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## The Startup and Evolution of The State Journal: A Statewide Newspaper Reports on Business

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**The Startup and Evolution of *The State Journal*:  
A Statewide Newspaper Reports on Business**

**Phillip Daniel Page**

**Research Project submitted to the  
Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism  
at West Virginia University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**Master of Science  
in  
Journalism**

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## ABSTRACT

Two Charleston, West Virginia, brothers, Robert C. and Henry E. Payne, III, and Charleston lawyer Fred F. Holroyd established *The State Journal* in October 1984 as a weekly newspaper to serve a statewide business readership. The newspaper evolved through difficult early years and eventually became profitable through the sales leadership of Lorenelle White, who would purchase the newspaper with her husband in 1997. She eventually would re-establish the newspaper's weekly publishing cycle.

The Whites would sell *The State Journal* in 2001 to a newly formed media business, West Virginia Media Holdings, which would increase in the newspaper's editorial resources. Since that time, the newspaper has received national recognition for its news coverage.

The State Journal is now 21 years old and employs about 20 people, including nine news personnel.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

To Lorenelle White (1955-2004), whose creativity and hard work rescued a dream and established a foundation upon which it could endure.

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## Introduction

*The State Journal* observed its 20<sup>th</sup> year in business in October 2004. *The State Journal* holds a significant place in state newspaper history as perhaps the only privately owned, statewide publication that succeeded in West Virginia during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the first editor of *The State Journal*, I was involved in the day-to-day operations of the new publication for nearly its first eight years. The first issue appeared in October 1984. I maintained contact with the founders of the publication, and they have discussed with me their reasons for starting the publication. Later owners of *The State Journal* also have shared information that was important to assembling this paper.

This writer, who returned as editor of *The State Journal* in November 2002, has relied on company records, published reports in *The State Journal* and other publications, personal interviews, and his own recollection to write this paper. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the staff and past and present management and ownership of *The State Journal*, especially the late Lorenelle White. Her leadership and success allowed *The State Journal* to survive and prosper. She opened up her company records for review. Her cooperation was essential to the writing of this paper.

## A Newspaper Is Born

Two Charleston, West Virginia, brothers – both Ivy League-educated businessmen – were frustrated with the West Virginia business climate and economy in 1984. The state's unemployment rate had risen. Large employers were reducing their work forces or pulling out of the state altogether. Small business owners, many of whom were natives of West Virginia, were seeing their markets erode. Many of those same business owners, including the Paynes, believed the media at the time – especially in Charleston – were openly hostile toward business. State government appeared to be incapable of responding to the crises that beset West Virginia. Frustration abounded.

Robert C. Payne, 45, owner of Business Computer Service in Charleston, and Henry E. Payne, III, 49, owner of Payne Engineering in Putnam County, West Virginia, and Florida, joined by Charleston attorney Fred F. Holroyd, 52, decided in 1984 to start a business journal to cover the state business scene. Robert Payne was aware that numerous tabloid-size business journals had emerged across the country, especially in urban markets. He took the lead in establishing the newspaper enterprise, moving it into his Business Computer Service building at 1210 Smith Street in Charleston.

Robert Payne believed the entire state of West Virginia, although it traditionally had been geographically and economically diverse, would provide an adequate market for a business publication. He saw the state and its 1.8 million people as the equivalent of an urban market that could support a business publication. Further, Payne believed *The State Journal* would serve businesses as a marketing and advertising medium and also provide business owners and managers a forum through which they could express their opinions and receive news about business activity in the state. The two brothers pooled a

relatively small sum of money and opened the doors of the new business on October 1, 1984. Robert Payne had hope that *The State Journal* would become a West Virginia version of the *Wall Street Journal*, a lofty goal for an under-capitalized business.

Robert Payne, who acquired articles of incorporation for *The State Journal* on September 17, 1984, from the West Virginia Secretary of State, hired a former jewelry and Yellow Pages sales representative, Dee Rumbaugh, to be *The State Journal's* advertising sales manager and first employee. He then hired this writer to become editor of what at first would be a weekly tabloid publication. Robert Payne's decision to publish as a weekly would become a matter of contention between the two Payne brothers.

*The State Journal* debuted October 18-21, 1984, at the Charleston Chamber of Development and Commerce's trade show, Cavalcade of Trade, at the Charleston Civic Center. The first edition of *The State Journal* bore the date Monday, October 22, 1984. The son of Henry Payne, III, Henry E. Payne, IV, now a highly respected and nationally syndicated cartoonist who is based in Detroit, Michigan, designed the original nameplate, which included a stylized map of West Virginia.

Robert Payne's goal was to emulate the appearance of the *Wall Street Journal*. Rather than photographs, the first issues of the newspaper used high-contrast photographic images that were intended to mimic the *Wall Street Journal's* famous line drawings of people whose names appeared in the newspaper's stories.

