaigned for rejection of the entire constitution because they disagreed with one or several of its parts. "They ask Montanans to discard all the good features of the proposed constitution because they dislike a minority of the changes proposed. This is like refusing to give the baby a bath because there is too much water in the tub."¹

Romney's response to a critical Farm Bureau representative was especially sharp:

One James H. Morrow, attorney of Bozeman, works for the Farm Bureau, and he possesses a lively imagination. This is proved by his carping criticism of the proposed constitution. He fears the environmental section, which is as tame as a broken legged cow in a coulee, will make informers of Montana citizens. Where was Dr. Morrow during prohibition?²

At the June 6 election, voters ratified the new constitution 116,415 to 113,883. Because 237,600 voters had

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Constitutional Summary," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 31, 1972, p. 2.

²Ibid, p. 6.

cast ballots on one or another of the four issues, and the favorable vote was 2,386 less than a majority of that number, the state canvassing board debated whether the vote to ratify was sufficient. In August 1972 the Montana Supreme Court declared in a three-to-two decision that the constitution had been ratified.¹

At 71 Romney was the second oldest delegate to the convention. The youngest was Republican Mae Nan Robinson, a 24-year-old graduate student in political science. Because delegates were seated alphabetically, the two were in the same row, and despite differences in age and philosophy they became good friends. Thirteen years after the convention, Robinson remembers she started out not liking Romney because he beat a good friend of hers out of a delegate slot. Her first impression of him was, "Oh, shit. This old windbag." But three weeks into the session Robinson had changed her mind, and told her friend how much she liked Romney and what a contribution he made. "He smoked those awful cigars," Robinson said later, and "that was maddening; but he was such a gracious, charming man." He had such pure and high principles, Robinson said, that she never felt she had to look for an ulterior motive when he advocated something.²

One of Romney's special contributions to the convention

¹Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 259-260.

²Interview with Mae Nan Robinson Ellingson, offices of Garlington Lohn & Robinson, Missoula, Montana, May 6, 1985.

was his substantive knowledge of taxation, the structure of the Legislature, and the court system, according to Robinson. That knowledge, combined with a passionate oral delivery, was very powerful. But he always tempered his passion with reason and balance, she said, and so people were willing to listen to him. She also remembers him as a wit, storyteller and philosopher.¹

After the convention adjourned, Robinson went on to law school, married, and had a son, whom she named Nathan Miles Ellingson, after Romney.²

Arlyne Reichert, another delegate who sat close to Romney at the convention, described his manner this way: "Even when he totally disagreed with another delegate, he argued with style!!"³

Delegate Richard Roeder said that Romney filled the role of elder statesman, with most delegates deferring to him regardless of their party affiliation. Growing up as the son of a journalist and public figure was part of the source of his power, Roeder said, adding that Romney knew so much about public affairs and the history of the state that he could not be fooled. On the convention floor, Roeder liked to refer to Romney as "The Sage of the Bitterroot."

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Arlyne Reichert to Christine Johnson, letter, June 24, 1985.

He also described him as a "William Jennings Bryan Democrat," in the very strong populist tradition. Romney saw his participation in the constitutional convention, said Roeder, as an opportunity "to open the political process that had been hidden since the time of the old constitution."¹

¹Roeder interview.

CHAPTER 11

THE FINAL YEARS

Romney had not been home from the Constitutional Convention for very many months before he plunged into a new debate with Montana Power Company. This time the conflict was over power lines. The company was proposing to construct a new 161-kv transmission line along the eastern foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains, on a right-of-way that would run parallel to an existing 63-kv line. The new line was to run from Missoula south to the Hamilton Heights road, a distance of about 40 miles.

Romney objected not to additional power for the area, but to an additional power corridor. In an August 1972 editorial he quoted a Bonneville Power Administration news release that said the agency was replacing a certain 230-kv line with a 500-kv line "as part of BPA's program of reducing environmental impact by using existing rights-of-way when higher capacity lines are needed."¹

Romney said the farmers and others who opposed the MPC

¹Miles Romney Jr., "No Great Love Hath the Montana Power Co.," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 16, 1972, p. 2.

project objected to "cluttering up the countryside with additional transmission lines which few regard as aesthetic boons." Power company officials had testified at a Montana Land Board hearing in Hamilton that placing the lines along existing rights-of-way or putting them underground was impractical. Romney thought MPC ought to follow BPA's example by replacing lower voltage lines with higher voltage lines. His editorial said:

Perhaps it is a matter of refusing to do that which you do not want to do by concocting an excuse that it is technically impossible. Then, of course, there may be a reason which MP Co. does not desire at this time to divulge. MP Co. has demonstrated it can be most obdurate; look how it fought to the last legal ditch to avoid paying the Flathead Indians the court-allowed rental on the Kerr dam site...only 20 years.

I would think that MP Co. engineers could be as able in erecting power transmission lines as BPA engineers, and that because of their advertised love for every blade of Montana grass, they should be equally as desirous of salvaging all environmental values possible.¹

Despite the editorials and other public debate by opponents, MPC constructed the line. Seventeen years later, company executive John Corette explained the organization's position this way: "The company had two objectives, namely to build a line that would best serve its customers and that would be the least inconvenience to the landowners along the line."²

¹Ibid.

²John Corette letter.

Colin W. Raff, another retired MPC official, had a sharper response: "The transmission line attack was merely another opportunity for Miles to criticize, and omitted the engineering considerations and right-of-way restrictions that were factors."¹

As the November general election approached, Romney followed closely Democrat Lieutenant Governor Tom Judge's campaign for governor. Romney was especially pleased that Judge supported strong reclamation measures at mining sites. He said this in an October editorial:

We must require that Montana secure a large severance tax upon the coal, measured by the ton, without any BTU qualifications. If the coal is good enough to burn to make steam to turn wheels which generate electrical energy, it is good enough to pay tax, BTU measurements not-with-standing. . . .

Our coal reserves today seem tremendous and they are. So were the potential hydraulic sites, now almost gone. So were the forests of America, but they are today disappearing at a frightening rate. So was our oil and gas reserves, now admittedly greatly depleted. The day is approaching when all of the various methods today used to develop energy, will be diminished to a point that we will be poor indeed. We should exercise foresight, and be tough in our determination that we do not waste. The day approaches when our energy cupboard will be bare.²

In November he championed the cause again:

It seems to me that there should be a backstop whereby the legislature should provide that supervisory control to be vested in the state to the extent that should reclamation be not adequately carried out the state

¹Colin Raff letter.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Profit By Past Experience," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 11, 1972, p. 2.

should step in and do the job itself, charging the cost against a severance tax imposed. When I introduced in the legislature a bill which would accomplish these things and impose a four-bit per ton severance tax, it failed (1969). Now I realize that the 50 cents per ton tax was too low. It should have been perhaps a dollar a ton. Now that people of the state are more awake to the situation it appears possible a fair tax may be imposed. This should be done. There are hundreds of millions of tons of coal involved. Once gone it is gone forever. If Montana's treasury were to secure revenue of a dollar a ton and at least half of the funds realized be deposited in a trust fund, the income from such a trust fund would in days to come fund the school equalization fund. . . .¹

Just one week later, Romney urged in an editorial that the newly elected Legislature enact a tax upon coal production, and establish an inviolate fund "with the interest from this accumulation of coal severance tax revenue being distributed to the schools, while the principal grows constituting something to show for the exhausted coal reserves."²

He recommended a similar tax for the timber industry, where timber stands would be exempted from all but a token property taxation, but a severance tax would be imposed upon logs as they went into the saw mills. That plan would have made federally owned timber liable to a tax as soon as the buyer started manufacturing the lumber. Romney recommended

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Sifting Through the Ashes," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 8, 1972, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "More Post-Election Analysis," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 15, 1972, p. 2.

that revenue accrued from such a tax be placed in a sacrosanct fund with income from the principal distributed among the schools.¹

Early in the new legislative term, after Governor Judge had reaffirmed his commitment to improving the state's revenue from its natural resources, Romney expressed cautious optimism that the Legislature would establish a sizable severance tax on coal. He suggested that if the Legislature should fail to carry through, a People's Power League could be formed to initiate the severance tax under provisions of the 1972 constitution.² Romney's father helped found the original People's Power League in 1911. Its purpose was to secure "beneficial legislation through the initiative and referendum."³

The coal tax did not materialize during those coming months and a People's Power League was eventually formed, but for a different purpose. During debate about probate matters in the Constitutional Convention, Romney had said that many people had come to his newspaper office complaining about having to go through probate to settle

¹Ibid.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Montana Should Get Its Fair Share," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 31, 1973, p. 2.

³Malone and Roeder, Two Centuries, p. 201.

simple estates.¹

The Ravalli County chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons decided to organize a reform drive gained support from many statewide organizations and private citizens. The group formed a steering committee, elected Romney chairman, and held regular meetings in Helena for many months. Finally, HB461 was introduced during the 1973 legislative session. It provided that joint tenancy estates involving only a decedent and spouse would not have to be probated in court. Instead they could be settled by transfer of property to the surviving spouse, after state and federal inheritance taxes had been certified as having been paid. The bill received unanimous approval in the House, but hopes for final passage in the Senate died when the Judiciary Committee there voted to hold it over to the newly authorized annual session in 1974.²

Soon after the legislative session ended, the bill's supporters decided to organize a loose federation to promote enactment of the law. The new People's Power League was formed, with Romney as chairman. The groups represented in the League were: Montana State Grange, Montana Farm Union, Montana Farm Bureau, Montana AFL-CIO, Montana Federation of

¹Montana, Constitutional Convention, vol. 4, p. 1134.

²"History of Effort to Improve Joint Tenancy Procedure Covers 40 Months," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 7, 1975, p. 3.

Women's Clubs, American Legion, Veterans of World War I, Montana Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Aging Service Bureau, American Association of Retired Persons, National Retired Teachers Association, local senior citizens' centers, and the Golden Age Senior Citizens' Group.¹

Besides promoting the existing bill, League members decided on a back-up plan in case the Legislature failed to pass the measure. They would prepare another bill, place it on initiative petitions and circulate them throughout the state so the bill could be placed on the 1974 general election ballot as a referendum measure.²

Ravalli County politics got a major shakeup in June 1973, when Senator W. A. (Bill) Groff, a Democrat, and Representative Norris Nichols, a Republican, both long-time legislators, resigned to accept posts in the Montana Department of Revenue. The county commissioners appointed Romney to succeed Groff, and C. Thornton Mann, a Victor rancher and Republican, to replace Nichols.³

¹"Seek Settlement of Joint Tenancy Estates Without Court Action," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 23, 1973, pp. 1 and 7.

²Ibid.

³"Romney and Mann Named to Ravalli Senate and House Legislature Seats," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 20, 1973, p. 1.

When the 1974 Legislature convened the next January, Romney once again left the Western News in the capable hands of his printer-foreman Gilbert Jelinek. Jelinek remembers how hard it was for Romney to leave:

It's said a woman is always late getting out of the house. In that regard he was the worst old woman. They'd be packed (Miles and Ruth) and ready to go and he always had to stop down at the shop and see that it was still standing. We'd talk and then he'd say, "Well, so long. I'll see you," or "I'll call you." I'd go back to work, and here he is back. "I forgot to say this....."

They'd finally get off, but they'd invariably be late getting over there (to Helena). No doubt it was the same way getting back to Hamilton.¹

One of the hottest issues in the 1974 Legislature turned out to be whether to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Romney favored the action, and the Montana House voted strongly to ratify, but the Senate hedged by voting for an advisory referendum. "At present the outlook for ERA in Montana is bleak indeed," Romney wrote. "The Senate vote appears to make Montana women less equal than many of them had hoped."² A couple of weeks later, the Senate finally voted to ratify, and Montana became the 31st state to do so.³

¹Jelinek interview.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports on Early Senate Activities," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 16, 1974, p. 4.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 30, 1974, p. 3.

Romney was encouraged when the Legislature resumed consideration of probate matters, but the body chose to set aside HB461 dealing with joint tenancy estates and give their full attention to a Uniform Probate Code. The Code included no mention of joint tenancy estates with right of survivorship until an amendment was added, and the Code was then adopted. Romney and members of the People's Power League were not entirely happy with the amendment, because it did not include all of the provisions of the original bill, but supported adoption of the code as a means of at least partly reaching their goal.¹

Another important accomplishment of the legislative session was the setting in motion of local government review commissions. Such commissions were mandated by the 1972 constitution and provided a vehicle for citizens to study their form of local government and decide whether to change it. Romney was active in developing the legislation, and saw its importance this way: "This could be the most important matter to face Montanans and have far-reaching results, if the people will it, or they could let it go to waste."²

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 20, 1974, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 27, 1974, p. 2.

Although Romney was playing an important part in the business of the Montana Senate and was instrumental in the passage of a number of significant measures, it appears he was not as happy as he had been in the House or at the Constitutional Convention. Ruth Romney said she frequently sat in the Senate gallery and could see how much it differed from the House. The House was quite informal, she said, whereas the Senate appeared to be run by a clique in a more cut-and-dried manner. Ruth Romney said she noticed one time during a break that groups of senators gathered together to talk, but that her husband was left alone at his desk. "I had tears in my eyes," she said. "I didn't like the way they were treating Miles. So I screwed up my courage and asked him, 'Miles, are you happy over here?' He thought a minute, and said, 'Reasonably so.'"¹

A hint of that isolation appears in an April 1974 editorial Romney wrote describing a move that was under way to do away with annual legislative sessions. He said some legislators were active in their opposition to the sessions:

It can be suspected that the motivation of legislators organizing such a campaign is chiefly among senators who subconsciously have their noses out of joint because the new constitution forced them to run for re-election. Some folks have been so unkind as to suggest that some of these senators are upset because annual sessions interfere with their winter sojourns in

¹Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

Arizona, Florida or California.¹

In early June, Romney turned his attention to President Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal. He believed Nixon should not resign, but go through the impeachment process so there would be a clear decision on whether he was guilty:

The fundamental problem facing America is to solve the Watergate riddle, without fear or favor, before we go on any search for the Holy Grail. Trust in our government must be restored before we try to accomplish anything else.²

Despite his apparent disappointment in his experience in the Senate, Romney filed for election to the office, won the Democratic primary and looked ahead to campaigning for a new term. About this time, he was plagued with diverticulitis and other problems. Eventually doctors ordered exploratory surgery and diagnosed the problem as cancer of the colon. Romney struggled with a decision about the future, but decided to go ahead with the campaign. There was never any question in his own mind that he was going to be completely open about his condition. "I believe the true test of honesty is in using it even when the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "You Can Cure the Ailment If You Will Take the Medicine," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 24, 1974, p. 2.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Resignation Is Not the Answer," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 5, 1974, p. 2.

occasion does not favor one's self," he wrote.¹

Romney barely skipped a beat in his work schedule, and was soon back at the office, even though he had a weekly regimen of chemotherapy.

Steve Mills, a retired California firefighter who moved to Hamilton in 1971 to ranch, was Romney's opponent in the general election. Much of his campaign centered on the theme of limiting the size, power and cost of government, because "as the government continues to expand, the rights and freedoms of the citizens continue to decrease."² His message attracted the strong conservative element in the community.

As an affirmation of support for Romney's place of leadership in the county, however, he was returned to the Senate in the November 1974 election. Montana voters also approved three constitutional amendments: The first establishing a resource indemnity trust fund to be built by taxes imposed on the extraction of natural resources, with the principal to remain inviolate (Romney supported it); the second providing that governmental divisions would have no immunity from suit except as specifically provided by a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature (Romney

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Death Has Put His Finger Upon Me," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 19, 1974, p. 2. See appendix 1.

²"Steve Mills," Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, October 28, 1974, p. 11-A.

opposed); and the third providing for a return to biennial legislative sessions (Romney opposed). Ravalli County voters went against the state trend by turning down the third amendment by a small margin.¹ Certainly Romney's efforts to defeat it were a significant influence.

The new legislative session got under way in early January with Romney assigned a heavy load as chairman of the Senate Committee on Committees and also of the Local Government Committee. In addition, he was made a member of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee.² In late January he reported on a trip by legislators to the state hospital at Warm Springs, where the group was kept standing and walking, without food, from about 9:30 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. "I was tired," the 74-year-old senator wrote afterward.³

In a February 23, 1975, interview published in the Missoulian, Romney said that he continued to receive weekly chemotherapy treatments for his cancer but had not been in any pain. "I am able to work from eight in the morning to 10 at night," he said. "Whatever my assets are, they

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Good Citizens Will Vote," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 30, 1974, p. 2; and Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 270-276.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 15, 1975, p. 3.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 22, 1975, p. 5.

haven't been impaired."¹ Missoulian State Bureau reporter Charles Johnson made this observation about Romney's influence in the Senate:

Romney has played a unique role in the intraparty politics of the Senate Democrats by serving as a link between the veteran, and often conservative, senators and the liberal young turks elected last fall.