Of the inaugural 24-page issue's content, 42.8 percent was advertising, most of which came from the Charleston-area market. The issue included 21 advertisements, which represented the following companies:



American Office Systems, Charleston;  
Exutone, Dunbar;  
Kanawha Valley Bank, Charleston;  
Jefferds; St. Albans;  
Executive Air, Charleston;  
Advertising Inc., Charleston;  
*The State Journal*, Charleston;  
Prudential-Bache, Charleston;  
New England Life; Charleston;  
Business Computer Service (two advertisements), Charleston;  
Creative Enterprises;  
The Computer Doctor;  
McDonough Caperton Insurance Group, Charleston;  
Wesco Corporation, Charleston-Huntington;  
National Travel Service, Charleston;  
TAG Consortium;  
Syscon Systems Consulting, Incorporated, Charleston;  
The Computer Store, Charleston-Huntington;  
Parkline, Incorporated, Winfield;  
Magnet Bank, headquarters in Charleston.

The profile of advertisers in the first issue was consistent with Robert Payne's goal to provide businesses a means to advertise their goods and services to other businesses. For example, American Office Systems was able to communicate its services and products to the readers of a publication who would be attracted to business-related news and opinion. Payne believed *The State Journal* would be an efficient single advertising "buy" for business owners who sought to reach other businesses. An early advertising theme in *The State Journal* emphasized that the new publication offered a business-to-business, "rifle-shot" approach for advertisers. Payne believed general circulation newspapers and broadcast advertising missed the mark for business-oriented advertisers because those media serve readers and viewers who never would use a major insurance company, computer service provider, or specialized business equipment supplier.

Business Computer Service, owned by Publisher Robert C. Payne, would be a consistent advertiser. Business Computer Service had a close relationship with *The State Journal*. It provided technical and administrative support for the publication, including computer services, payroll, billing, and other business functions.

For its first issue and through most of the first year of publication, *The State Journal* depended on a Charleston, West Virginia, printing and direct mail business, Direct Mail, Incorporated, to assist with pre-press production and distribution of the publication. Robert Payne, relying on his computer expertise, arranged to transmit news and editorial copy from the BCS/*The State Journal* offices to Direct Mail, Incorporated, which was about three blocks away. A series of embedded computer codes in the transmission allowed typesetter operators at Direct Mail to generate paper galleys of type from phototypesetters at the correct specifications, i.e., type size, column widths, etc. *The State Journal's* personnel would pick up the offset type and return to the Smith Street offices for paste-up. *The State Journal* also reached an agreement with Direct Mail that called for the company to use its databases to generate about 10,000 mailing labels that included addresses to businesses across the state. Those names would become the majority of *The State Journal's* initial readership.

Robert Payne negotiated a printing agreement with Phil Fourney, who managed Star Printing in Ravenswood, West Virginia. The company published a weekly newspaper and a shopper that served the Ravenswood market. The company also did substantial contract commercial printing and agreed to print *The State Journal* and then label and “bag” the newspapers by zip code. *The State Journal* would deliver the newspapers to the U.S. Postal Service in Charleston.

Robert Payne's startup plan was to distribute newspapers free of charge through the mail and invite readers to subscribe. He looked at the initial free distribution plan as a form of direct-mail advertising. *The State Journal's* introductory subscription price was \$30 per year. Those first mailings generated some subscription sales, but the actual paid circulation would not grow much beyond 2,000 during the first several years of operation. The company made limited telemarketing efforts. It had a full-time receptionist call individuals who had received the newspaper free of charge and ask whether they would be willing to become paid subscribers. During those first years, the company always published 9,000 to 11,000 copies each issue for distribution to paid subscribers, to lists of selected professionals, such as attorneys, and through mailing lists that were developed to reach business owners and managers.

The front page in the first issue included a lengthy index that previewed several inside stories, including interviews published in question-and-answer format with two gubernatorial candidates, Republican Arch A. Moore, Jr. and Democrat Clyde See, and the two candidates for the United States Senate, former Governor John D. Rockefeller, IV and John Raese, the Morgantown businessman. The inaugural issue also included a profile of the West Virginia Roundtable, a statewide business support organization made up of chief executive officers and presidents; a column by attorney Holroyd about employment at will; a column by Henry Payne about the benefits of power generation; a story about the Cavalcade of Trade, the Charleston Chamber of Development and Commerce's trade show; and a syndicated business column by economic commentator Louis Rukeyser.

In its lead story, Robert Payne explained his reasons for starting *The State Journal*: “A statewide communications mechanism for West Virginia business does not exist. So why not make one?” Saying he found existing media coverage of West Virginia business lacking, he then offered this observation:

Businessmen read voraciously. They read national publications – the *Wall Street Journal* and *Inc.* They read trade journals, like *Coal Age*. But nowhere is there a place for West Virginia businessmen to read about West Virginia business.

West Virginia businessmen are married to West Virginia whether they like it or not. Where you are is the source of your well-being. And frankly, my well-being isn’t well enough.

And rather than complain, the typical businessman does something about it. Starting this newspaper is the most practical thing I can do.

In an editorial on a page titled “Editor’s Page,” the newspaper made several pledges to its readers in an unsigned column, “A new voice.” Those pledges included:

- We intend to report the news as we find it, while also commenting on the issues of the day.
- Business, like other human endeavors, is not an exact science. If you object to the content or tone of the stories, columns or opinions that we publish, please let us know. We’ll give you an opportunity to be heard.
- Our advertisers and readers are our bread and butter. At the same time, as a responsible journal, we must separate news decisions from advertising considerations. We must maintain that separation to maintain the independence so vital in gathering and objectively reporting business news.

A signed opinion piece by Robert Payne on the Editor’s Page offered the following hopeful note:

This paper is born with the idea that West Virginians can and will pull on their bootstraps, will solve their own problems and will bask in the resultant glory. We will also laugh occasionally, smile frequently, frown occasionally, and, yes, we will point our finger when it can be done productively.

Expertise and experience that exists within the business community is solicited in the form of guest commentary and interview [sic]. Letters to the editor are encouraged.

Some in the business community were optimistic about the introduction of a business publication. Charles Ryan, founder of the media marketing company Charles Ryan Associates in Charleston, offered this assessment:

I was ecstatic that someone was going to do it. The need for business coverage was not being met. Charleston Newspapers' startup of business tabloid sections about the same time bears me out. There was a distinct void in terms of business coverage in Charleston Newspapers. The idea of someone being dedicated to covering business was appealing, and *The State Journal* was a catalyst for it. It caused the step-up on the part of journalism toward the coverage of business itself.

I questioned whether it would make it. It was a stretch for advertisers. No one could have done it without many lean and losing years while getting it in place. I was aware of the reluctance of advertisers, and that there was not a great deal of capital. ... It took commitment plus money.

As Charles Ryan mentioned, Charleston Newspapers, the umbrella company that has managed *The Charleston Gazette* and the *Charleston Daily Mail*, also quickly noticed the startup publication. Charleston's two daily newspapers began weekly tabloid business sections in 1985. A principal at Charleston Newspapers eliminated any doubt that the daily newspapers' move was meant to combat the new publication. Ned Chilton, the late publisher of *The Charleston Gazette*, once confided to this writer that Charleston Newspapers' new business sections indeed were intended to be a response to *The State Journal*.

*The State Journal* published its second edition on November 26, 1984. In its third issue, published December 3, 1984, the newspaper declared in a story on Page 1: "*The State Journal*, born only weeks ago, now is teething and coming out each week."

While Robert Payne had been committed to publishing a weekly newspaper, his brother Henry, a key investor in the fledgling publication, believed the newspaper should

establish itself as a monthly first and then grow gradually into a weekly publishing cycle as the enterprise gained financial strength. To support a weekly publication, Robert Payne had to build a larger advertising sales staff, expand the newspaper's editorial department, add some clerical help to assist with circulation and subscription sales, and bring on personnel to assist with advertising and page production. *The State Journal's* payroll grew significantly. Advertising and subscription sales would not keep pace. Adding to the problem, *The State Journal* was poorly capitalized. Its first cash infusion was less than \$80,000, a sum that soon would be depleted.

During a March 15, 1985, board of directors meeting, Robert C. Payne was elected chairman, and Fred F. Holroyd was elected secretary. Frustrated with his brother's decision to establish a weekly publishing cycle, Henry E. Payne, III withdrew from the board of directors within the first six months the newspaper was in operation. More significantly, Henry Payne also would suspend his financial support.

While Robert Payne and Advertising Manager Dee Rumbaugh worked on sales, this writer hired two full-time reporters and developed a network of news correspondents. Norman Kilpatrick of Charleston, West Virginia, and Jeanne Reall of Columbus, Ohio, joined the staff as full-time reporters. Kilpatrick focused primarily on coal, electricity generation, and transportation. Reall primarily covered state government. The network of correspondents included no fewer than eight writers during that first year. They reported business news from the following West Virginia communities: Morgantown, Fairmont, Clarksburg, Wheeling, Parkersburg, Beckley, Martinsburg, and Bluefield. They submitted stories about business-related activities in their home regions. *The State Journal* agreed to pay correspondents \$50 per published story, an amount that was

substantially higher than the prevailing rate at that time among West Virginia publications.

Dee Rumbaugh left *The State Journal* after only two months. John Womack of Charleston, West Virginia, succeeded her as advertising manager, but he would stay only a few months. By October, with expenses mounting and revenue lagging, five sales representatives were serving the Charleston and Huntington markets. The newspaper also listed sales representatives working in the Elkins, Wheeling and Bluefield markets. It listed The Harris Group/New York as its national accounts representative.

Robert Payne maintained the weekly publishing schedule as best he could. Printing, mailing, and payroll expenses mounted. Without the support of his brother Henry and with his personal resources all but exhausted, Robert Payne sought additional investors and cash. On November 23, 1985, the Board of Directors discussed severe financial losses. Robert Payne reported that five new shareholders had acquired 27.5 shares of stock in *The State Journal* for their total \$27,500 investment and that he and Fred F. Holroyd had co-signed a note with Charleston National Bank for \$50,000. But the new investment and loan would not be enough to sustain the newspaper's weekly publishing schedule. Robert Payne had no choice. He knew he had to take dramatic steps.

Robert Payne notified his staff during the Thanksgiving holiday of 1985 that he would lay off reporters Kilpatrick and Reall and change the compensation agreement with the advertising sales staff. Sales representatives would be paid strictly on a commission basis. Payne left the subscription price at \$30 per year even though *The State Journal* had established itself with subscribers as a weekly publication. The

newspaper received few complaints regarding the change in the publishing schedule or the subscription price.

Payne notified readers of the change in the publishing schedule in the December 2, 1985, issue. A Page 1 item directed readers to an editorial that appeared on Page 18, the Editor's Page. Under the headline "The State Journal – The Business Plan 1986," Robert Payne offered these candid comments:

*The State Journal* is reorganizing its publishing schedule from a weekly to a monthly.