It had appeared earlier that the Democrats, who control the Senate, might split over committee assignments and chairmanships. But the Democrats' Committee on Committees, with Romney playing a key role as conciliator between the two factions, divided the spoils in a way that satisfied both sides.²

Romney's action on several bills during the 1975 legislative session indicate how fiscally conservative he was. He introduced a bill that would have required all state government employees to make detailed reports of their travel plans to an independent agency. He believed the public's interest in such reports would lead to a significant reduction in unnecessary trips and save the state a million dollars a year. The bill was killed in the House Judiciary Committee.³ Romney was one of the few legislators to refuse to go along with a bill to appropriate \$1 million to Republican Attorney General Robert Woodahl to investigate a Workmen's Compensation Division scandal. "I

¹Charles S. Johnson, "Miles Romney Plays It Straight," Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, February 23, 1975, p. 15.

²Ibid.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 19, 1975, p. 2, and March 26, 1975, p. 2.

think it's wrong to be hijacked that way,'" he said of Woodahl's request, labeling it 'extravagance personified,'"¹ He also voted against salary increases for state elective officers, county officers and others, stating that with 20,000 Montanans unemployed it was not the right time.²

In early April, Romney and the People's Power League celebrated when the reworked joint tenancy bill that Romney had introduced into the Senate was finally approved by the joint body and signed by Governor Judge. The group had had to fight against repeated efforts to cripple the bill by amendment both in the House and Senate. The gestation period for the final bill was 40 months.³

In the last days of the legislative session Romney was also able to win approval for a bill that protected the coal severance taxes from indiscriminate use. Romney's belief in the importance of imposing a significant resource severance tax probably dated back to 1924 when Republican Governor Joseph Dixon defied the Anaconda Company and sacrificed his career by preparing Initiative 28 for the 1924 election. The initiative called for levying a graduated tax of up to 1 percent of gross production upon any mine that produced over

¹Johnson, "Romney Plays Straight."

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 2, 1975, p. 4.

³"Here's Joint Tenancy Law, It's History, How to Use It," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 7, 1975, pp. 3 and 6.

\$100,000 gross per year. He lost his bid for re-election, but the initiative was approved.¹ Gilbert Jelinek says Romney kept a copy of Dixon's bill, because he thought so highly of him for taking a stand against the Anaconda Company.²

The matter had been on Romney's mind again in 1941 when he criticized the 27th Montana Legislative Assembly for failing to provide assistance for the aged. He said Montana citizens were benefiting very little from the huge earnings the Anaconda Company was realizing from the state's natural resources. ". . . We ought to protect the future of our state by demanding an adequate severance tax on the corporate earnings that vanish outside and are gone forever," he wrote.³

During the 1967 Legislature a tax of five cents per ton was levied on coal with half of it dedicated to reclamation. "The law was toothless," Romney wrote, "not from age, but from design of those being regulated."⁴ In 1969 Romney introduced a bill that would raise the severance tax to an

¹Malone and Roeder, Two Centuries, pp. 219-222.

²Jelinek interview.

³Miles Romney Jr., "Where Pension Funds Can Be Raised," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 27, 1941, p. 4.

⁴Miles Romney Jr., "Suggestions For a Better Use of Montana's Coal Natural Resource," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 24, 1970, p. 2.

unheard of 50 cents a ton. He asked Pat Williams, later a member of the U.S. House but then a young representative, to speak for it. "They were clobbered," Ruth Romney said later.¹ But Romney did not give up, and in the ensuing years continued to write editorials in support of the tax, and formation of an inviolate fund to protect it.

By 1975 enough people were convinced of the value of such a tax that the Legislature approved a bill setting it at three times the 50-cent level for which Romney had campaigned. The bulk of the funds were to be disposed of in various set ways, with just a fraction going into a fund for some future use. Romney was disturbed about that section of the bill. "I feared some Legislature might piddle away this heritage improperly, leaving nothing to show for the non-renewable wealth removed from the earth," he said.²

So in the final days of the 44th Assembly I moved to suspend the rules for introduction of a late bill, which provided for holding a constitutional election upon the proposition of placing the principal of the coal taxes into an inviolate fund to be used for school and university purposes. It was my plan that if this could be realized that the money now appropriated for those purposes from the general fund could be used for other public purposes³

Some amendments had to be made to gain general acceptance, but in the final form the bill provided that the

¹Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

²Miles Romney Jr., "Romney Reports," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 23, 1975, p. 2.

³Ibid.

Legislature could use the interest from the fund for any purpose, but that the principal of the trust fund could not be used at all except by agreement of three-fourths of the members of each house of the Legislature. The bill also provided that not less than 25 per cent of the coal severance taxes would go into the trust fund until December 31, 1979, and after that date, 50 percent.¹ Romney expressed his feelings about the bill this way:

So I believe this Legislature accomplished something for posterity with respect salvage of severance coal taxes for days in the future when the coal may have been all mined. How much better would it have been had there been similar salvage of funds from natural resources such as mining and timber and the funds put into work for the people before the mineral and timber wealth had been dissipated?²

Romney did not live to see the final approval of his measure in the 1976 general election. At that time, 63.4% of the voters said yes to the measure. In Ravalli County the approval rate was 68.73%.³

On August 4, 1975, the Legislature met in special session to take care of a technical matter involving the 6-mill university system levy. Romney's trip to Helena for the meeting turned out to be one of his last. John Austin, a Hamilton neighbor and a leader in the People's Power League, drove Miles and Ruth to Helena in the Romney car

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Waldron and Wilson, Atlas, pp. 278 and 284.

because Romney did not feel up to driving himself. At Romney's request, they headed east from Hamilton by way of the rugged and winding Skalkaho Pass road to Anaconda. There they stopped at the old Marcus Daly Hotel and looked at the picture of Daly's horse on the floor of the beautiful Victorian bar. Romney had a story to tell about it, Austin remembers. Then "we took the cut-across just out of Garrison to Highway 12," and Romney talked about a bridge reconstruction project the Legislature had funded over in the Big Hole which he thought was unnecessary. "He found so much of interest" on the trip, Austin said.¹

That fall, a series of public hearings was being conducted by various local government study commissions. Romney reported on one in Corvallis, where he found a vocal ultra-conservative faction with nothing good to say about the constitution or the study commissions. He was dismayed by the enthusiastic applause one speaker received when he declared the document was "the lousiest, dirtiest thing that ever hit the state."² Some suggested religious reasons for their objection to the constitution. A number stressed the importance of having the greatest amount of individual freedom and least amount of government; yet, according to

¹Interview with John Austin, Austin home, Hamilton, Montana, June 14, 1989.

²Miles Romney Jr., "A Search For the Grail Continues," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 1, 1975, p. 2.

Romney, the 1972 constitution extended freedom greatly.

This is part of what his editorial said:

Now what is wrong with a study of local government, which, to become effective, must be adopted by a vote of the people? Should we not forever be endeavoring to improve our local government? If the majority of the people of Ravalli County consider and vote for turning over their local county government to town meetings, to a committee of three, five or fifty, or even an unknown man in a big Cadillac with a Utah license, it should be proper. Let the majority rule. If they make a mistake they can do the job over and remedy it. . . .

There are some literary tracts which tell us of the search for the Holy Grail by three of the Knights of King Arthur's Round Table. Only the purest of the Knights could hope to find the goblet, and troubles followed even their searches. People of the world, our country, Montana and of the Bitter Root, have long been searching for the governmental Grail which will best serve mankind. It is elusive and may never be found. But the objective is certainly worth the effort and we should all, regardless of our political affiliations, our religious faiths, our possible dislike as persons for one another, combine to bring about the best government possible. That is why these studies are good. We do not have to accept their recommendations but those recommendations should be meaningful, receive mature consideration, and be accepted or rejected on their merits, not upon some baseless slander, hearsay, lack of study and understanding.¹

In Romney's final months, he tired more easily but continued to work full days. "He didn't spare himself," Ruth Romney remembers. "I was always trying to pull him away from his office to get more rest." He never lost a day of work, never had to take a pain pill, and never lost his hair or appetite from the chemotherapy.² On December 6, he

¹Ibid.

²Romney interviews, June 10, 1989, and April 8, 1985.

celebrated his 75th birthday.

Jelinek remembers that Romney continued to come down to the shop to work after supper each night, but that he did not accomplish quite as much. "It didn't alter his outlook on life, that I could see," Jelinek said, "and it certainly didn't change his gregarious nature."¹ The paper went to press Tuesday nights then, and Romney continued to supply hamburgers for the crew that worked late. Jelinek remembers a common occurrence:

Every now and then someone would come in and see Miles chomping on a hamburger with onions in it and catsup and the rest of it and holding a bottle of beer, and say, "Are you supposed to be eating that kind of junk?" And Miles would say, "Hell, they know I'm not going to be around here very long."²

Ruth Romney says she and her husband never discussed his illness or what would be done with the paper after his death. "We both pretended life was going to go on and on." The closest they came to discussing it, Ruth Romney remembers, was one night when it had become more of a struggle for Miles to keep going. Ruth described the scene this way: "We were sitting at the dining table. So I reached over and took his hand, and I said, 'Miles, don't you think it's about time that you should give up the paper?' And he said, 'I'm not ready yet.' "That was the only thing that was ever said," Ruth Romney said years

¹Jelinek interview.

²Ibid.

later. "And I'm glad he didn't (give up the paper). He did what he wanted to do. He died on his feet. Isn't that wonderful!"¹

Ruth has another poignant memory of the last days when her husband was visibly failing. Miles had told Ruth one night that he had a lot of things to do the next day. So in the morning she went to his bedroom and woke him instead of letting him sleep. "Oh, come here and lie down with me for awhile, Ruth," he said. "But Miles, you were supposed to get up," she replied, and so he did. Years later it still brings tears to Ruth Romney's eyes to remember that she did not spend those few minutes with her husband.²

On Wednesday morning, February 18, 1976, the Romneys' 51st wedding anniversary, Romney got up and dressed for work as usual. Ruth Romney remembers that he looked especially bad, but that he was determined to continue. "Well, he's going to try to go to the office," Ruth thought. "So be it." She watched him from the window as he struggled to get into the car, his breathing labored, but "I didn't dare to interfere," she said. He finally drove off down the street. A short time later Ruth received a phone call from Sallie Brutto, who was helping Romney at the paper, saying he had

¹Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

²Ibid.

been taken to the hospital.¹

Ruth rushed to be with her husband. He was weak but alert, and also thinking about their anniversary. "Well, Ruth," he said, "we'll take a raincheck." "Sure we will," she replied.²

On Thursday Romney rallied enough to have visitors. One was Jim Sculley, a long-time city resident, who had asked Romney's advice on a certain matter. "Well, Miles," Sculley said as he was leaving, "I sure thank you for your help, and when you come back to the office we'll talk about it again." "I will not be there," was Romney's reply.³

The Western News that Wednesday included as usual a quotation in the ear on the front page. Rather prophetically Romney had chosen to repeat a quotation from Socrates that had run the week before. This is what it said: "So, my judges, face death with a good hope, and know for certain that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death."⁴

At 3:30 p.m., Thursday, shortly after a visit from his

¹Romney interviews, April 8, 1985, and June 10, 1989.

²Ibid.

³Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

⁴Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 11 and 18, 1976, p. 1.

good friend G. M. Brandborg, Romney died of congestive heart failure.¹

¹Romney interview, June 10, 1989, and "Western News Editor-Publisher Claimed By Death At Age 75 Years," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 25, 1976, p. 1.

CHAPTER 12

A FAREWELL AND A PERSPECTIVE

"When Miles passed on, I didn't want a funeral service or anything, because I'm a great escapist," Ruth Romney said years later. But John Driscoll, majority leader for the Montana House and friend of the family, encouraged her to change her mind. She finally did, but told Driscoll, "I can't have anything to do with it." He offered to make the arrangements and she agreed, but with the stipulation that it not be a religious service since Romney was not a member of a church.¹

The family held a private funeral at a mortuary the day after Romney died, and a general memorial service at the Hamilton Elks Lodge a week later.² Tributes were given by W. A. (Bill) Groff, deputy director of the Montana Department of Revenue and former Ravalli County state senator, former state representative Pat Williams, and the Rev. Monroe Wilcox, a retired Methodist minister. Clarence

¹Romney interview, April 8, 1985.

²"Memorial Service Will Be Held at Elks Temple on Friday, Feb. 27," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 25, 1976, p. 1.

Popham, a cousin, responded for the family.¹

Groff called Romney "the most honest man I have ever known." He fought for his position on political matters "but carried no malice," Groff said, and his influence in the state "was felt far more than any of us can realize."² According to Groff, as chairman of the County Democratic Central Committee Romney deserved much of the credit for the composition of the state party. He attended many local and state meetings at great personal sacrifice to make his opinions known; he wrote ads and gave advice to young candidates; and wrote or helped write all the preambles for the state Democratic platform for the previous 30 years. He called passage of the Joint Tenancy bill Romney's greatest accomplishment in government. "This law will save more money for more people than any other act passed during my 20 years in office," Groff said.³

Williams said Romney referred to himself as a printer, but was also a historian with "full respect for accuracy." It was not uncommon for the Montana House or Senate to be collapsed in laughter because of Romney's wit, he said. During a debate on whether to give 18-year-olds the right to

¹"Memorial Services for Sen. Romney Held Feb. 27," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 3, 1976, p. 1.

²Ibid.

³"300 Hear Miles Romney's Work, Character Described," Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, February 28, 1976, p. 7.

hold office, Romney said, "We have granted 18-year-olds the right to marry and any fool knows it's more difficult to be married than it is to be Mayor."¹

Romney was not a politician, Wilcox said, but "a statesman of the first order;" not just a jobholder, but an "enthusiast." He exemplified "the marriage of knowledge and character in a person."²

Much of Popham's tribute dealt with descriptions of a young Miles Romney. He said Romney had never been a follower. "He was a good student when he wanted to be, but if he decided it was more important to be on the mill pond with his boat and dog, that's where he would be." He gave another example of Romney's individuality: when it was the fad for boys to roll their own cigarettes, Romney decided to chew tobacco.³

When Romney died, a memorial fund was established, to provide scholarships for high school students going into journalism.⁴ The Western News continued publication all through the weeks that followed. Sallie Brutto took over the editing duties and Popham handled the business end.

¹Pat Williams, "Eulogy for Miles Romney," Hamilton, Montana, Elks Lodge, February 27, 1976. (Mimeographed.) See appendix 2.

²"300 Hear," Missoula (Montana) Missoulian.

³Ibid.

⁴Fourth Estate, August 1978, p. 5.

Much of the paper was devoted to printing the tributes that came in from many influential quarters, such as: U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield; Governor Tom Judge; U.S. Senator Lee Metcalf; and Representative Driscoll. Missoulian editorial writer Sam Reynolds also wrote a thoughtful piece for that paper.¹

At Romney's death, the Ravalli County Commissioners, two Republicans and one Democrat, became responsible for appointing his successor in the Senate. Attorney General Robert L. Woodahl ruled that the successor would serve out Romney's term through 1978. The appointment went to Russell J. Bergren, a Darby businessmen and one of four men recommended by the Democratic Central Committee. The other Democratic nominees were: Dr. K. Ross Toole, University of Montana history professor, author, and former director of the Montana Historical Society; Dr. Roy White, University of Montana education professor; and Clarence Robinson, a Hamilton insurance man. The commissioners had also considered two men recommended by the Republican Central Committee: Thornton Mann, former state representative from Victor; and Elmer Severson, a Stevensville rancher. Several other individuals also expressed an interest in the job.²

¹See appendix 2 for complete texts of these tributes.

²"Darby Man Named to Fill Term of Miles Romney as State Senator," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 17, 1976, p. 1.

The future of the Western News itself then became the major problem to be solved by the Romney family. A young businessman, a young journalist, two retired journalists, and even Toole, all expressed an interest in buying or leasing the paper.¹ Ruth Romney finally decided to sell to the Southwest Montana Publishing Co., an affiliate of Scripps League newspapers and owner of the Ravalli Republic in Hamilton and the Northwest Tribune in Stevensville.²

In an article in the Western News announcing the sale, Clarence Popham said this:

The Western News has been sold. For the first time in over 82 years, The Western News of Hamilton, Mont. will not carry the name of the Romney family as owner or editor.

It would have been nice if there had been someone in the family that could take over but as long as there was no one who could, it became necessary to sell the paper.

As it became apparent that it was necessary to sell, a feeling developed that it should not be sold to the competition. This opinion was voiced time and again. Ruth had the same feeling and expressed the wish that if there was a possibility of selling it to someone that was known as a friend of Miles or The Western News they should be given a chance. Anyone that expressed any interest was encouraged to investigate. Each one was asked to make an offer. We let them know that if they could make a comparable offer we would consider it.³

¹Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

²"Western News Sold to Scripps Affiliate," Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, April 11, 1976, p. 38.

³"Western News Changes Hands After 82 Years," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 31, 1976, p. 1.

Popham went on to say that the most important consideration in the sale was assuring Ruth Romney's comfort.

Years later, Ruth Romney said it had been tough deciding on the right buyer for the paper. Some of those who wanted to buy were not capable of doing the work, she said, and some were not able to make a good financial offer. Finally it was apparent to Romney that if she were going to have an income to continue living, the sale to Southwest Publishing was necessary. "I didn't like Scripps taking over," she said, "but I had to be practical." She was also philosophical about the decision. "The Western News died when Miles died," she said. No matter who got it afterwards, "it would not be the Western News."¹

With the change in ownership, John Barrows, general manager of Southwest Montana Publishing, became publisher and editor of the Western News, replacing Sallie Brutto. All other employees were kept on.² Barrows, as the new editor, made an effort to keep some of the old Western News features. The June 9, 1976, issue, for instance, featured a full page spread of pictures of Jan Strate growing up. The newest addition to the collection was a picture of Strate with her husband and three children. Romney had run the

¹Romney interviews, January 24, 1985, and May 10, 1990.

²"WN Sold," Missoulian.

series from 1946 to 1965.¹

In that same month, delegates of the Constitutional Convention held their annual reunion meeting. George W. Rollins, a faculty member at Eastern Montana College, gave this tribute to Romney:

The real worth of a man must be measured also in terms of what he was, as well as what he did. Miles Romney was a man of ability, character, and integrity. None of his associates could ever question his courage and wisdom. Which one of us will ever be able to forget his compassion, his respect for the opinion of others, or his love for his fellowmen?²

Later that summer, the Western News' 100-year-old C. B. Cottrell 2 revolution flatbed handfed press became the center of media attention when it was retired. From then on, the owners printed the paper on an offset press at the Ravalli Republic. The three-ton Cottrell press was manufactured sometime between 1870 and 1880 and was installed at the Western News in 1911. For some years it was run by human foot power, and then by motor. In its prime the Cottrell press could print up to 1,200 papers per hour on one side. By the time of its retirement, it had printed nearly 4,000 issues of the paper and had more than 8,500,000 sheets of paper run through it. In the earliest days, type was hand set, but in 1910 the Western News

¹Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 9, 1976, p. 3.

²George W. Rollins, "A Tribute to Miles Romney," speech at Montana Constitutional Convention Reunion, Kalispell, Montana, June 26, 1976. (Mimeographed.)

brought the first Linotype machine into Ravalli County.¹

Southwest Montana Publishing donated the old Western News press, Linotype machine and other equipment to the Bitter Root Valley Historical Society. Members of the society had hoped to reconstruct an actual working print shop with the donated equipment, but could not find a suitable spot. All pieces continue to be stored in a building at the tepee burner museum site on the Ravalli County Fairgrounds in Hamilton.²

The final dissolution of the Western News came in 1977 when Southwest announced that the paper would be merged with the Ravalli Republic. The front page headline in the last issue, February 24, said "1887-1977--A Publishing Era Has Ended." The quotation in the ear that day was from Heywood Broun. It said:

A newspaper is a rule unto itself. It has a soul for salvation or damnation. The intangibles of a newspaper are the men and women who make it. A newspaper can neither rise above or fall below its staff.³

The Western News lives on now as bound volumes in the archives of the Ravalli County Museum and on microfilm at the Montana Historical Society Library in Helena.

¹"An Old Friend Laid to Rest," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 18, 1976, p. 2, and "WN Changes Hands," Western News.

²Whitlock interview, July 24, 1989.

³"1887-1977--A Publishing Era Has Ended," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 24, 1977, p. 1.

That same year, 1977, the Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association dedicated its 50th anniversary celebration to Romney. The group had already honored him with a lifetime membership the year before his death. The program book for the anniversary was covered with pictures of Romney in various outdoor pursuits--measuring snow depth, at a fire lookout, at a mountain lake, and holding a brace of ducks.

During the summer of 1982, Romney received a very special honor from his peers; he was elected to the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame at a convention of the Montana Press Association. Warren Brier, then dean of the University of Montana School of Journalism, made the nomination. In a news release announcing the election, Brier said that Romney had been called "Ravalli County's most respected resident," and described as "honest, tough, humorous, gentle, eloquent, intelligent, artless and brave." The Western News, Brier said, was "invincibly independent." Romney and his father became the first father-son duo to be elected to the Hall of Fame.¹

One measure of a newspaper's influence is its circulation. In that respect the Western News could not compete with many publications, but it did grow under

¹Warren Brier, "University of Montana Media Release," July 7, 1982, School of Journalism files, Romney Papers. (Mimeographed.)

Romney's direction. In 1945, after Romney had been running the paper on his own for eight years, the circulation was 1,955. In 1969 it was 2,200, and remained about that until the end. In comparison, the WN's closest competitor, the Ravalli Republic, published five days a week and had a circulation of 4,500 at the time of Romney's death.¹

Ruth Romney has no doubts about her husband's influence or legacy. "He lives on," she says. "I hear it all the time. It's amazing that he made the imprint that he did."²

He lives on at the University of Montana where his Hall of Fame portrait is hanging in a hallway at the School of Journalism; and where a retired faculty member, Edward Dugan, remembers him as a "highly principled man."³ Nathaniel Blumberg, former dean of the School of Journalism, remembers Romney as a man of firm convictions who worked hard but fairly. "He was occasionally outraged by injustice, falsehood and sugar-coating," Blumberg said, and "exemplified the best traditions of journalism." I. F. Stone of Washington, D.C., whom Blumberg described as the epitome of the investigative journalist, once said he liked

¹Circulation information about the Western News was obtained from the March 15, 1945, and July 9, 1969, issues of the paper (both in Page 2 editorials), and from family member Clarence Popham. Information about the Ravalli Republic was obtained from its circulation department.

²Romney interview, January 24, 1985.

³Phone interview with Edward B. Dugan, April 5, 1985.

a newspaperman with fire in his belly. "By God, I think Miles Romney fit that," Blumberg said. "He cared a lot more about the quality of his paper than the bottom line." Blumberg also described Romney as "a splendid legislator and one of the most thoroughly open and honest persons I've known." Blumberg said he was uncertain about the overall influence of the Western News beyond the local area, but that it was not a crucial question to answer in evaluating Romney.¹

Certainly not all memories of Romney are as glowing. Most Montana Power Company representatives who were on the receiving end of Romney's attacks remember a different side of him. Joseph A. McElwain, former president and chairman of the board, said, "I thought he was a person who enjoyed creating controversy and espousing socialistic principles."² Colin W. Raff, a retired senior vice president, said he was quite familiar with the Western News because of Romney's views, which Raff said Romney expressed "repeatedly and repetitiously." "Other than that, I regarded the Western News as a local weekly with limited circulation," and Romney, not as a newsman, but rather as "a politician and pamphleteer."³

¹Blumberg interview.

²McElwain letter.

³Raff letter.

Another long-time MPC employee, David Hope, who lived in Hamilton and worked as a service man and engineer, didn't have much patience with Romney's attacks on the company, but remembers positive contributions he made too. "He hardly ever let a week go by that he didn't have an editorial or article that was critical of either the Montana Power Company or the ACM Company," Hope said. "He had a vendetta against the two companies for some reason. I don't know just for sure why except that I think it helped his circulation," he said. On the other hand, Hope remembers Romney as "always sort of for the underdog, and promoting the ordinary person."¹

Romney lives on in the memories of many of those who served in government with him. Former Governor Tom Judge says Romney's work in the Constitutional Convention and in helping pass much of the related legislation afterwards is an important legacy. "In a period of a few years, Montana made an enormous amount of change from corporate domination of politics to where you have a very open government where people's wishes had a right to be heard . . . ," he said.²

Pat Williams, serving in the U.S. House of Representatives at the time of his interview, said Romney's influence "reached beyond the lovely Bitterroot." More than

¹Phone interview with David Hope, July 27, 1989.

²Judge interview.

once, corporations in Montana "would huddle about Miles' latest editorial at their expense." Williams said while Romney was in the Legislature, he acted as mentor for Williams and many other young legislators and was an important influence in their lives. He also influenced Montana political thinkers, politicians, campaign workers and legislative watchers "who would flow in and out of that little office." Miles would sit and visit with a person, talking, cajoling and carefully trying to persuade them with the brand of logic he had, Williams said. "I think his influence went out unnoticed, certainly unwritten. I think he spread a lot of wisdom around Montana that way."¹

Romney greatly influenced John Driscoll, another young legislator. Soon after Romney died, Driscoll found the lead type from the last quotation Romney had chosen for the front page of his paper: "So, my judges, face death with a good hope, and know for certain that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death." Driscoll keeps the type on his desk at the Montana Public Service Commission where he now serves. "I think probably he (Romney) had that in there as an epitaph," Driscoll said. "It might give you an idea of how he looked at himself."²

Leif Erickson, a prominent Democrat and long-time

¹Phone interview with U.S. Representative Pat Williams, July 27, 1989.

²Driscoll interview.

friend of Romney's, was asked in 1983 about the influence of the Romneys and the Western News. "Integrity was the No. 1 thing about them, both father and son," he said. "Miles (Junior) had a terrific amount of ability and he wrote editorials that had some meaning." He went on to say, though, that in his opinion the influence of the Romneys and their paper was pretty much confined to the people who were already converted to the liberal viewpoint. Many became converted in the Depression years, he said.¹

Thomas Haines of Missoula, a Republican who served in the Montana Legislature from 1950 to 1974, does not think Romney's criticisms of Montana Power and the Anaconda Company had merit. "It was overdone," he said years later. "What was good for them (the companies), was good for Montana." Haines minimized Romney's influence on other legislators. "He was kind of a loner," he said. On the other hand, Haines characterized Romney as a good legislator. "He worked hard at it, studied the bills, and knew the rules," he said.²

Newsmen looking back on Romney's life and work also give mixed reviews. Duane W. "Doc" Bowler, former editor of the Billings Gazette and Helena Independent Record, thinks that Romney had limited influence as a newsman during the

¹Erickson interview.

²Phone interview with Thomas Haines, July 24, 1989.

Anaconda Company days except with liberal thinkers. Because of his ideas on taxation, his progressiveness, and the limited circulation of his paper, "he was almost a non-person," Bowler said. On the other hand, Bowler believes Romney was a good influence in the Legislature--a Progressive, "in a good sense."¹

Bob Gilluly, who, as editor of the Ravalli Republic, worked a number of years as Romney's chief news competitor, says the importance of the Western News as an independent paper during the Anaconda Company press period was "rather overblown." There were about 100 independent papers, he said, although the Western News probably stood out among them. Romney's influence was mostly local, although "maybe the editorials got clipped and passed around the Democratic party and used as legislative ammunition," Gilluly said. Historians see those papers as maybe more influential than they really were, he said. Gilluly says that from his viewpoint as Romney's competitor he felt the Western News "went down hill" the last couple of years, particularly when Romney was in the Legislature. "An impartial observer might disagree," Gilluly said. "The University people" admired him so much that they still thought it was a good newspaper, Gilluly said. The problem was that they didn't read the paper every week, but instead saw the strong editorials that

¹Phone interview with Duane W. "Doc" Bowler, June 11, 1989.

would find their way into Missoula or be reprinted in the People's Voice. Gilluly also believes that as Romney began to develop a statewide reputation as a good legislator, his reputation as a newspaper publisher improved, even among people who did not read his paper regularly.¹

William D. "Scotty" James was a respected Montana journalist during the Anaconda Company press era and later, and served as editor of the Great Falls Tribune. He considers Romney's influence as a newsman and legislator broad and important. This is what he said:

I did not know Romney personally but had a high regard for him as a newsman and a legislator. I thought he had courage, integrity and ability. He was not afraid to speak his mind and was not reluctant to buck the special interests when he thought someone should speak for the public.

His circulation was small but his influence was much greater and I think he had an impact on Montana greater than many thought. I considered him a reformer as well as a courageous journalist. Montana certainly needed men of his caliber.²

Just three weeks before he died, Romney wrote an editorial under the head, "Much of Great Value Buried in Obscure Past." In it he described a beautiful wooden table his wife had given him. The table was hand made by John Peterson, a local craftsman, especially to hold Romney's dictionary. Romney said it was too bad Peterson's name was

¹Gilluly interview.

²William D. "Scotty" James to Christine Johnson, letter, July 19, 1989.

not imprinted on the table because it would probably be forgotten before the table wore out. "Time has a nasty habit of turning all of us into ashes, unrecognizable by succeeding generations," he said. But he added this idea, which may be the best expression of his legacy: ". . . Mankind, each and all of us, is transient upon this earth and no matter how important seem our efforts to us, they leave little for future generations to either admire or deprecate...except in the field of ideas."¹

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Much of Great Value Buried In Obscure Past," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 28, 1976, p. 2. See appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLES OF MILES ROMNEY JR.'S WORK

The following section contains samples of the many kinds of work done by Romney--editorials about power abuse, springtime, and dying; news articles; a eulogy for his father, a president, and another for his dog; the story of a wedding in a bar; and even a political cartoon.

Each was chosen as representative of some idea that was important to Romney. They are arranged in chronological order so that the reader has some sense of how those ideas developed through the years.

"A SUGGESTION"¹

It is seldom that people are given to eulogizing the living. Tradition had whispered to us that the time for praise is after death. To work of well constructed praise the Olympians have tended deathlessness while the inspirer of the work fades to the earth again. Yet we fail to see sufficient reason for not heaping high a mound of esteem because the motiving [sic] power dwells with us still.

Dean A. L. Stone is in charge of instruction in the School of Journalism on the campus of the State University of Montana located at Missoula. A man, handsomely endowed with noble ethics and unbounded sentiment, so seldom to be found in the field of the fourth estate, he stands head and shoulders above all other instructors in the hearts of those who knew him. On the campus of Missoula he is beloved by the student body as no other man and we believe the feelings held by the student body for him have been judiciously placed. Pre-eminent among Montana newspaper folk through no accident he heads the faculty which instructs our nascent journalists in ideals that no man can give askance to.

Some men have earned questionable fame by generous endowment of institutions of higher education. They have handed over millions hoping for educators to raise the standard of the peoples. They have had colleges and schools sponsered [sic] with their names. Rockefeller, Clark and Carnegie are such men.

But we believe there is a higher function in the scope of education than the indiscriminate giving of gold and silver. Palatial edifices erected in the memory of piratical money kings will not serve the purposes of raising the level of knowledge so well as will the implanting of ideals toward life in the mind of our young men and women by thinking instructors. Dean Stone has admirably carried on the work of sowing good and healthy seeds and future generations will attest in the day of harvest that will come of the value of that sewing [sic]. Further Dean Stone is still at the helm, remaining as the guiding force in the Montana School of Journalism.

We can do no other than believe Dean Stone's work is of an infinitely [sic] higher character than that of the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "A Suggestion," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 6, 1922, p. 2.

endowing barrons [sic] of industry who remissfully give back for the purposes of education what they immorally took legally. Authorities and students of the State University of Montana could do no better in payment for the services, past present and future, of this man, than inscribe as imperishable his name in the solid parts of the university. We suggest that it is not only fitting but essential that the Montana School of Journalism be henceforth known as the Stone School of Journalism and in so doing feel that a just debt for service rendered the state may be at least partically [sic] repaid.

"IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR"¹

Some wise fellow once made the happy remark that fleas make dogs their host just to remind the dogs that they are dogs. It is accepted as fact that the scratching canine must have fleas even if it actually is only a case of dandruff. As dogs are afflicted by nature so man is afflicted by works of his own making. If you have gone over your mail recently you may have observed your tax notice.

They say that dogs scratch, even when they have no fleas, just because their canine ancestors [sic] scratched. Men are different, they have not always paid taxes. Taxes are of man's own making.