Our original plan this time last year envisioned either a monthly or a weekly. Optimism sprinkled with brashness overruled a more conservative approach. We decided to reach out beyond our grasp and go weekly to test the waters.

On hindsight we learned many things over the year.

1. We learned that our paper was read extensively throughout the business community across the state. Time and time again we heard reports of *The State Journal* being found open on executives' desks.

2. We learned that business advertising budgets mirror the business climate in this state – not generous.

3. We learned how to publish a newspaper at an unheard of low cost.

4. We learned that a year's experience is a prerequisite for many advertisers, particularly the national ones.

5. We learned that a more gradual approach to business growth was the way to proceed.

6. We learned exactly what our costs in every area were, while last year at this time we had only estimates to go by.

The current business plan allows for us to accomplish our original goal of providing a profitable business newspaper for the West Virginia region. We extend a sincere thank you to our supporters who have subscribed and our business friends who advertised with us.

We depend on each of you for your support in the coming year.

*The State Journal* limped across the one-year finishing line. With advertising sales improved but still erratic, *The State Journal* would struggle for the next several years. The newspaper continued to publish and distribute 10,000 copies per month. Paid circulation would approach and exceed 2,000 during the first few years, a rate that



generated about \$60,000 per year. But *The State Journal* was unable to market the publication in a meaningful way, and circulation sales remained constant. Growth, however, was unremarkable.

Minutes from the Board of Directors meetings in 1986, 1987, and 1988 show a continued frustration with sales and the difficulty in finding a successful advertising sales manager. By December 1, 1988, Henry Payne had resumed his involvement in *The State Journal*. He requested that Robert Payne reward this writer with 40 shares of stock in *The State Journal*, about 11 percent of the total. One year later, Henry Payne became chairman and would vote Robert Payne's stock; this writer was appointed vice president; Lizbeth Robey, Robert Payne's daughter who had served as bookkeeper for *The State Journal*, became secretary and director. In October 1989, Robert Payne decided to leave his Smith Street property and move Business Computer Service and The State Journal to office space on the ground floor of a municipal parking garage at McFarland and Virginia streets in Charleston.

While Robert Payne would give up his leadership role regarding the most important financial matters, he was about to make his most enduring contribution to *The State Journal*. In January 1990, he hired Lorenelle White, a former radio and television advertising sales representative in the Charleston market, to become a sales representative. Within two months, she would become sales manager and start *The State Journal* on the road to economic recovery and profitability.

## Technology Advancement

One of Robert Payne's early contributions to publishing in West Virginia arose from his computer background. He recognized that Apple, the computer company, had developed the Apple Macintosh, which held potential for publishers to do typesetting for a fraction of the cost of phototypesetting, the industry standard of the day.

Phototypesetting required the use of expensive equipment and expensive photosensitive paper to produce paper "gallies" of type that were pasted on newspaper grid sheets. Known as "cold type," phototypesetting replaced the previous industry standard, "hot type," which used molten metal and the famous Linotype equipment to produce metal type that compositors assembled into pages.

At the same time, Aldus, a software development company, was a pioneer in the development of pagination software that allowed journalists to design news pages on video screens and produce paper printouts of news pages on laser printers. The new computer-driven process offered substantial cost savings. Initially, however, Apple was unable to configure adequate memory to store pages that had been "pasted up" electronically. Robert Payne successfully assembled a hard drive into a network that would allow the storage of electronic pages. *The State Journal*, using the Aldus software program Pagemaker and Robert Payne's hardware system, would typeset entire news pages by October 1985. While Payne's innovation would pay a small dividend for *The State Journal* with regard to reduced production costs, it would benefit other small newspapers in West Virginia.

Bill Childress, who retired in 2003 after more than 20 years as executive director of the West Virginia Press Association in Charleston, recalled the startup of *The State Journal*:

I have a two-pronged impression of the startup of *The State Journal* – one involving content, the other production. Bob Payne was a pioneer in the use of desktop publishing. Because of our circumstances at that time, my perception of the content was colored by the technological achievements. *The State Journal*, to the best of my knowledge, was the first newspaper in the country to use a desktop publishing system to put out its pages. We (West Virginia Press Association and *The State Journal*) put on in early 1986 what I believe was the first desktop publishing seminar in the country.

Childress said widespread flooding in November 1985 wiped out about a dozen newspapers in the state, and managers of those newspapers were looking for replacement typesetting equipment. At least a few newspaper owners attended the seminar at the Charleston Marriott, where Robert Payne and this writer demonstrated *The State Journal's* pagination system. Childress said some of the owners showed interest in the new technology. The Computer Store of Charleston, West Virginia, which participated in the seminar, put together an affordable equipment package for small newspapers for slightly more than \$12,000: two Apple Macintosh 512s, an Apple Laserwriter for galley type output, an Imagewriter printer for labels, and Aldus Pagemaker 1.0, the pagination software program.

Childress said newspapers began to replace their flood-damaged Compugraphic phototypesetting equipment with the lower-cost Apple package. Many of those newspapers, however, used the Apple equipment to produce galleys of type rather than fully paginated pages.

“It was like wildfire in a dry forest,” Childress said of the new interest in the Apple technology.