In the economic life of early man there was no such thing as taxes. Barbarians operated under a highly capitalistic type of society. They took what they wanted--if they could get away with it. Because they had not the educational advantages of modern capitalists they were noticeably more crude than the pillars of American economic institutions of today. The Neanderthal male took his flint-headed spear, or his club, and by force garnered his properties. So was it until feudal times when man gradually became more and more sensitive and polished until today the market manipulator or the commission man burglarizes the public with the victims being hardly aware of the fact. As society became more complex the owners of property saw to the establishment of government to protect their vested rights. As the property was being protected from usurpation by the dispossessed it was only natural that the owners should see to it that most of the burden was placed upon the dispossessed. It costs money to hire guards, sheriffs, police, judges, and clerks so it was raised through taxes. The more government we had the more it cost until today mankind staggers under the weight of taxes. The trouble in this country today is chiefly that the dispossessed are beginning to fret under the burden and the owners are beginning to fear they may have to give up some of the wealth they have inherited, filched, or gained through business, speculation, or what not.

Obviously we cannot go back to the days of barbarism. Things are much too complicated in modern life for that. We are interdependent. Even the billionaire must depend on the farmer, the miner, the woodsman, the herder. Otherwise Mr. John Moneybags would be unable to have his fine mansion, his

¹Miles Romney Jr., "It's That Time of Year," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 4, 1937, p. 2.

warm clothing, his meat, vegetables, and sparkling wine. The newspapers owned by the rich would make us believe that the poor unemployed masses must depend on the rich Mr. Moneybags and his like because it is the rich who give the unemployed classes jobs. It would be rather difficult to make the millions who have existed on a virtual dole in this country for the past few years believe such a fable.

So what are we going to do about it? The run of the mine folks in America are receiving their tax notices and will shortly pay their taxes--if they can. The unemployed millions have no tangible taxes to pay but through indirect taxation they join the small farmer and merchant, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker in piling up taxes to run our government. And the newspapers of the rich shriek to the heavens about how the administration is "soaking the rich"--who get everything they have from the rest of us!

It is a queer world and will probably remain such a world until we get wise enough to run it for service to mankind rather than for profit to a few owners of our machinery, of our natural resources, of our patents, of our engines of propaganda.

So dogs keep on scratching and men keep on paying taxes. But men are generally credited with being possessed of a capacity for more intelligence than dogs. It may eventually come to pass that men will assert themselves and run affairs for the service of everyone.

"THE DUKE'S COMING--SO WHAT?"¹

When short-termed King Edward VIII quit his throne ostensibly to wed an expatriated American divorcee most everyone was thrilled with the action. Outside England the King apparently had the sympathy of the majority of people. This was especially true in our country. It was also a fact that liberty loving folk, the world over, approved of the ex-King's gesture of sympathy toward the unemployed under-privileged people of Wales. Now the ex-King is to come to America with his bride. Here he will be dined and wined by the social elect, he will be treated as an honored representative of a friendly foreign power, he will be closely observed. Many Americans who sympathized with Edward in his matrimonial troubles now have their fingers crossed. His recent trip to Germany where he was used as a sounding board for fascist propaganda has not increased Windsor's prestige in the United States. When he comes to this country and pals about with William Randolph Hearst his popularity is likely to suffer another setback. What a small class of social lizzards [sic] think of the ex-King will not matter in the days to come. What matters with respect Windsor is whether he has the stuff to do something from now on in life rather than be a puppet for people with questionable aims. Will he turn out to be merely another stuffed shirt or will he be a man? And, after all, what can he do with his life? The mere fact that he was born of royal blood and happened to turn out to be a good fellow may make the gaping crowds turn out to look him over. Edward could have accomplished something for the English masses at one time. But he apparently had nothing on the ball but a desire for plenty of income.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "The Duke's Coming--So What?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 4, 1937, p. 2.

"THERE'S IRONY IN THAT THAR HILL"¹

Records of the Anaconda Copper Mining Co. and its subsidiary corporations show a consolidated income for the first nine months of 1937 of \$26,965,164, equal to \$3.11 per share on the 8,674,388 shares of outstanding capital stock. Net income for the same months of 1936 gave a return of \$1.15 a share of \$9,940,132. Beside the consolidated income the company has announced earnings amounting to \$1,569,085, or 18 cents a share, for the first three quarters of 1937. These are neat earnings when one stops to think that the company's newspapers are shouting editorially for government retrenchment in order to avoid imposition of heavy taxes on those who have the ability to pay. This income is especially sizable when one compares it with the income enjoyed by the same companies during late unlamented reign of Herbert Hoover.

Yet the A.C.M. Co. in Montana is curtailing operations. While it curtails operations in Montana mines, smelters, woods, it is interesting to note that the number of potential unemployed will increase and the relief rolls will grow. Yet its newspapers cry for reduction of relief! The only reason the government is forced to raise money and hand it out for relief is because private industry has signally failed to provide jobs to the unemployed. We wonder if the A.C.M. Co. subsidiaries in South America, in Poland, and elsewhere, are curtailing operations? Is the Company producing profits on the one hand, poverty on the other hand, and politicians in between in Chile just as it is in Montana? Are the rich mines and the poor miners of South America being exploited while the low grade mines and unemployed miners of Montana remain unproductive?

It is a tragic joke unappreciated by Montanans that the great piles of wealth--millions of dollars--produced from the "richest hill on earth" at Butte have nearly all been transported out of the state and that a considerable amount of this wealth has been taken abroad, invested in copper mines abroad, and has resulted in the production of rival copper supplies (produced by cheap peon labor) which glut the market and force idleness and the dole upon American miners. When Butte miners fail to work, the smelters at Anaconda and Great Falls stop producing. When the workers in these cities are idle and "broke" it is difficult for the farmers of Montana to sell their products for their best

¹Miles Romney Jr., "There's Irony in That Thar Hill," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 18, 1937, p. 2.

market is lost.

It is rather late now to consider the great mistakes made in turning over the natural resources of our wonderful land to the rapacity of individual avarice. Individual initiative has gutted the finest veins of ore from our hills, it has destroyed our beautiful waterfalls, it has polluted [sic] our waters, it has ravaged our forests, all in order to provide rich profits to a few insiders. And after the damage is done these insiders, or their heirs, cart off the spoils to some other land and compete against our own people!

It is a tribute, not to individualism, but to a bountiful store of natural resources, that the Anaconda continues to pay dividends after so many long years of ruthless exploitation.

"SPEAKING AT THE BANDSTAND"¹

Among the precious provisions of the Bill of Rights, those first ten amendments to the Constitution insisted upon by Jefferson, none is more vital than that guaranteeing freedom of the press. Without it democracy could not survive in America; without it dictatorship "can happen here."

But freedom of the press is not a one-way right. It implies definite obligations on all newspapers worthy of the name. Among them:

- (1) The obligation to publish factual information.
- (2) The obligation not to suppress or distort legitimate news.

Here in Montana where the daily newspapers, almost without exception, are controlled as flagrantly as they are in Germany and Italy, freedom of the press is a shameful mockery. The right to criticize and condemn--a perfectly legitimate right--is freely exercised, while the obligation to inform and enlighten is totally ignored and in its place is exercised a novel and sinister privilege--the right to suppress and distort. Liberty of the press is virtually license of the press--and a license operated, not by the State as in Germany, but by private monopoly.

Here is an interesting illustration. On Sunday, August 7, Senator Wheeler addressed an oldtimers meeting at Kalispell. On the same day at Anaconda, Congressman Jerry O'Connell, fresh from a brilliant victory in the primary election, spoke to a much larger gathering of working men at a similar event. The following morning The Montana Standard, Missoulian and other ACM newspapers blazoned the story of the Wheeler meeting in bold headlines, including the Senator's usual criticism of the Roosevelt administration, while no mention whatsoever was made of the O'Connell speech.

The Standard, describing the athletic events at the Anaconda picnic, said that afterwards "there was speaking at the bandstand!"

No mention of O'Connell's name. The remarks of a U.S. Congressman are not news. He does not exist. The deadline against printing his name in the Company press must be

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Speaking at the Bandstand," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, August 18, 1938, p. 4.

preserved, unless it can be used to his discredit.

With Wheeler, it's different. The former progressive senator, who once said that if the ACM company newspapers ever printed his picture, his friends could be assured that he had sold out, is now the darling of this same daily press. And today he doesn't even wince when his picture appears alongside photographs of the President of the ACM company, the president of the Montana Power company and the company-controlled Governor of the state of Montana.

Montana is unique among the states of the Union. No other state has a daily press so completely controlled by one gigantic corporation. No other state is without a few daily papers which print the legitimate news. In no other state has the ruthless suppression and distortion of news been carried to such extremes.

And when will the Copper-Power Hierarchy discover that, in imposing this stupid policy on its chattel press, it is merely defeating its own purpose? When will it realize that it has not only destroyed the influence of its newspapers but has made them a shining and attractive target?

"THE PRESS IS AGAIN REJECTED"¹

Now that the election is over we wish to direct attention of the public to an important matter. We refer to the attitude of the press in the past election. Of the leading daily newspapers in the nation at least 65 per cent were outright for Willkie while 20 per cent favored Roosevelt. The remainder, professing to be neutral, actually in most instances favored Mr. Willkie.

We have no quarrel with the rights of newspapers to advocate the candidacy of any candidate. But the public should--and apparently does--realize that there is a reason behind the heavy preponderance of newspaper support in this country to certain candidates.

Big newspapers involve the investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars. There are few individuals who can afford to purchase and operate big newspapers. Thus control of the "big-time press" has been concentrated in the hands of the wealthy in our country or in the hands of giant corporations.

The natural result of such concentration of ownership has been the concentration of policy also in the hands of the owners. Working newspapermen on most newspapers in the past election favored Roosevelt but wrote for Willkie's election.

In Montana we are all aware of the concentration of ownership of the major portion of our daily press in the hands of corporate owners who have no stake in our state other than the accumulation of dividends provided by exploitation of our natural resources. If the control through ownership of this press could be broken down it would unquestionably demonstrate that most of the owners have never even stepped within the boundaries of the Treasure state.

Newspapers of this type are not operated for profit. That is only incidental. The chief reason for operating Montana newspapers is that they may influence public opinion so that corporate political control can be maintained in Montana at a profit.

This situation--in state and in nation--is an

¹Miles Romney Jr., "The Press is Again Rejected," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 14, 1940, p. 2.

unmittigated [sic] evil. The press is in disrepute. The source of news vended to our people is poisoned at its source. There exists today a possibility that a free press can be built up in Montana. We certainly need such a press because only a few scattered publications in our state even attempt to maintain independence.

"AMERICA GOES TO WAR UNITED"¹

It is here. War, with all it means, is upon us. It is not that we are surprised. It is more a matter of relief that at last the issue is determined. For many years we have seen the menace of Japanese Imperialism threatening us from the Pacific. Some day we knew we would have to face it, beat it down. The day has come.

Ever since Hitler assumed power in Germany and began his armament race with its consequent steps toward conquest of Europe it has been apparent to many of us that sooner or later we would find ourselves in Hitler's way. Many sincere people hoped against hope that day would never come. They abominated war as do we all. But none of us could escape it because without war, without continual conquest Hitler's regime is doomed. He can only live to rule upon victory which rests upon the ashes, the lies, the treasure of conquered people. So it is not for others to say, it is only for us to accept the issue.

We are not afraid. Perhaps we are a bit too confident. That is not good for an individual nor for a nation. When we get too fat, too rich, too complacent, we are likely to be riding for a fall. But America with its peerless citizenry, its vast resources, its far-seeing leadership, will win this fight. That we are already ready is demonstrated by the fact that the war--when finally it came--found this nation with one mind, one determination, one objective--to win through to complete and absolute victory so this thing will not be visited upon us again. This complete unity shows the world we are going to stand no more international nonsense. Such unity possesses such strength that it should make the enemies of this country tremble. It is a power that does not know its own strength but is sufficient to beat down all opposition--even if we have to do it the hardest way.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "America Goes to War United," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, December 11, 1941, p. 4.

"SUMMING UP AND IN RETROSPECT"¹

It is trite to repeat that Death comes to all men, yet there was never anything more true.

Likewise it seems few are so fortunate as to be prepared nor brave enough to reconcile it when Death strikes those dear.

When Death takes a man, or a woman, it marks the final phase of that individual's story. Then can we check up the credits and the debits. But when Death strikes at a newspaper into which the spirit and ideals of the dead person has been instilled, another question is posed. What of the future of that publication?

Little newspapers, like The Western News, are usually the reflection of the man or men who operate them. Too often good newspapers of this type have continued to function, and often to flourish, after the man who made them has been beckoned by the Grim Reaper. Many the time it would have been better had they gone the way of all flesh instead of having suffered their policies to be diverted from original pathways.

Miles Romney made The Western News. He acquired it 50 years ago when it was much frailer than it is even today. With a passion of justice, as he viewed the economic and social world of that day, Miles Romney built his little paper into a genuine influence in this commonwealth. Fundamental laws resulted from his leadership. Some of them still influence profoundly the life of our state. He was soon up to his neck in the famous political feuds of the Daly-Clark-Heinze era and it is no little tribute to his character that he emerged from those titanic battles as one of the few who had not been irretrievably smeared in those wars.

Because he was true to his ideals and would not deviate from them, even when opposed by insurmountable obstacles, he suffered like few men in Montana have suffered. Because he would not bend the knee his Western News was boycotted by controlling influences and every endeavor was made to run him out of business. Somehow he confounded his adversaries. This writer can hardly comprehend how he accomplished it but he maintained his publication and fought the good fight

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Summing Up and In Retrospect," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 1, 1943, p. 4.

until he was accepted, even by most of his political foes. Though many opposed him always few of them but respected him.

Inevitably Romney's pathway led into the field of politics because you cannot correct social and economic and political evils without taking part. Those folks who disdain politics because it is dirty seem to fail to comprehend that it will never be cleaned up by remaining out of it. Although a candidate for high office on several occasions, in each of which Romney enjoyed the respectable opposition of the powers that be in Montana, he found himself unable to win election.

This writer, like all sons should be, is prejudiced inordinately in behalf of his father; but as I check back over the record of the years that Romney carved for himself, without the benefits of education that many of us have today, in the face of ostracism and boycott, I rather marvel at the portion of success he achieved. In recalling the list of men who have succeeded in a political way in Montana, where he failed, I remain unconvinced. I am inclined to think it was not Romney who failed but rather the people. And I am further convinced that I would much prefer that he had maintained principle and sacrificed success than to have adopted the reverse procedure, as has been the practice of so many of his contemporaries.

He made and spent a lot of money during his lifetime, and he had little at the end. But I discern a record of service which seems to be much more important than the dollar which seems to be the grail sought so earnestly by most people.

With these thoughts in mind, I think we will continue the little 53-year old Western News much along the same lines as in the past. We will strive to further the policies in which Romney pioneered and in our small way help to build a better world. Often we will probably be mistaken, sometimes out of step, but we will be satisfied if we can show any where near as good a score card at the end of the trail as did Dad.

These thoughts are written as I feel I had the best father who ever lived. I think that is something worth while for any man to think. And it will be a better world when we can all think it.

"THE CHIEF IS DEAD BUT HIS WORKS LIVE ON"¹

The shock occasioned by the death of President Roosevelt was stunning. Then, like ever-widening circles that grow in a calm pool the feeling of dire loss spread out to envelope [sic] the world, for Franklin Roosevelt had become a symbol of hope--a torch to follow--for people everywhere. The magnitude of his past accomplishments and the promise heralded in his efforts to promote a lasting peace for all, and security and freedom for Americans, won him a gigantic international following. Roosevelt saw the menace of foreign aggression and prepared us for that eventuality so that when the attack came we were not powerless. He armed our friends so they might withstand the onslaught of our enemies until we could lend a decisive hand in the battle. He breathed the breath of liberalism into the shattered framework of the American economy by providing leadership which attained better, happier and freer conditions for all Americans.

His passing need not prove an insuperable barrier to the success of his plans for a peaceful world. His passing can prove to be an inspiration to President Truman to fulfill the promises of achievement of the goal. Owing a determination to preserve the gains in human progress, both at home and abroad, made under the guidance of Franklin Roosevelt, President Truman will merit the support and help which his fellow countrymen are today giving him on every hand. With sob-choked throats we unite to support President Truman's efforts to forward the work so well started, yet unfinished, while there is a gold star in the world's window for its great soldier-statesman now gone to the Great Beyond.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "The Chief is Dead But His Works Live On," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 19, 1945, p. 2.

"TO EACH HIS OWN"¹

The other day while waiting for a train at the Northern Pacific station in Missoula I chanced upon an interesting speculation. Close by the waiting room door, on the train platform side of the station, boldly engraved in the cement platform blocks is the drawing of a heart pierced by an arrow. Right below the pierced heart is firmly engraved the following wording: Ned and Elsie, June 8, 1910."