Robert Payne’s technological innovation also attracted interest nationally. In its March 15, 1986, issue, *Editor & Publisher*, a leading newspaper industry trade publication, reported a story, “Using personal computers to put out a newspaper.” The story appeared under the NEWS/TECH section of the weekly magazine. Written by George Garneau, the article went into detail about the technology that Payne used in his publishing system:

Robert Payne credits cheap personal computer pagination and laser typesetting for the tentative success of *The State Journal*, his year-old business newspaper in Charleston, W. Va.

The monthly *State Journal*, a 40-page tabloid with a partially paid circulation of 10,000, is turning a small profit after about a year, thanks to the low cost of buying and operating computerized composition equipment, according to Payne, the publisher.

Like a growing number of small newspapers around the nation, *The State Journal* is applying cheap new technology – personal computers and laser typesetters – to newspaper publishing.

Payne, who also has a computer business, uses three kinds of personal computers linked in a network. Ad composition and page makeup are done on Apple Macintosh personal computers, and tabloid-sized newspaper pages are printed – minus space for photographs – in two pieces on an Apple LaserWriter printer. The system also handles business functions, including circulation, advertising and accounting.

The system eliminates the need for a person to paste columns of typeset copy onto page mechanicals. It allows one editor to design and compose the entire newspaper, one page at a time, on the screen of a standard personal computer, speeding makeup and saving typesetting costs. Control is increased as last-minute changes can be made immediately.

“The cost of conventional typesetting was not economical from a newspaper standpoint,” Payne said. “The Macintosh system was so much less expensive (that) it allowed us to get the newspaper started and to get us to the point where we are profiting marginally after a year.” ...

Payne said the Macintosh system fits into his philosophy of using only industry standard equipment because it is easier to service than specialized equipment.

Garneau also delved into the specifics of *The State Journal's* typesetting system, including its relatively low cost. He quoted Payne as saying the early Macintosh's principal limitation was its inability to reproduce photographs.

## ***The Gazette and The State Journal***

The Payne brothers' disdain for *The Charleston Gazette* was a key reason for their venture into the newspaper business. They recognized, however, that their contempt for the state's largest newspaper would not by itself lead *The State Journal* to success.

*The Charleston Gazette* reported in late 1985 on Robert Payne's decision to change the newspaper's publishing cycle from a weekly to a monthly. *The Gazette's* editor at that time, the late Don Marsh, occasionally mentioned *The State Journal* in his column. For example, on December 10, 1985, Marsh wrote in a column about the size of state government in West Virginia. He cited an editorial in *The State Journal* that called for a 50 percent reduction in state government employment.

*The State Journal* occasionally offered critical analyses of *The Gazette*. And, on occasion, *The Gazette* would respond. In a July 6, 1990, column entitled "Why the Rich Don't Quibble," Marsh wrote about his vision of the sort of person who should run the state's principal environmental protection agency and a meeting that he and a *Gazette* reporter had with government officials about the leadership of the state environmental agency. He wrote:

We caught hell from *The State Journal*, a publication directed at businessmen. I read the *Journal* and think it is pretty good, despite its tendency to approach business in a style I identify with mimeographed reports that proud parents mail out at Christmas.

His column then quoted liberally from an editorial in *The State Journal* that criticized *The Gazette* editor and reporter Paul Nyden for participating in discussions with government officials about a government agency's management. *The State Journal* had

questioned whether a news organization's employees should participate in such an exercise and thus become newsmakers.

Perhaps one of the biggest surprises from *The Charleston Gazette* was its decision to publish a lengthy and largely favorable story about *The State Journal* by Matt Harvey of The Associated Press on Sunday, December 17, 1989, under a six-column headline: "5-year-old State Journal delivers, business leaders say." The story included favorable remarks from West Virginia business leaders. Excerpts follow:

"*The State Journal* is one of the best things the business community has going for it in the state," said Dick Northup, president of Appalachian Power of West Virginia. "The State Journal covers the whole ball of wax and I think it's a conduit for business."

Deborah Herndon, director of government and community relations for A.T. Massey Coal Co., said the newspaper is "an advocate for business like Radio Free Europe is an advocate for democracy." (p.20)

The story detailed Robert Payne's reason for starting the publication in 1984. The story said:

Payne borrowed the idea for *The State Journal* from similar operations in nearby states.

"I had traveled to Columbus, Pittsburgh, Washington, Atlanta, and in each of those cities there were successful business tabloids. I thought to myself, 'Why doesn't Charleston have one?'" Months later, it did.

The same Associated Press story also reported the paid circulation at the time – about 2,400 – and its annual gross sales – about \$300,000.

## **Lorenelle White Arrives**

Henry Payne took a more active role in the management of the business at the end of the 1980s. He had disagreed with his brother's decision to establish *The State Journal* as a weekly publication and withdrew for a time from participating in any management decisions regarding the business.

During its first five years, the publication was relatively static in its subscription and advertising sales. As a result, it accrued substantial debt. With little or no progress in reducing the company's debt, Robert Payne would make way for the return of his older brother. But it was Robert Payne's decision to employ Lorenelle White in February 1990 as an advertising sales representative that would become the turnaround point in the history of *The State Journal*.

White had experience as a radio advertising copywriter and in radio and television advertising sales. She had been an account executive for WVAH, a Putnam County television station whose sales staff she joined in July 1982. She became local sales manager there but left West Virginia for Charleston, South Carolina, where she again worked in television advertising sales until she returned in 1989 to the Charleston, West Virginia, market. Her husband, William E. White, would manage WVAH-TV in Putnam County, and Lorenelle White sought media-related sales opportunities outside of the broadcasting industry.

White, who became advertising sales manager within two months, brought new energy, commitment, organization, and focus to the advertising sales staff. By May 1990, the Board of Directors recognized the improvement in sales under White's leadership. By November 1991, the Board was discussing shareholders' desires to see a



profit of 12 percent to 15 percent of gross sales, a relatively modest margin in the publishing industry. The newspaper had established some sales discipline, was addressing its debt, and finally was able to contemplate sustained profitability.

White began a trend that would serve the paper well. She identified opportunities to allow organizations to sponsor special sections that would be inserted in *The State Journal*. *The State Journal* would sell advertising into the special sections, and the partner organizations would provide editorial content. The newspaper would assemble the publications and label them as special advertising supplements. At a relatively modest cost, client organizations would have a means to deliver their messages to a business readership, and, if they desired, they could obtain additional copies of the advertising sections for separate distribution. *The State Journal* also accepted an invitation from Ernst & Young, the accounting firm, to become the media sponsor for Ernst & Young's statewide Entrepreneur of the Year program. *The State Journal* remained a sponsor from the time it introduced the program in West Virginia in the early 1990s until it suspended the program in 2004.

Lorenelle White focused on increasing advertising revenue and related sales. She later would stage professional seminars and special events, such as the annual Who's Who in West Virginia Business awards editorial section and associated luncheon. The Who's Who in West Virginia Business event typically attracts more than 300 people, including the governor, to a downtown Charleston hotel. It has become a major business-related event in the state and a major revenue opportunity through advertising sales in a special newspaper supplement. White also built on the success of *The State Journal's* annual special section, 55 Good Things About West Virginia. The section, which the

newspaper started in 1986, focuses on people, institutions, natural resources, history, and places that are unique to West Virginia. The section historically has been the newspaper's most lucrative special project, totaling 48 to 60 pages and providing the publication with substantial advertising revenue.

This writer resigned as editor in July 1992 to become the editor of the Register-Herald, a daily newspaper in Beckley, West Virginia. At a July 7, 1992, meeting, the Board of Directors named reporter Abbey Zink as the new editor. Advertising sales manager Lorenelle White became general manager. Management would remain stable at *The State Journal* for four years. During that time, White improved sales and allowed the company to retire longstanding debts.

At a December 27, 1993, board meeting, Henry E. Payne, III, Robert Payne, Lizbeth Robey, and Lorenelle White discussed the improved sales and profits the company had experienced during the year, the company's upgrade of computer equipment, and a new compensation plan for White, the general manager. It also authorized a dividend payment to shareholders at \$70 per share. That same year, *The State Journal* took its printing business away from Star Printing in Ravenswood after eight years. *The Parkersburg News & Sentinel*, a newspaper and publishing business owned by Ogden Newspapers, Incorporated with headquarters in Wheeling, West Virginia, would print the newspaper for three years before *The State Journal* contracted with Charleston Newspapers to print the newspaper, label copies, and deliver them to the local post office for shipping. Charleston Newspapers would maintain the account until late 2002, when *The State Journal* contracted for printing and mailing preparation services with Clarksburg Publishing Company in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

Board of Directors minutes show that Henry Payne, White, and Robey decided on November 16, 1994, to not pay dividends to preserve capital. Board minutes said Henry Payne emphasized that he wanted the newspaper to restore its role as the *Wall Street Journal* of West Virginia. In addition, the Board discussed an expected 10 to 12 percent increase in annual sales and expected the profit margin to exceed the 15 percent goal.

The principal strategy to improve sales was simple. The newspaper expanded its publishing schedule to 24 issues in 1995. The editorial calendar for that year listed two issues each month. Each monthly regular issue would have a “focus” that included news coverage of banking; medical care and good health; manufacturing; travel, tourism, and conventions; and education. The “focus” sections were intended to give sales representatives additional opportunities each month to approach advertisers with a section that would attract readers who may have an interest in their particular business topics or sectors. *The State Journal* also published a special issue each month. Some would carry a regional theme and give advertising representatives opportunities to cultivate business in communities away from Charleston. Special issues included “Business & the Legislature” (January); “Business & the Legislature II” (February); “Pride & Progress I – North Central West Virginia” (March); “Pride & Progress II – Southern West Virginia” (May); “Women in Business” (June); and “Coal” (November). *The State Journal* would follow similar publishing schedules in 1996, 1997, and 1998.

In June 1996, editor Abbey Zink resigned to attend graduate school in Illinois. Reporter Jack Bailey, who had joined the staff in February 1993, became editor.

Neither White nor the Payne family emphasized circulation growth through 1997. The subscription price remained constant (\$30 per year) until January 1992, when the company added a 6 percent sales tax as a part of the \$31.80 annual sale price.