This testimonial of a plight now somewhat remote, graven clearly in the cement, struck me as a picture from life that is typical. It is an incident that is common in the lives of most men and women, and certainly, at least at the time, probably seems the most important thing in the world.

I do not know if Elsie and Ned followed this testimonial to the altar. It is entirely possible that Elsie might have been entirely ignorant of the incident and that some shy Ned was merely outlining a hidden hope that smouldered [sic] in his heart? Did the couple stand together and gaze upon the craftsmanship in the cement when completed? Are they happily wed and parents of a family? Was their matrimonial venture, if it materialized, shattered by the discord of divorce? Did they bear children, who died or lived, and are those children in this section of the world today? Did any such children serve in World War II in some foreign land, fighting the good fight for their country, as indeed their father Ned, may have fought it in World War I in Flander's Fields?

You can project a thousand conjectures about such a situation, but it is doubtful if we will ever know the facts. It is entirely possible that both Ned and Elsie may have completely forgotten the incident, and would hardly recall it even if they read these lines. The following lines of some old verse are appropriate to such a contingency: "And the worst and the best of this is, that neither were most to blame, if she has forgotten my kisses, and I have forgotten her name."

But there is one certainly [sic]. It is that a man and a woman on June 8, 1910 shared some intimate bond, just like millions of others of their kind have shared similar bonds, down over the stairsteps of the ages. Whether it lived to flower and bear fruit or was shattered for some

¹Miles Romney Jr., "To Each His Own," editorial, October 10, 1946, p. 2.

unknown reason we cannot tell. But the sure thing is that it at the moment seemed most worth while, more desirable than riches, more sought after than political power or social prestige, that ineluctable something that makes the whole world go round.

"THERE AINT NO SUCH ANIMULE"¹

We have been hearing a great deal of talk the past few years, and particularly the past few months, about the "free enterprise system" and about the "law of supply and demand."

A lot of people have been "taken in" by this malarkey. Every child ought to know there is no such a thing as free enterprise or an inexorable law of supply and demand possible under our economic system.

It is true there is competition--during recurrent panics of our economic system--among wage workers for jobs and farmers for relief in various forms, as well as competition in such times among merchants for the pay checks of WPA workers.

But there is never any competition among the big fellows who own and run the economic machine of America, and who are branching out today to do the same thing all over the world.

With but few exceptions Big Business is monopolistic, and the exceptions are becoming less numerous every year through mergers, interlocking directorates, etc.

Big Business is taking care of itself through control of the government. It owns the press in order to elect stooges to public office who will do its bidding--give it special favors--appoint administrators who will play the game of Big Business.

You are not Big Business because you have a few thousand dollars in the bank. In this game a hundred thousand dollars or a cool million dollars, is "chicken-feed."

The Republocrats in attacking the New Deal talked much about competition and free enterprise. Let us draw back the curtains and examine some of the facts that are not given to the public by the kept press, by the gagged radio commentators, by the Big Business-elected members of Congress and legislatures, as well as administrative officials elected or appointed to public office through the machinations of Big Business.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "There Aint No Such Animule," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 28, 1946, p. 6.

Are you aware that the Match Trust possesses the "know-how" for manufacturing a miracle match which would light one thousand times--but which has never reached the market? The Match Monopoly would not permit such a match to get into the hands of the public. It would result in reduction of match sales.

Are you not aware that the utilities--such as our old pal, the Montana Power Co.--have no competition; that their rates are based upon valuations which guarantee them a profit, and to make the matter even worse, the valuations are pumped so full of air that often the rates are based upon two or three times the actual value of the utilities; that depreciation is figured by such utilities in taxpaying, but never in rate-making? That is the right of plunder--a truly free enterprise!

Attorney General Tom Clark, who is certainly no wild-eyed radical, recently pointed out in a speech in Boston before the Massachusetts [sic] Associated Industries (no communist group) that "the introduction of fluorescent lighting was retarded. Here power company revenue was at stake. Again, so that more electrical lamps could be sold, the manufacturers built them with shorter life." He went on to point out that a monopoly withheld vitamin D from sufferers of rickets, a disease of the undernourished. Clark said: "Some years ago patents for producing vitamin D by ultra-violet ray came into the hands of a university foundation located in a butter producing area. The sole right to use this artificial method of producing vitamin D in foods belonged to the foundation. The foundation denied licenses for irradiating oleomargarine because the patent holder was 'unsympathetic' to oleomargarine. Monopolists think of their profits first, and of the people last."

Our economic system gives the monopolists the freedom to gouge the consumers, it limits competition through combinations and hidden agreements, it restricts production in order to provide prices satisfactory to the manufacturers. It annihilates any semblance of a law of supply and demand, because the supply is artificially controlled. It makes free enterprise a ghastly joke for reason that the freedom of a little fellow to compete with the giant is preposterous.

Whenever you hear anybody prating about the law of supply and demand and the free enterprise system, put him down for a knave, a fool, or a dumbell [sic]. There aint no such animule.

"WHAT IS UN-AMERICANISM?"¹

When any person starts shouting that one or another action, philosophy or procedure is "un-American" I am moved to marvel at the mental attributes of such a character.

Who owns the right to tell you what is, and what is not good Americanism?

If you study the Constitution--the fundamental law of our land--peruse the immortal Declaration of Independence, or merely consider the history of our nation, you can hardly come to a conclusion that anyone possesses a monopoly [sic] on determining what is good Americanism and what is not.

As a consequence of this truth I conceive it in exceeding bad taste for anyone to have the ill temper and faulty store of knowledge that permits them to label other persons, ideas or actions which to them may seem poor, wicked or false, as un-American.

The Revolutionary fathers of this land--Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Paine, et al--conceived it their privilege to effect a change in their government and they pledged their very lives to their cause. It resulted in quite a blood bath with numberless sanguinary battles and skirmishes being fought over a period of years until they accomplished their objective. Many people called them un-American at the time but History has changed that viewpoint. Time has an annoying faculty of reversing contemporary judgments of self-appointed judges.

The great Lincoln stated that whenever a government of a nation becomes ill fitted to the needs of that nation it was not only the privilege but if necessary the revolutionary right of the people to overthrow such a government and build it anew in a form more in keeping with their pleasures.

History of all nations points to these facts. Good common sense tells us that whenever any man-made organization becomes obsolete it should be discarded and a new organization substituted that will work for the common good. Thus did the Industrial Revolution destroy Feudalism and bring Capitalism into being.

It seems to me that good Americanism is not to be found

¹Miles Romney Jr., "What is Un-Americanism?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 2, 1947, p. 2.

in calling the neighbor who does not agree with you a "communist" or "un-American." That is simply the exemplification of abysmal ignorance. Whenever anyone perpetrates such a performance in your presence just label him a dunce and unworthy of respectable argument.

Good Americanism, it seems to me, consists in a full examination of all possible views and methods of procedure, by everyone of our 130 odd million citizens. This discussion and argument which surely ought to ensue over the merits of respective programs and philosophies goes a long way toward determining what is best for the most of us. Such programs, after such determination should then be placed into effect. That's Democracy at work--something of which we talk too much about in this country, and practice too little. Obviously this is not going to suit everybody, but those who are disgruntled, on any side of these arguments and decisions, are a pretty sorry sort when they can only sum up their displeasure by assailing their adversaries as "un-American." Such tripe is a distinct demonstration that the human race has after all, gone not very far along the paths of progress.

"AN EPITAPH"¹

I know many may consider me unduly sentimental, and I am aware that others have paid tribute far better than I will do here, but I am not apologetic about writing of the passing from this world June 3 of "Pal"--my dog.

She had long lived on borrowed time, having attained an age of 17 years last December, but when the time came for her to leave our family, none of us were ready for it, because she was in truth one of the family.

"Pal" was a native of the Bitter Root. Unlike some, her parentage can be traced to a well-bred Irish spaniel father, whilst the cocker spaniel mother is cloaked in dark obscurity. She was a bilingual dog, having learned to appreciate and respond to Finnish from the late Mrs. Emanuel Kattelus, before she took up English from her mistress and master, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Gray, Jr. She mastered the minor tricks of dogdom at an early age and it was not long before she became an eager duck hunter.

As a youngster she met Dr. J. W. Kilpatrick and from then on she endeavored to avoid him for the remainder of her days, for he robbed her of all hope of progeny, but gave her many years of life which she could never have hoped for otherwise. During her life-time Dr. Kilpatrick administered to her on divers occasions and for many years he sheared for her a summer gown so she could escape the discomforts of summer heat. When we sorrowfully admitted it would no longer be right to permit her to battle vainly for the last threads of her life it was the good doctor we called to aid us. During the last illness I remember how she often looked up at me as if to ask why I did not do something to rid her of her ailment. She thought I was all-powerful. And I will never forget the trusting look in her dear eyes as Dr. Kilpatrick carried her away to mercifully end the twilight of a good life which had endured too long.

"Pal" was well liked by all who knew her. She was an outstanding duck retriever [sic], whether upon land or in the water. I have seen her perform astounding returns of birds which made me swell with pride of ownership of such a splendid animal. People who were not acquainted with "Pal" sometimes would joke about her build, for it was not considered beautiful. My friend Howard Bates was always aroused to mirth about her "conformation." But everybody

¹Miles Romney Jr., "An Epitaph," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 8, 1948, p. 2.

agreed she was a dog possessed with personality. She loved and was loved by all who knew her, never bit anyone nor possessed a surly moment. In her later years she accompanied me to work almost daily as if she took as much interest in the WN as did those of us who labor there. She greeted all who visited your editor, whether he be governor, United States Senator, Congressman, or laborer, with the same degree of interest--showing that "Pal" was a Democrat in the finest sense of the word. She was far from the best chink dog in the valley, being as is her tribe, too eager, but there were few, if any dogs in the Bitter Root who worked as well and retrieved so many ducks as did our "Pal."

Sometimes I wonder about the wisdom of becoming so attached to a dog. The sorrow that overwhelmed us upon losing "Pal" is not a happy load to carry. But the happiness that a good dog brings a family is well worth the grief that inevitably wells up within you when the ultimate in life has been reached. We Romneys, and the Gray family, will always cherish the memory of "Pal." She was truly a wonder dog.

"AND HOW DOES SPRING COME?"¹

Spring comes not from any edict issued by Glenn Chaffin at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce nor because the calendar indicates that time of year has approached.

At one time there lived in Hamilton a lovable character named William Harris, philosopher, mechanic, and weather prophet, whose pronouncements upon the subject of weather were listened to with respect by all who knew him, because Bill came pretty close to doping out in advance the various Didos that might be cut by the Weather Man. But those forecasts, together with their fount, are no more ours.

Seasons are dependent upon the movement of celestial bodies and do transpire in a somewhat orderly process, though nothing in the world brings Spring at a given moment. According to common gossip even a groundhog holes up certain years until it is plainly evident that Spring has come and sometimes it seems as though Spring has passed on into Summer before we can be certain that Spring is here!

Just when does Spring come?

Spring comes to the Bitter Root when Mrs. Shappee reports that buttercups have taken the place of pussywillows.

Spring comes when you see high school athletes, terminating a winter-long stint as basketball, breezing about their cinder pathways.

Spring is here when highway signs indicate that trucks are being checked for weight loads which have been limited.

Spring is really upon us when snow has receded from the trough leading to the top of Downing Mountain west of Hamilton and when the water can first be observed as it tumbles over the lip of Canyon creek Falls into the awesome cascade over granite walls to the abyss bottom below.

Spring comes to Hamilton when George Beechwood takes down the storm windows at the Hamilton federal building and reports, as he has, that he captured eight rattlesnakes April 3.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "And How Does Spring Come?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 15, 1954, p. 2.

Spring comes to our community when Archie Wright sallies forth into the country and can come back reporting that morels have been found thrusting their delectable [sic] torsos through soft warm earth. Not yet but soon.

Spring is on hand when you see "Sally" South stalking up the street to deliver a repaired fish rod to some hopeful angler who is getting ready for the impending open trout season.

When you see the local garden lovers working upon their lawns, preparing soil and dealing out fertilizer; then you are aware that Spring can not be far distant.

Spring is the time of the year when the fire alarm sounds, spreading fear and alarm in the hearts of many, and when it is found the alarm pertains to a grass or weed fire which got beyond control as mankind prepares for the coming of the Spring Season.

Love is forever in the hearts of youth, so Spring is always in our Youth. But in those more advanced in age, Spring is recognized as the outset of another year in the mysterious journey through life. It is a time recognized by the budding trees and bushes, by the green blush of grass awakening from the brown sleep of winter.

In Hamilton Spring comes when Art Sleep and his cohorts turn loose the water that flows through the C&C Ditch.

In the Bitter Root Spring is here when Joe Hughes brings to town the first delicately pink and gorgeous Bitter Root flower.

Spring comes to our valley with the sound of rising waters in the creeks and river. The cattle are taken away from hay and turned to green pastures. Children are no longer complaining of school for they know it will soon be over.

There are a thousand and one ways to recognize the advent of Springtime but we are never sure just when it will arrive. That's why a canny guy like Chaffin never tries to beat the gun and announces it ahead of time. Instead the combination of all signs like those noted above, gathered together, make it plain that Spring is here. The old WN, glad to see another Spring--its 64th--is therefore most happy to accommodate Mr. Chaffin by reporting he has read the signs and is ready to speak: Spring is at hand!

"HAGEMAN--BRIGGS"¹

Come down to marry me and my honey in a taxi Judge, now don't be late, was the injunction served upon Justice Thomas M. Magee last Thursday night. He responded and joined in wedlock Sidney Hageman to Georgia Gerleman Briggs before a company of 40 odd well wishers and incredulous citizens who had gathered at the Rainbow Bar when the impending nuptial event was heralded about the Hamilton precincts late that afternoon.

All the assorted wedding guests were best men and bridesmaids or matrons of honor but the witnesses who signed as accessories to the act were Loyd Rennaker and Elsie Rhine.

As the wedding was about to be staged a number of troubadours trooped into the bar room where wedding guests were in the process of being decorated in honor of the occasion, and offered to sing "O, Promise Me" and other appropriate vocal offerings, when in came two men armed with guitars and the potential singers vanished, in misty-eyed confusion, possibly mistaking the musical instruments for shotguns. But it wasn't that kind of a wedding because this romance had been smouldering [sic] for a number of years and everybody implicated apparently being willing and eager, unless possibly the good judge, who had hardly comprehended the ramifications of the job he had consented to legalize until apprehended by a taxi driver commissioned for that purpose.

The vows taken by the couple were completely in order, although there was some confusion concerning inclusion of the word "obey" in the ritual. The bride ventured that the groom "had better" and he responded "spose?"

After the wedding the judge was packaged home via taxi and the ante-bellum festivities started around a large bouquet of Four Roses. A next morning reflection of events of the previous 24 hours elicited from Sir Sidney the admission that although he is a Republican he had never had it so good.

The bride was attired in a blue street-length dress, with white accessories, and wore a corsage of white carnations. She is a former well known resident of the district south of Hamilton, having for a number of years

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Hageman--Briggs," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, April 3, 1958, p. 7.

been engaged in growing strawberries and selling strawberry plants. In recent years she has been living in Portland, Ore.

The groom is a native of Hamilton who very likely owns more lots and structures in the city than any other person. This is his first time at bat in the matrimonial game whilst it is bride's third marriage.

Friends of the couple in the Hamilton community were quick to wish them well in their new venture and were somewhat taken back when Mrs. Hageman left Sunday night for Portland. Those who feared the couple had split the family sheets so soon after the nuptials, practically before the glasses were dry, can be reassured for Mr. Hageman has advised the WN that his wife has merely gone to Portland to pack up personal property and bring it to Hamilton.

"WE CANNOT ALWAYS GET THE THINGS WE WANT
BUT THAT IS NOT A VALID REASON FOR NOT TRYING"¹

Elsewhere in this edition a question is propounded by Thomas A. Morris, former Bitter Root resident, who inquires how the WN, or anyone else, can support federal or state--or indeed any governmental agency--when upon so many occasions those agencies have in the past failed to carry out the wishes of the WN, or others?

There are several answers which the WN offers for the consideration of Mr. Morris and such other persons as feel the WN, and others, might be guilty of inconsistency. For that matter, inconsistency is not always an error.

First of all, no one person, nor group, has a monopoly on being right. Those who take stands upon matters of public concern, base their viewpoint upon what they consider sound ground. There is often disagreement. What this writer may feel to be the best policy can be, and often is, viewed with disagreement by many others.

But I think it best that people voice their viewpoints on public affairs. From the collision of various viewpoints, possibly very much at variance, some compromise solution is often possible. It may not please you, nor this writer, nor anyone else completely, but in a society as complex as ours today, it is the only practical solution.

And it may be that sufficient majority of folks believe in one method, which can be adopted, and put into effect and kept in effect, so long as the majority continues to support that attitude.

Secondly, the WN believes in government. I cannot conceive that anarchy is a desirable society in which to live. In the early days of the American Republic, when the pioneers were moving westward, often they were isolated in small groups, and even as individuals. Everyone had to be self-sufficient. Anarchy prevailed for a time but as more and more people settled in various localities, some sort of government had to be adopted. Montana saw this situation with the results vigilante groups were formed to enforce rules they themselves made. The more population increases the more complex become the dealings of mankind, one with

¹Miles Romney Jr., "We Cannot Always Get the Things We Want But That is Not a Valid Reason For Not Trying," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, July 17, 1963, p. 2.

another; one with the mass. Thus law and regulation become a necessity. Unfortunately we do not all see things the same. So we have adopted a form of democracy whereby each citizen can exert his views through representatives or when he himself becomes the representative of a group.

It seems to be the best idea developed yet. Complete democracy with a town meeting endeavoring to function on a national scale is too unwieldy. Dictatorship in any form, whether from a king ruling by asserted divine right, a fascist or a communist dictatorship, is repugnant to those among us who believe in majority rule and most of us do.

Because national and state government is big and complex many of its operations are placed in the hands of agencies, such as the Montana Fish and Game Department, for example.

Some among Montanans, including the WN, often disagree with the manner in which the F & G Dept. functions. And we are prone to criticize operations with which we do not agree. But we sometimes also agree with the operations. Examples might be the attitude of the WN with respect to closing of the Skalkaho fish hatchery which the WN, and others, opposed; and the acquisition of winter range by the department, which the WN, and others, applauded. And it might be said some people had exactly the opposite views on both subjects. The department must make numerous decisions on matters which many Montanans have decided views concerning. It is not surprising that there results considerable criticism. But everything that the department does is not criticized. As a matter of fact most is not. Would it be wise for people to keep silent about the things they fail to approve? Then no change in policy could ever be anticipated.

Some years ago the F & G Dept. was directly under control of the governor. It was thought by many sportsmen that this was a bad situation as too many politics found its way into the administration. Jobs were likely to be placed in the hands of cronies of the ruling governor, rather than in the hands of experts. So the control was placed into the hands of the commission which in fact has turned it over to a bureaucracy. The consequence seems to many to be that Montana took the F & G Dept. so far out of politics that it got out of control of the people--who could make their wishes known to a governor, who being a politician, seeking re-election, was likely to correct such flagrant errors as became annoying to the public. Now many Montanans think the F & G bureaucracy needs a hearing aid.

The WN believes that Medicare is preferable to the

present method of providing various types of health care. But the WN would prefer that such care be provided through social security for all people, rather than merely the aged. Other nations have adopted such plans. The proposal is fought by probably most of the medical profession, and some others, and they assert the program has failed in England, for example. But it is noteworthy that England continues to use the program, which was started by the Labor Party, and which has been maintained--and expanded--under the Conservative rule. British people prefer it to the old way and the Tories are afraid to change it.

The WN believes that federal development of Knowles dam is desirable. Actually the WN believes the dam which should be built ought to be one at Paradise by the federal government. But compromise seems necessary. No private power company will build dams like Paradise, Knowles, Hungry Horse, Grand Coulee, and similar multiple purpose projects. If America is to be developed to the utmost for the good--not so much of those of use living today--but for future Americans, it should be developed to the maximum. Pigmy [sic] development for only the purpose of making private profit for the few people who own private power companies interferes with full development.

There seems to this writer to be good reason to believe Providence placed our natural resources on earth for ownership and use of all mankind--not for the enrichment of a very small portion of mankind--at the expense of the masses. So it would seem proper for citizens who believe in full development of the natural resources belonging to all of the people of the United States, to favor action of the federal departments working to provide such full development, and to oppose the action of the departments of government when they retard full development.

When some of us oppose the peddling of poison from airplanes over vast areas of the nation we can only hope if we speak out for halting such practice, at least until a better demonstration is provided that great damage will not ensue. Even if we speak out we often fail to win our point. But it lays the ground for more examination by the authorities if they find their actions are meeting opposition. But because some citizens oppose spraying the forests with DDT, or other poison, does not mean they oppose the Forest Service. Certainly the Forest Service has done, and is doing, many valuable chores for Americans. It must be remembered that rapacious money-hungry plunderers ravaged the cream of the forests of the United States--including Montana and the Bitter Root--before the Forest Service was created. In fact, it was this pillaging of the forest resource which caused the federal government to create the

protecting Forest Service.

Because we often times condemn practices of a federal or state agency does not mean we think the agencies undesirable. It is quite certain that most of these regulatory agencies are doing many good jobs of which we hear very little, but without which the nation, the state, the individual citizen would suffer a loss. So, while some among us may condemn some of these agencies for acts of which we do not approve, would it not be silly indeed to declare that all federal and state agencies should be shut up forthwith which would mean that necessary regulations be abolished?

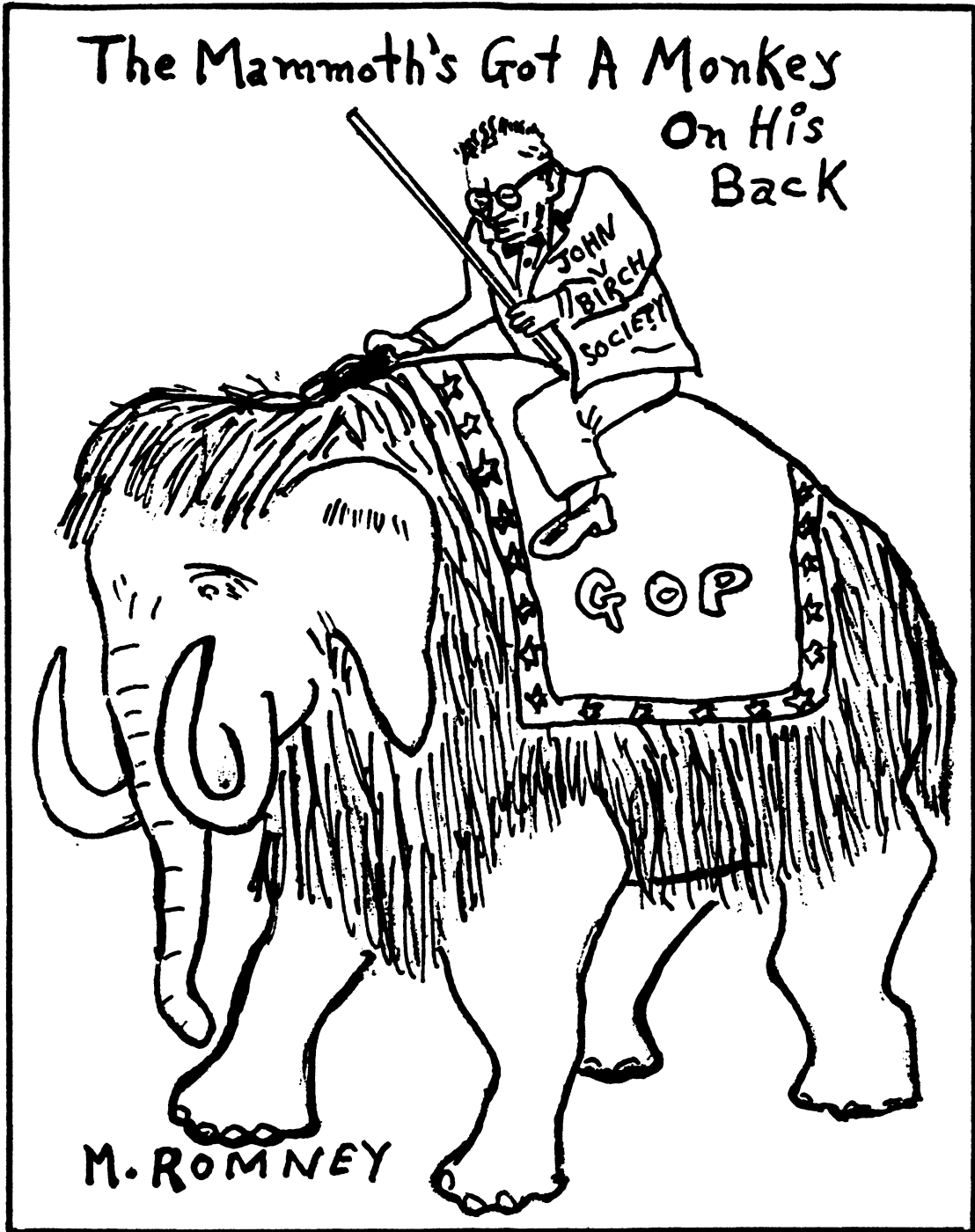
What is the alternative to these agencies? Do any among us desire that some individual, or small group, without any sanction through representative government, however faulty--should be given the power to issue ukases as to where and when you may hunt or fish, what development and use is to be made of our resources, who is to benefit from development of our natural resources, our national health care and costs, and so forth.

It is true that the agencies, federal and state, often fail to heed complaints. Sometimes people think the agencies of their government are cold and hard and uninterested in the public welfare. But what would the situation be if the public affairs were handled by private individuals answerable to nobody?

And it is worth pondering whether you think the ears of all bureaucrats are closed to proposals and criticism from the public of policies of their agencies. I have no doubt but that the vast majority of public servants are endeavoring to do a good job. Certainly most all of them think the policies they promulgate are proper. However, there are many private citizens and corporations and their lobbyists and agents, at all times working to get public agencies to adopt policies which will redound to the financial benefit of these operators, by all sorts of stratagems [sic] in such a way that some of the vast sums of public funds will find their way into the treasuries or pockets of these wily characters and corporations. It would be strange if, among the vast army of public servants some did not turn out to be careless, incompetent and even venal. But you may be sure that most all public servants welcome suggestions, desire constructive criticism, and are eager to adopt views which will improve the public service. It is human to feel one's decision is best but most folks want to achieve the best, even if they find their first views are not adequate. As the policy adopted comes down the chain of command there is not always the opportunity for those in the

lower echelons to effect desired changes but there are numerous occasions when policy is altered because of difference in viewpoint found on the lower levels of the bureaucracies.

It is necessary that citizens be critical of their government when they think it in error. Failing to be critical and voice such criticism results in stagnation. Just because what we consider to be proper fails to transpire in answer to our criticisms is no reason to despair. It merely means we should speak louder, more frequently, with greater authority in the future. One day there will be ears which will hear and act.



"HOM'S HOMICIDE
HOOTENANY HELD
HOW COULD DUCKS
BE BLAMED FOR IT?"¹

In retrospect those attending the annual Hom's Homicide Hootenany Monday night will be able to agree that the party was bigger and better than ever with about 125 of the valley gentry attending just about the only stag event left in the area. But on the black Tuesday following the saturnalia no such like agreement could be had. Yesterday most of the flock who attended the festival wondered sadly why they lived.

Harry and Jimmie Hom did themselves proud in turning out a vast and remarkable array of foods which disappeared from the scene as though Merlin had waved his magic wand. Roast wild duck, smoked steelhead, smoked venison, spareribs in great quantity, plus all sorts of garnishes, chop suey, pickles, Chinese cabbage, chicken-fried rice, salami, cheese, bologna, smoked whitefish and trout, and pineapple with sweet and sour sauce and pork.

Old John was present to pour and overdid himself with his liberality with the consequences that Tuesday there were many of those who attended the affair who took a dismal view of the whole affair. Today a few of the more stalwart of the guests are able to smile and in the days to come they will again start looking forward to the next January renewal of the ordeal.

Report No. 1. The Montana Liquor Control Board is preparing to declare another dividend.

Report No. 2. Some wives are expected to learn how to smile again in the sweet tomorrow.

Report No. 3. Some of the best fables about such an affair never get into the public prints.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Hom's Homicide Hootenany Held How Could Ducks Be Blamed For It?" Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 15, 1964, p. 1.

"WHAT WILL IT PROFIT MANKIND?"¹

No person or group possesses a monopoly on love for the bounties of Nature and the wonderful unsoiled out-of-doors, the mountains with the forests, animals, birds and streams. Truly the great Wilderness hold an appeal to a vast number of people; so vast a number that it is not strange that the appeal is based upon widely different bases.

Some people love the natural Wilderness areas because they permit an escape from the stress of modern living, but that type of appeal was still in the minds of similar people when the pressure of modern life was unknown.

There are folks who love the wild fastnesses as yet untamed by mankind because they furnish beauty to the eye, freshness that is wanting in the sterility of urban living.

Still other citizens are ardent supporters of salvaging the unspoiled back country because they find within it great satisfaction in hunting or fishing, or both sports.

There is a type of human who enjoys recording in the mind through personal viewing unravaged mountains and almost primeval forests and there are others who revel in recording such sights with their cameras. The latter have managed to provide much happiness to uncounted masses of other people through vicarious transmission in person, via printed material or through the media of the air.

Then there are persons who for a number of the reasons above cited, as well as others, garner a multiple satisfaction from the Wilderness resources.

Truly the Wilderness resource has had a great part in the building of America. It provided the raw material from which the peoples of Europe, venturing upon a new and unknown continent, built their homes and their industry. As they multiplied and prospered their sons and daughters and other immigrants from the Old World, kept irresistibly pressing westward; first over the Appalachian ranges, then on to the Mississippi, following Lewis and Clark and the other explorers, through to the Rockies and thence to the great Pacific beyond.

In this flood of humanity across the continent the

¹Miles Romney Jr., "What Will It Profit Mankind?" editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, May 13, 1964, p. 4.

Wilderness resource provided the sustenance [sic] for the migrating hordes. The herds of game and birds provided food, the forests were used to build new homes and fences and timber the mines, and so forth.

The story is familiar to all who have read the history of the United States.

Meanwhile millions of bison have vanished. The passenger pigeon is a thing of the past. The cream of the virgin timber has been snatched from the landscape, the hills have been eroded, the bunch grass has largely disappeared, streams have been polluted and now even the very air is threatened by the ability of mankind to despoil. Nature's bounty in the desperate effort of all to gobble up the potential riches provided by the Wilderness, before that entity has been completely wiped from the face of the earth.

Once upon a time there was a man named Howard Zahniser who loved the Wilderness. He was not the originator of this idea. The love of the Wilderness is inborn in all mankind, for different reasons. But Zahniser had a theory that something should be done about it and he spent years working to achieve fruition of this idea of preserving the Wilderness in perpetuity. He once wrote:

"The wilderness that has come to us from the eternity of the past we have the boldness to project into the eternity of the future. As champions of this forward movement we should realize that we are indeed working to fashion the kind of policy and program that will insure now--before it is too late--the preservation of wilderness forever wild. We are working for the future."

This writer never knew Zahniser well but upon the several brief occasions that we met it was easily apparent to me that here was a man who was dedicated with a passion for salvaging for tomorrow a portion of the Wilderness, to preserve it and make it inviolable to those who would exploit it for mere pecuniary reasons. To Zahniser it would only rightly be exploited for aesthetic purposes.

Zahniser fought a good fight and today it appears that he and his associates, who through a loosely organized group, filled with highly individualistic persons seeking a collective boon, are upon the threshold [sic] of a Wilderness bill by the Congress. Although their bill has been somewhat emasculated by the pulling and hauling between their group and other groups seeking utilitarian use of the remaining Wilderness for profit, there remains some body which lovers of true Wilderness can still relish.

One might think that when comparatively little of the original Wilderness remains, that everyone would develop some sentimental view toward preserving the vestiges. But in our dog-eat-dog society this apparently is not the case. So long as there remains another stick of timber, another lode of ore, another unused blade of grass--even though heretofore it has not been accessible or practical for use--there seems to be a thirst in the minds of some folks to make that value available so that a profit can be harvested--even though tomorrow the resource perishes.

It is not alone that some men or corporations seek to grasp control of the diminishing resource, there are men in the political life of the nation who have the life and death control over that resource, and some of them--too many--have responded to the pressure of those who seek to exploit the resource.

The other day (May 5, 1964) Howard Zahniser died in his sleep in his home in the Washington metropolitan area. He was only 58 years of age and had made a significant contribution to his country. Perhaps his vision will in a degree be attained, though posthumously. This man who loved the Wilderness and who had visited probably hundreds of parts of the remaining back country, probably might have preferred to find his end upon a trail over Packbox Pass or upon the Blodgett switchbacks. Ironically he died in bed at home. But his vision goes marching forward.