In 1997, *The State Journal's* principal owner, Henry Payne, decided to sell the publication to Lorenelle and her husband, William E. White, an experienced television executive. The transaction closed in March 1997. Reporting the sale in its April 7, 1997, issue, *The State Journal* said Lorenelle White was considering the possibility of restoring the publication to a weekly publishing schedule. She said she planned no changes in the staff, which then had reached 11 full-time employees.

Reflecting on her first exposure to *The State Journal* in February 1990, Lorenelle White said during an interview on October 25, 2001, at *The State Journal's* offices in Charleston:

I saw *The State Journal* as a medium that had a different client base, (one) that was not retail on which television subsists. I didn't want to compete with (husband) Bill, but I did want to use my sales experience.

She said she was not aware when she joined the company in January 1990 of the extent of financial difficulties facing *The State Journal*. White said:

I knew he (Robert Payne) needed someone to bring in money and turn around the situation. I really don't think I grasped the magnitude of the problems until it was all taken care of.

She also reflected on the Whites' acquisition of *The State Journal*:

We didn't have deep discussions about it. By 1997, we had brought the company out of debt. I met yearly with Henry to discuss the business, including my compensation package. Henry liked *The State Journal* as a bully pulpit, but he realized that it also was an investment. As for Bob, it was his original dream, and he had done a good job in getting the product established.

White said it was during her 1997 annual meeting with Henry Payne when she first asked whether he would be interested in selling the newspaper: “I was surprised. He was eager to sell,” she said. Henry Payne asked Lorenelle White to establish a price. She hired lawyers and accountants to assess the value of the newspaper. She had contacts through her husband with media executives who also helped establish price. She recalled: “I went to Henry with the offer, and he accepted it. There was no negotiation.”

Lorenelle White said her first goal was increasing revenue. She commented during the October 2001 interview:

The bottom line is everything. That was what I was taught from day one. By having control, I could reinvest the profits in the business and not have a demand to meet a higher profit margin. I felt that was important to the newspaper.

Under Lorenelle White, the newspaper adopted a Mission Statement and a Vision Statement. They were:

#### **Mission Statement**

*The State Journal* strives to report on business in West Virginia accurately, completely and thoroughly; to educate the community at large about the contribution business makes to West Virginia; to promote change that enhances economic development and progress and to treat our readers and advertisers with fairness, integrity and respect.

#### **Vision Statement**

Working as a team, we are committed to providing a publication that reflects, at all times, accuracy in content, excellence in production and timely delivery of news and information. We are dedicated to creating a profit level that allows the company and its staff to continue to excel and grow. We will continually strive to increase the level of service, and to build quality, long-term relationships with our readers and advertisers.

The Whites decided to resume a weekly publishing schedule in 1999. That same year, the newspaper established its first Internet Web site, as well as a *The Daily Journal*,

a news service delivered to subscribers via facsimile machines and e-mail. The newspaper's content itself included stories from The Associated Press, whose service *The State Journal* had acquired. In this writer's opinion, *The State Journal's* extensive use of wire service copy during its transition to a weekly publication was indicative of poor editorial planning and management. The editors over time had reduced the newspaper's traditional use of copy from correspondents from various communities across the state. Prior managers recognized that correspondents provided valuable and cost-effective business news coverage from numerous West Virginia communities for a newspaper that professed to have a statewide reach. White said she believed *The State Journal* also could develop ancillary products, such as a media directory that lists contact information for newspapers and television and radio stations, to achieve higher margins. At the same time, White was certain her decision to resume a weekly publishing schedule made business sense. She said during her October 2001 interview:

Today, we are not at the same profit margin as when Henry owned the paper, but we are at the same level as other papers our size. Had we stayed monthly, we probably would be at the 15 percent level. But as a weekly, our expenses are higher, but being a weekly gives us credibility and visibility that you can't get as a monthly. We are doing more revenue than we could have done as a monthly. We're averaging 33-34 pages per issue, and we could not have had that volume as a monthly. As it stands now, it would take three, four years before this is a mature operation. It provides me with a nice day-to-day challenge and a nice income, but it's not a mature business.

In October 1996, *The State Journal* became a member of Association of Area Business Publications, a national trade group based in Los Angeles, California. White, who learned the publishing business exclusively at *The State Journal*, considered her exposure to the association to be critical to the success of the business. She said:

That is one of the best things I've done. It gets me with other publishers, and I learn from them about their strategies on advertising and circulation. It has provided me benchmarks on costs of editorial and sales. The membership is open, right down to the financials.

She said she never accepted Robert Payne's critical view of *The Gazette* as a foundation upon which to build the business. She said:

I don't believe that you can succeed in business by taking on someone rather than selling *The State Journal*. He wanted to take business from the *Gazette*. He had no organization, and they had all the organization in the world.

I always looked at *The State Journal* less as a passion and more of a business. I don't believe that with the level of our circulation and who we are serving that we're really going to change the media. We're a small business that is preaching to the choir. I have made some efforts to broaden the circulation, to have a voice with non-business people.

But I did not forget why we're here from a journalistic perspective, and I wanted to see this paper get into the hands of people who want to get the other side of the story. I am not a journalist. My efforts have been to provide our editorial staff with a platform. I don't dip into that arena very often.