If a significant portion of the remaining unspoiled Wilderness is preserved generations of lovers of the out-of-doors can enjoy it--perhaps into the infinity of perpetuity.

If the Wilderness remaining is unlocked for spoilage by the plunderers of natural resources, what will it profit the generations of tomorrow, when the body and soul of the Wilderness has passed through the cash register?

"LET'S NOT TAKE A DO-NOTHING TRIP TO NOWHERE"¹

Sometimes I hear people sneer at the phrase "The Great Society" and I do not understand them.

As I understand "The Great Society" plan, it is an attempt to make our country stronger, greater and better for everybody who owns citizenship to it.

My comprehension is that an endeavor is being made to provide all of the common necessities of life to all of our citizenry, and that includes ample food to sustain a healthy diet. It includes adequate housing so that our countrymen and women and their children will be comfortably housed, warm and decently maintained. It means that all of the nation's children will be provided equal and good schooling, at least for the elementary and secondary grades, and for higher education and vocational needs where indicated.

It means that all citizens shall be treated fairly and equally before courts of law and by the police. There should be none too big for the law and there should be no discrimination by the law. The law must not look one way if one type in society violates the statutes and another way if another type is the violator.

Adequate medical and hospital services must be put within the reach of every American. We can not have a first rate nation if a large percentage of our citizenry is unable to pass physical tests which keeps them out of the armed forces, nor mental tests which makes them ineligible due to lack of educational facilities having been provided for their use.

We cannot boast about our superior national status when the elderly are not provided adequate care in their later years after having given of their abilities during their productive years. America is not Tibet where the children take their parents out into the wilderness and bash in their heads leaving the corpses for the vultures.

This is America with the greatest accumulation of wealth and talent and strength in the history of the nations of the world. It is a nation which can and should provide knowledge, recreation and enjoyment in parks, theatres, wilderness areas, beaches, playgrounds, natatoriums, fairs,

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Let's Not Take a Do-Nothing Trip to Nowhere," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, November 23, 1966, p. 2.

rest homes, zoos, and a thousand and one additional facilities to make for a better life for everyone.

Also recognition must be provided to those of great talent in the field of the sciences, from anthropology through the entire gamut to zoology, et al, so that they will possess the time, place, machinery, instruments and books, etc. which they can use in mastering the mysteries of the universe, of the human cell, or means for overcoming dread disease, and so on and so forth.

Are these objectives so wrong they should be scorned?

Within the space of the past hundred years things have come to pass which were undreamed of hitherto, and if projected by someone, were often scoffed at. The near miracles may perhaps continue to be unfolded before the eyes of ours, and no doubt those of future generations, provided we are wise enough to give the means to those gifted with ability to bring into being the triumphs of mind over matter which most of us today are incapable of perceiving.

All of these things, and more, constitute the basis of a "Great Society." It is not something to be sneered upon. It is an endeavor to achieve for mankind, and for Americans first among mankind, an exalted standard of living as yet uncalculated.

When I hear my fellows make light of such attempts at perfection or near perfection, for the good of all, I wonder at the depth of their perception. It seems to me that in lieu of scoffing such captious critics ought to be offering better alternatives. Or do they seek to go back to the cave? Do they desire to abolish the forward steps in the arts, the sciences, the brotherhood of man, which we have been falteringly taking? I think not, instead I think some of our friends have become so partisan they have ceased to do much thinking.

I believe that in the hearts of mankind there beats an innate desire to ameliorate the lot of all mankind, not just "me," not just "mine."

When I hear somebody whimpering that "I'm tired" of this and "I'm tired" of that, particularly in an editorial or the speech of one who purports to be a leader, I cannot help but marvel at the immensity and the force of the vacuum.

But, some may protest, it costs money and we don't like to pay taxes.

There is no doubt that it costs money. So, also, does it cost money to build our giant war machine and move it to the borders of the Orient, to the top and bottom of the earth, to the depths of the seas and the heights of the heavens, and to the far corners of Europe, Asia and Africa. Thus far the cost of war, past, present and future, is gobbling up approximately 80 cents of each dollar of our national tax annually. The money we are expending on making for a better life is a mere drop in the bucket.

Which is the better? Certainly if there be waste, mistakes, extravagance, or thievery, it should be halted, corrected, overcome. But the forward effort must go on else our nation will flounder as have the civilizations of the past. There is no stop in midpassage permitted for the personal satisfaction of the selfish. We are all in this boat together, even if some can't comprehend the fact.

If we do not provide for equal rights, fundamental needs, adequate education and other items enumerated in part hitherto in this comment, we are going to have to care for the revolution, for the crime in the streets, for the burglaries, and for the incarceration of a rising share of our population, and that is going to be horribly expensive, both in money, in wasted time and effort, and in the aspirations of our country.

Those who sneer at the "Great Society" had better offer something better, or at least as good. If so, it is conceivable some of us will get on and ride with them in their efforts.

"ALL CITIZENS SHOULD PARTICIPATE"¹

There exists a disposition among many people, if not most, to regard politics as a "dirty business," which they refuse to participate in, except at arm's length, by voting "for the man." And a lot of folks don't even take the trouble to vote.

There is indeed some validity for this attitude for we are all aware of the scandals that are included in the generalization "Watergate" and many among us remember the "Teapot Dome" scandals, the "Ballinger affair," the scandals of the Grant Administration, and hundreds of lesser outrages against good government.

It seems that there will always [sic] be political predators who give politics a bad name. It seems there are always rich individuals or giant corporations which, in order to attain their greedy ends, are eager and willing to bribe public officials or through pressures via dissemination of false information secure governmental action which provides them with privileges and which bring them wealth, power or the means which provide those benefits. Otherwise why did contributors give more than \$60 million to the "Committee to Re-elect the President?"

Yet all of us know that the action of government closely affects the lives of all citizens. Everything that we eat, wear, use, even to the air we breathe, is influenced by the action of government. It is government which takes our soldiers into war. It is government which permits wise or unwise use of the public's resources. The quality and amount and price of our foodstuffs are subject to dictation by your government. Inflation, affluence, poverty, hard times and prosperity result from the operation of government. You name it and then trace it and you will find that somewhere the government plays a part in the ultimate character of whatever may be your subject.

Who is so unwise that he or she will refuse to participate in the direction a government takes that touches upon the lives of everyone?

Down at Victor Bill Brown tells us that if people insist on going around with their eyes shut they are apt to bump into something. He says that when your shoe lace

¹Miles Romney Jr., "All Citizens Should Participate," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, October 31, 1973, p. 2.

becomes untied it is wise to stoop over and tie the lace. Otherwise you might stumble over it and fall.

That is good philosophy. Citizens would always do well to inform themselves about the direction their government--national, state, local--takes and have a hand in guiding it. Don't go around blindly bumping into the results of bad government; don't stumble over your own failure to participate in the operation of government.

Sure, it must be admitted that it is difficult to know the records of people who aspire to public office, to know whether it is a good choice when you "vote for the man." But everyone can, by engaging in reasonable discussion, by careful reading of material made accessible by political parties, by individual candidates for public office, by reading and listening to news and comment in the media, gain knowledge upon which to base a decision as to who should be elected to the various offices from school trustee to president. All aspects should be studied, not from a single viewpoint. It takes time but the results would be beneficial.

Every citizen should ascertain the duties of all public officials so that ability to fill government posts is placed upon shoulders of people qualified to carry out the duties of offices to which they aspire. It is to be lamented that a large segment of the citizenry has little idea of the responsibilities of even their county officers, not to consider state or national officials. How can a person determine if a candidate is qualified to administer a given public office if the duties of such office are not even dimly understood?

I think this lack of understanding finds some of its origin in a failure of the public school system to teach students the elementary duties of public offices, how taxes are levied and computed, what is constitutional law and what is statutory law, where to get information about the law and regulations and the difference between them.

We must not forget that before there is a bribe taker there must be a bribe giver and we must watch for the consequences of such intercourse.

We must not forget that if we abdicate our responsibilities as citizens, which includes intelligent voting, we must harvest evil consequences.

We must not forget that if we refuse to participate in the operation of our governments we can not fairly complain of the consequences if they are not to our liking.

It does not matter whether a citizen is a Democrat, a Republican, a Conservative, a Socialist, or an Independent. The main thing is that there must be citizen participation. That should include participating in primary elections because if your choice is unsuccessful in the primary, you may not have a choice in the final, or it may be a choice among evils in your opinion. This is just as true for Republicans or Democrats as with Independents, although the latter conceivably could be sacrificing more than the others.

Finally let it be suggested that avoiding participation in politics because it is "dirty" is the best way of permitting it to remain "dirty." You are never going to clean up anything by refusing to try to improve it.

Those who refuse to help clean up "dirty politics" stand before us with dirty hands themselves because they are refusing to assume the burdens of citizenship, which include cleaning up "dirty politics."

"DEATH HAS PUT HIS FINGER UPON ME"¹

For more than a half century, most of the time, I have been each week writing editorial comment covering an astonishing number of subjects the total of which I cannot now even compute. Never until tonight have I been faced with the task of contemplating my own dissolution.

But the time is now upon me when I must take WN readers into my confidence though I am aware the matter is of much more importance to me than to them. I believe the true test of honesty is in using it even when the occasion does not favor ones self.

A short time ago it became apparent there was something wrong with my internal organs. The first x-rays indicated it to be diverticulitis but there was a subsequent suspicion of cancer of the large colon. Because of its position no biopsy could be secured and it was determined that major surgery was the only recourse. When one is faced with such a dilemma considerable cogitation ensues. This resulted in a determination to go through with the surgery which took place at Daly Memorial Hospital in Hamilton June 12, 1974, being performed by surgeon Steve Ellis.

It was found that my colon was infected with a malignant tumor as well as diverticulosis, all of which was completely removed, including 16 inches of my intestine.

This morning, having healed sufficiently, I am moving to my residence from Daly Hospital. There I hope to gain strength, return to editing the WN and go on to better things, excluding, hopefully, for considerable time dissolution.

But you can never tell. This cancer thing is most insidious and in my case its close proximity to my liver is cause for fear of further infection. There will be an attempt to thwart the attack if it occurs.

I can find comfort and discomfort in statistics. But nobody is fooling anybody. The matter will have to be confronted and fought out. Ruth and I have been meeting all of our problems all of our many years together and we are not fazed by this one.

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Death Has Put His Finger Upon Me," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, June 19, 1974, p. 2.

I may live six months, a year, four years, five years, twelve years, and die of a heart attack at the end of any of those spans. Now, aged 73 years, expectancy gives me at least five years. But I could live longer than some of you readers who are 53 or 63.

Why should I go into this long personal discussion of my affairs with you? There are several answers, first of which is that over the course of many years I have become intimately acquainted with numerous WN subscribers. We know each other, in many instances having community interests. I feel that Ruth and I would be letting you down if I did not give this information.

Secondly, and most important to me, I filed last April as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the State Senate, in which I now hold a seat by virtue of an appointment received upon the resignation of Senator Bill Groff. Although I did not seek the appointment at that time I did promise that if appointed, I would run for election. I now have the nomination--and then this situation develops!

I could probably keep my mouth shut and perhaps win election without most voters knowing of my trouble. That is not my style. I considered resigning the nomination. But I might have ten years! If I die before the election, a year or two years after it, what then? I determined that the best thing to do would be to confide in the public what my situation is, and then trust in the electorate, as I always have, even when I knew it was going wrong.

So that is the codicil to my political life, open to all to inspect. If I live and am elected I have many things I would try to do as your state senator, such as secure greater return in tax upon the billions of tons of coal which once exhausted by mining is gone forever. In 1969 I started the movement to secure this tax as an addition to the public's trust fund. I would also endeavor to improve the situation with respect joint tenancy with right of survivorship estates in which I have worked hard for more than two years, and am still dissatisfied with the results. True and not lip service to salvage of our watersheds must be worked out. What better proof than the rapid runoff of snow in recent days? There are a thousand things that need to be done. Incidentally I have a thousand more editorials to write lamenting this and exulting that. I want to write about use of federal funds received in form of revenue sharing, which is becoming a national and local disgrace.

But finally before the hospital light goes out in 107 I want to pay tribute to the surgeon, the doctors, the nurses, the aides, the technicians, and all others who have at least

in my case showed concerned effort to help me in my time of trouble. They seem to show genuine concern which in these money-hungry days is a tribute to their character. I have found Daly Hospital's facilities good, and I recall with pride that when Mrs. Daly gave it to the community without prejudice to race or religion, she also stipulated it was to be operated without profit. Well, well--the train has run off the track again, there are always things to write about. But it is with a grateful feeling that I salute the Daly effort even at a time when the hospital is running at only a fraction of capacity. Perhaps in watching those strange atoms knock one another about in the IV bottle I gazed upward at for some 200 hours I got off the track too?

"MUCH OF GREAT VALUE BURIED IN OBSCURE PAST"¹

Several years ago my wife surprised me with her purchase for us of a new Webster's dictionary of the latest printing. It was the very best except that it initiated a new method of pronunciation and I have had neither the time nor patience to master the new rules and signs, so the old dictionaries, at home and at office remain my favorites, until such time as I can luxuriate in retirement and conquer the intricacies of the new method of marking pronunciation.

Never one to do things half way Ruth followed up the dictionary purchase with acquisition of a small table with drawer upon which the big book lies, wide open as such a book should always be, flaunting its supremacy over me.

The stand is a beautiful thing, fabricated by the late John Peterson, Bitter Root carpenter and builder. It holds the dictionary well and does not lose caste if the two are compared by those who appreciate the works of master builders, be they printers or carpenters.

However I could not be so remiss as to fail to point out that in the hard wood stand there is one thing missing. I looked inside the drawer and under it, and everywhere about the piece of de luxe furniture and nowhere is there any indication that John Peterson, or for that matter, anybody, created the stand.

This is bad because in the days to come when somebody acquires that stand from our estate, or at one of the public sales of Morris Gardner or his successors, they will wonder who was the artisan who built this work of art, which probably will outlive the dictionary, the latter being of more delicate composition.

I hazard the opinion that it would be wise if builders would always place their name upon good pieces of work. You can justify such a viewpoint by pointing out that the name of Iten is stamped upon Hamilton's cement paving, defying eternity and demonstrating reliability of the late builder.

Even though good silver is easy to identify the makers have a habit of imprinting the word "sterling" upon it, and the people who make Stetsons follow suit. It "used to be" that automobile makers were proud of their cars and placed

¹Miles Romney Jr., "Much of Great Value Buried in Obscure Past," editorial, Hamilton (Montana) Western News, January 28, 1976, p. 2.

their names upon them although the cars of today seem to be changing names faster than we can keep up.

I notice from inspection that upon the bottom of drawers in the desks at the Montana legislature that many former members of the Senate and Assembly have written, printed or carved their names so that posterity will realize that once upon a time Rep. Joe Doaks actually used that particular seat, even though we may have difficulty determining the place of Doaks in legislative history, what he accomplished, and what happened to him.

Time has a habit of eroding the identities of mere men and women. Take John Peterson for example. I personally knew him as a splendid man of character who also possessed great ability in his craftsmanship. When he died and I had occasion to write an obituary about him I was struck with the great number and variety of building creations in which he participated including the expansion of The Western News plant. He was responsible for construction of houses, buildings and structures of various types from one end of the Bitter Root valley to the other. That is why I thought it was important his name should have been inscribed in the drawer of our stand.

But I guess that I have missed the point.

Time has a nasty habit of turning all of us into ashes, unrecognizable by succeeding generations. Give us twenty more years and nobody except a research student would be able to identify Peterson and his works.

How many of Montana's governors and United State Senators can you name?

Do you recall the early mayors of Hamilton, the first legislators to represent this county in the state legislature, that Ravalli County was almost named Bitter Root County when the county was created, the names of the important race horses of Marcus Daly, when the Northern Pacific arrived in Grantsdale, and a multitude of other things which at the time they transpired, were "on the tip of the tongue" of everybody in this community.

Great emperors of China, or the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, and Pharoahs [sic] of Egypt, who ruled millions of people, built pyramids in which to store their bodies for eternity, are not only gone, but gone in some cases without leaving us their names, and their vaunted burial places were desecrated, destroyed, ransacked not too long after the prattle of their grandchildren became audible.

That which we are considering is that mankind, each and all of us, is transient upon this earth and no matter how important seem our efforts to us, they leave little for future generations to either admire or deprecate...except in the field of ideas. This possibility has immeasurably improved with development of printing, photography, and other methods capable of preserving information, music, views, and other modern contributions to life. What a wonderful thing it would have been had these modern technologies been available to preserve all of the good things, and some of the bad things, evolved by forgotten peoples of antiquity? Then we would have had access to much if not all of the contributions of the past, now lost, instead of only a few trifling statues, the wheel, the pyramids, some broken down structures. Also it might have been that much of the thought in all of the sciences, in literature, in the development of government and fraternity could have been preserved.

The remote civilizations of the past have actually turned to dust, building city after city upon the foundation of prior cities; records are unavailable of much which we would love to study today, but the possibilities had we possessed adequate means of preservation, are easily perceived from the odds and ends that have somehow been salvaged from destruction, such as the cuneiform writings of Assyria, Babylonia and Persia, etc. the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt, the papyrus documents of the Alexandria Library, and so forth.

Maybe, after all, it is a good thing to keep a record of those who are sculptors, writers, builders, creators in whatever line. I think I'll forge John Peterson's name in the drawer bottom.

APPENDIX 2

MEMORIAL TRIBUTES

"GOVERNOR RECALLS ROMNEY'S SIMPLE CLAIM TO FAME
'I AM A PRINTER'¹

The following tribute to Sen. Miles Romney was written by Governor Thomas L. Judge and sent to the WN by Mailgram.

Few men have dedicated their lives to the betterment of Montana as did Miles Romney. Miles was a man who fought for what was right and steadfastly remained true to himself and to his beliefs. This was a philosophy by which he lived.

Once during debate in the Montana House of Representatives, Miles was asked his occupation. He replied "I am a printer" and sat down. Miles considered himself a printer rather than an editor or publisher because he simply printed the truth. He did not manipulate or manage the news, and The Western News is a tribute to the man who guided it.

But Miles was more than a printer. He was a rare man, historian and maker of history, editor and legislator, the only person to serve consecutive terms first as a delegate in the Constitutional Convention, then as a state senator. Miles Romney's progressive influence upon Montana has brightened our past and widened the horizons of our future.

Miles served with distinction in the Montana House of Representatives, Senate and Constitutional Convention. His principles of truth and honesty included a strong concern for the average Montanan. In the legislature, he fought long and hard against corporate interest and played a major role in established territorial integrity in Montana. Miles introduced one of the first major bills on public disclosure for public officials. He truly believed in ethical, honest and opened government. He will long be remembered for authoring, promoting and securing passage of legislation which made a major change in our probate laws. Miles also wrote the constitutional amendment which will appear before the voters on this year's general election ballot. The amendment would set aside 50 percent of our coal tax for education.

Miles was also deeply committed to the ideals of the Democratic Party. He served as a state committeeman from

¹Thomas L. Judge, "Governor Recalls Romney's Simple Claim to Fame 'I Am a Printer,'" Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 25, 1976, p. 1-2.

Ravalli county for many years and also served on the state Democratic Executive Board and as secretary of the Executive Board of the Party. The 1972 preamble to the Montana Democratic platform which Miles wrote, states:

"We are now at a critical time in the history of Montana.

"In the remaining years of this decade, it will be necessary to make hard decisions regarding the life in Montana.

"We must save our irreplaceable and natural resources.

"We must strike a balance between economics and environmental interest in the development of Montana.

"We must develop revenue programs that tax the rich and the poor and the influential and the unknown all on the basis of equity.

"And most important of all we must save the special quality of life in Montana."

Miles' own words express his principles and dedication to our state.

In his lifetime, Miles Romney accomplished a great deal of good, but knew that there was a great amount left to do. He left us with the faith that what he firmly believed in would be accomplished. All of us, as Montanans, must strive to live up to that faith. Montana has lost a great man, and Miles Romney will be sorely missed. But his beliefs and accomplishments will live on for future generations for Montanans to follow.

Carol joins me and all Montanans in extending to Ruth and to Miles' family our deepest sympathy.

Thomas L. Judge, Governor

"SENATOR MANSFIELD SENDS TRIBUTE"¹

Miles Romney was a good man and a close friend of many years. His death leaves a void in the leadership of western Montana. Miles was a man dedicated to the betterment of his community and the well-being of his state. He demonstrated these talents over and over again in his capacity as a resourceful newsman, able publisher, and a state legislator, who worked hard and long for his local constituency, as well as the interests of the entire state. Miles Romney will be missed in the Big Sky country, which is a better place because of his dedication and service.

Mike Mansfield
Majority Leader U.S. Senate

¹Mike Mansfield, "Senator Mansfield Sends Tribute," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 25, 1976, p. 1.

"CONTRIBUTION TO MONTANA LAWS
IS DESCRIBED BY REP. DRISCOLL"¹

Rep. John B. Driscoll who, as House Majority Leader, was a close observer of the legislative efforts of Sen. Miles Romney, has supplied the following account of the working habits and the outstanding contributions of Senator Romney who accomplished, during the 1975 session of the Montana Legislature, two of his long-held ambitions in the field of legislative action.

Senator Miles Romney was a hard-working legislator of vision and tremendous dedication to the future of Montana. He was the first at his desk in the Senate chambers nearly every day, and invariably was the last to leave each evening. In formal deliberations his forte as an orator was to link discussion of a current problem with his impressive and colorful knowledge of Montana's history.

In the last session Miles figured significantly as arbitrator between freshmen senators and established senators who felt that traditional rules of seniority should be followed. The conflict revolved around crucial committee assignments and leadership positions. Both groups looked to Senator Romney to solve the issue by making the critical decisions on committee assignments. To Senator Romney's credit, all sides were satisfied. Miles was asked to bridge similar communication gaps throughout the session.

Miles was cautious financially. From his position on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the controversial interim Legislative Fiscal Oversight Committee, he closely appraised requests for the release of state tax money. To convince him to vote in favor, one had to have an attractive program and some very sound arguments. Miles was not closeminded. He simply was more prone than most to give a new idea a little more "testing."

Senator Romney originated and advocated several concepts that are now important to Montanans. In 1969 he first attempted to raise the severance tax on Montana coal from 5 cents per ton to 50 cents per ton. One tenth of the new tax would have gone to reclaim stripmined land. Projected income for a biennium from his HB569 would have

¹John B. Driscoll, "Contribution to Montana Laws is Described By Rep. Driscoll," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, February 25, 1976, p. 1-2.

been about \$500 thousand. The proposal failed. Miles was criticized in some quarters for being radical. Five years later he returned and, with considerable satisfaction, played a key role in passage of the now nationally famous Montana Coal Tax Package. The tax per ton is over \$1, and the income per biennium is expected to be over \$55 million.

In the late sixties Miles began pressing for a Trust Fund to generate income and interest for use by future generations. The fund would be fed by revenue from taxation of Montana resources. Miles was only partially satisfied to see the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund created in 1973. He felt it was far too small an amount, and that it should draw on income from all of Montana resources. It came as no surprise to some of his close acquaintances when Miles suddenly introduced SB407 in the closing hours of the last session. This much publicized Coal Tax Trust referendum, if approved by Montana voters, would place 1/4 of all revenue from the coal severance tax into a trust fund to be used by future Montanans. On January 1, 1980, fifty percent of all revenue from coal would begin to flow to the fund. Future legislators would be able to spend only the interest, unless violators could muster a 3/4's majority vote. Senator Romney felt strongly that the state's current operations budget not be allowed to become financially addicted to revenue from a depleting resource like coal. This idea of Miles' will be voted upon by all of us in the coming general elections.

A third concept that is now law in Montana due mainly to the efforts of Senator Romney is a much simplified probate procedure. Miles was incensed by the thought of a surviving husband or wife having to spend large sums of money and extended time undergoing legal red tape. Accordingly he, with the help of the People's Power League, gained passage of SB223. The law now allows for transfer without court proceedings of real and personal property held by spouses in joint tenancy.

Miles had other bills in the four sessions that he served. Many dealt with fish and game matters, and problems of public access to trout streams. Still other bills that don't have the Romney name as first signature in the sponsor block owe their passage to his efforts. Of course he also fought and defeated many measures that he felt were wrong or burdensome to Montana.

It's difficult to capsulize the effectiveness of a legislative career with the stature of Miles Romney's. He had far in excess of the necessary motivation to do the work. He was articulate and attuned to the people he represented. Above all, for his personal virtues of honesty

and selflessness, he held the necessary respect of the men and the women he had to convince.

Miles Romney as a legislator will be missed.

John Driscoll

"MILES ROMNEY: HE SURELY DID"¹

"I believe the true test of honesty is in using it even when the occasion does not favor one's self."--Miles Romney. June 19, 1974.

What words can capture Miles Romney? One has the feeling the old fellow is looking down quizzically, curiously, as if to say: Let the stripling write what he wants about me, he will anyway, and I shall make no comment other than to smile over some of it, chuckle over the earnestness of some of it, tuck some of it away in the mind, and then turn to more important things.

Miles Romney died last week. For much of his life he was a measure of Montana. He was decent, humane, dedicated to the interests of all men rather than a few. He was honest, tough, humorous, gentle, eloquent, intelligent, artless, brave.

In much of that imposing list he was what the rulers of Montana were not. They were crooked, brutal, greedy, selfish.

So naturally Romney clashed with them. He was what Montana should be. And he knew it, and he never deviated from that conviction.

He couldn't be bought and he couldn't be bullied. He couldn't be driven out of business. He worked at being honest and the readers of his paper, the Western News in Hamilton, knew that. They might disagree with him, but they knew the fellow editing that paper was leveling with them as best he could. That's what Romney did in that editorial of June 19, 1974, when he noted that he had cancer, and because he was running for the State Senate the people had a right to know about that.

As histories of Montana are written, Romney and his father--the earlier Miles Romney who began editing the Western News in the 1890s--will find places of note and honor. Many of those they fought have died or will die in gaudy mansions, built by the looting of Montana, and if the world bothers to remember them at all it will be with a snarl.

That has to be noted, but it must be emphasized that

¹Sam Reynolds, "Miles Romney: He Surely Did," editorial, Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, February 25, 1976.

one of Romney's most effective attributes was not combativeness but gentleness and candor. Fight he would and fight he did, but he was not a mean and perpetually angry scrapper. He was a moderate man, a modest man, with a sense of humor about himself. It was his enemies who were excited, upset, vicious and radical.

As the years passed Montana swung around; it became more honest, more open, less afraid, stronger and more sure of itself. It threw off its shackles. It became much of what Romney always said it should be. It came a long way toward becoming the way he was.

That means he won. He surely did. Not alone--as he himself would firmly assert--but he did win.

It happened during his lifetime. Montana may mourn over the death of this thoroughly decent man, but it can rejoice that he died only after seeing fulfillment of much of his life's work.

For those who loved him, there can be deep gratification in knowing the truth of that, just as there can be deep gratification from having known the man himself.

--Reynolds.

"EULOGY FOR MILES ROMNEY"¹

During debate in the Montana House of Representatives in the 1967 Legislative Session, Miles Romney was asked, "Sir, what is your occupation?" He stood, grabbed the microphone and said, "I'm a printer." Of course, Miles understood the value of being a printer, however, many of us thought he was much much more. He was, to those of us who knew him and many who never met him, an important person.

Instances which may have been milestones in another's life went almost unnoticed in his: He was the first American student to be nominated to West Point by a woman-- Jeannette Rankin, who nominated Miles to the Academy; Miles was the only Montanan who served consecutive terms first as a Delegate to the Constitutional Convention and then as a State Senator; in his younger days he worked as a employee of the U. S. Congress during the first hectic, explosive days of Roosevelt's New Deal; and about fifty years ago he became a printer.

And more.

He was an historian. In his profession of editing and publishing he chronicled the truth. Miles understood that news is history shot on the wing and understanding that he had full respect for accuracy. He and his father were immersed in the history of this state and of this Bitterroot Valley. As he was chronicling history he was also molding it and helping to direct the social and political thrust of the past quarter century. Through those years his editorials, his legislation as a Delegate to the Constitutional Convention have changed the flow of human events in this state. All because he was a printer.

And more.

Miles was a teacher. His classroom was everywhere the Western News was read. He tutored us about this valley, and the people who live here. Those of us from other places know you. We have read of your births and deaths, your weddings and funerals and in Miles' newspaper such happenings were front page stories because he understood the importance of the people and of the common occurrences in their lives. He knew these things because he was a printer.

¹Pat Williams, "Eulogy for Miles Romney," Memorial Service, Hamilton Elks Lodge, Hamilton, Montana, February 27, 1976.

And more.

He was a politician, a progressive, a conservationist, a Democrat. But labels didn't stick well or long on Miles. While he had no time for that philosophy which holds that the best government is that government which is more indifferent to people's needs, he also waged battle against government waste and burgeoning bureaucracy. Miles knew the necessity of sound management because he was a small businessman--a printer.

And more.

A wit. A humorist. Have you ever heard the Montana House or Senate collapsed in laughter? That did many times to Miles' subtle, ironic wit. Last Legislative Session a bill was being debated which gave eighteen-year-olds the right to hold elective city office. The proposal was meeting with some opposition until Miles stood and said, "We have granted eighteen-year-olds the right to marry and any fool knows it's more difficult to be married than it is to be Mayor."

For he was a printer.

And more.

But you cannot really know Miles or understand who he was until you know Ruth. The greatness of a man is often measured by the kind of woman who loves him. Ruth Romney is gracious, generous and kind. For your friends, Ruth, and for Miles' friends, you must bear up, as you are so obviously doing, under this present sorrow. We will want to continue to enjoy you as the vibrant person you have always been.

The people of this valley and of this state are better off now because Miles Romney was here and because he was a printer.

"SEN. METCALF PAYS TRIBUTE TO FRIEND
OF MANY YEARS, MILES ROMNEY"¹

Senator Lee Metcalf writes to Hamilton to say he regrets that he was ill at the time of the death of his close friend, the late Sen. Miles Romney, and offers a tribute to be used in The Western News:

The death of a loved friend always brings moments of nostalgia and remembrances that are incoherent, unconnected and at the same time very real. When Doris Milner called me in the night in Washington and said: "Your old friend died," I said "Not Miles," and she responded that Miles had died that afternoon.

I thought of many things, of the times when I read the Western News and was inspired to a different philosophy and new ideas long before I personally met Miles Romney.

I recalled when I ran for the legislature from Ravalli County in 1936 he helped me, and when I went to Helena in 1937 he was working for the Railroad and Public Service Commissioner, and was a counsellor and a guide.

I sought and gained an appointment as an Assistant Attorney General under Harrison J. Freebourn; and Miles, who knew Harry, was especially helpful.

But while I sincerely appreciate these favors and accommodations they are not the measure of a man you have known for almost 40 years; the visits that Donna and I have had with Ruth and Miles in Hamilton when we came to town during campaigns; a memorable trip or two up over the continental divide where the mountains just seem to go on forever. These too are remembrances. Good talk, good company, conversations over dozens of subjects, these are ways of really knowing a person.

Donna and I went back to the Bitter Root after Freebourn's term expired in 1941 and until World War II came along, we lived in Hamilton. The Romneys were among our closest acquaintances.

Then the war came on and for a number of years I was

¹Lee Metcalf, "Sen. Metcalf Pays Tribute to Friend of Many Years, Miles Romney," Hamilton (Montana) Western News, March 24, 1976, p. 1.

traveling in foreign fields and Donna was also gone. In 1945 we returned to Hamilton, but I was a candidate for the Montana Supreme Court and spent very little time at home that year. Nevertheless, the experience and the knowledge of campaign practices and procedures that Miles passed on were invaluable.

But Miles was to me and to many of the people of the State of Montana more than a dear friend and good companion. He epitomized an integrity and honesty that was an inspiration to attempt to follow. He had a deep seated belief in people, in democratic institutions, in the overall wisdom of the rank and file. As with all of us, sometimes the illusions were shattered but mostly his confidence in the people was rewarded and he could proudly tell those of use who doubted that he told us so. In time, I came to believe rather than to doubt.

Because I knew Miles Romney, I have been a better legislator, a better judge, a better Representative, a better Senator and a better person. I enjoyed knowing him, I am appreciative and humble for his help over the years, and I will fondly and gratefully remember him.

I have been reading some of the clippings from the Western News that I have saved. All at once I am inspired all over again. Here was a man with ideas who could write to express them. The things that Miles has written will be around for a long, long time.

There is a touching passage in Maurice Maeterlinck's play "The Blue Bird." It is in the scene when the children are in the Land of Memory and they meet their grandparents. The Grandmother tells them that "(e)very time you think of us we wake up and see you again."

Over the years, many of us will be thinking of Miles in the Land of Memory and our thoughts will bring him back and awaken him from time to time.

To Ruth Romney, a devoted wife, understanding and loving helpmate, Donna and I extend our heartfelt sympathy and our special gratitude: for a valued friendship.

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