Historical sales figures clearly demonstrate the role that Lorenelle White played in building the business since her arrival in January 1990. The newspaper posted its first million-dollar sales year in 2000, a sum that includes advertising and circulation revenue and sales of ancillary products. *The State Journal* reported the following advertising sales revenue through 2001, the final year Lorenelle White and her husband owned the publication:

1986 (monthly)	\$130,828
1987 (monthly)	\$155,955
1988 (monthly)	\$207,947
1989 (monthly)	\$180,204
1990 (monthly)	\$259,178
1991 (monthly)	\$399,017
1992 (monthly)	\$363,191
1993 (monthly)	\$370,181
1994 (monthly)	\$464,103

1995 (24 issues)	\$487,768
1996 (24 issues)	\$540,984
1997 (bi-weekly)	\$611,444
1998 (bi-weekly)	\$720,542
1999 (weekly)	\$880,157
2000 (weekly)	\$1,048,310
2001 (weekly)	\$1,318,635

While White focused largely on advertising sales, she addressed circulation revenues largely through rate increases. With the newspaper raising its subscription rate only once during its first 13 years, the new ownership increased the subscription price in January 1998 to \$33.92 for one year or \$59.36 for two years. Reflecting the move to a weekly publication, the prices again increased in January 1999 to \$46.76 for one year or \$74.20 for two years. The company in January 2000 increased the price to \$54.06 for one year, \$74.20 for two years, or \$98.58 for three years.

The subscription rate remained relatively static (and through the transition from a weekly to a monthly publication) until 1998. In effect, *The State Journal* nearly doubled its annual subscription price during the first two years of the Whites' ownership and its transition to a weekly publication, which the data below show:

October 1984 (weekly)	\$30 (one year)
January 1992 (monthly)	\$31.80 (one year; sales tax added)
January 1998	\$33.92 (one year)
	\$59.36 (two years)
January 1999 (weekly)	\$48.76 (one year)
	\$74.20 (two years)
January 2000	\$54.06
	\$74.20 (two years)
	\$98.58 (three years)

As *The State Journal* increased revenue, it expanded its staff incrementally. At the end of 2001, the last year the Whites owned *The State Journal*, the company had 17 full-



time employees. The company listed the following staff members in its November 26, 2001, issue:

Editorial	6
Advertising sales	4
Business/Circulation	3
Production	2
Administration	1
Publisher	1

Lorenelle White and her husband entered discussions in late 2001 with representatives of West Virginia Media Holdings, LLC, a newly formed media company that aspired to have statewide influence. The Whites decided to sell *The State Journal* to West Virginia Media Holdings. It was the new company's first acquisition.

The Charleston *Sunday Gazette-Mail* published a story in its November 25, 2001, edition that quoted Lorenelle White as saying: "I am looking forward to this. I think it is the next good step for us. We have between 35,000 and 40,000 readers each week. I don't expect any staff changes. Everything should remain like it is." (White's statement regarding readership reflected her belief that several employees at a workplace read each newspaper.)

In its November 26, 2001, issue, *The State Journal* reported Lorenelle White as saying the newspaper had worked to position itself as a business resource. The story said:

Within the past year, for example, *The State Journal* has cosponsored several business events and business rewards programs.

"That dedication to being a business resource will certainly not change. In fact through West Virginia Media Holdings, we should have the opportunity to be even more of a resource," White said.

The same story included comments from Bray Cary, president and chief executive officer of West Virginia Media Holdings:

“One of the reasons that we formed West Virginia Media Holdings was the hope of having a forum to let people know that good things are happening, and can happen here in the Mountain State,” Cary said. “For years, *The State Journal* has already been doing that, keeping the business community informed about some of the exciting companies and positive developments that are occurring.”

## New Ownership

Cary and W. Marston Becker founded West Virginia Media Holdings in August 2001. Their stated goal was to build the state's leading news and broadcast entertainment company. With its ownership and management in the hands of West Virginians, West Virginia Media promotes itself as a statewide business that operates four television stations and *The State Journal*, which it now calls a statewide "business and leadership publication." In its promotional materials, West Virginia Media says it is committed to benefiting the people of West Virginia while serving the company's advertisers, employees, and shareholders.

West Virginia Media Holdings says it assembled its media properties strategically.

The company closed on the following acquisitions:

- *The State Journal*, acquired December 12, 2001.
- WBOY-TV (NBC affiliate), Clarksburg, acquired December 13, 2001.
- WTRF-TV (CBS affiliate), Wheeling, acquired April 30, 2002.
- WOWK-TV (CBS affiliate), Huntington-Charleston, acquired May 24, 2002.
- WVNS-TV (CBS affiliate), Beckley-Bluefield, acquired February 28, 2003.

The company says the properties "together provide a highly attractive media purchasing market for advertisers who seek to reach the greater West Virginia market."

The company also noted that ongoing collaboration among the television stations and *The State Journal* and increased investment in newsgathering "have made West Virginia Media the state's news and information leader." The company also said it has upgraded technology and infrastructure at its member stations and added "additional reporting capacity" in each market.

West Virginia Media took a gradual approach in assuming control and influence over *The State Journal*. After committing time and resources to acquire the television

properties, West Virginia Media Holdings management increased news staffing at *The State Journal*. West Virginia Media employed Len LaCara, managing editor of *The Herald-Dispatch* in Huntington, to become managing editor of West Virginia media. He would report to Holly Shannon, vice president for news who was stationed at WBOY in Clarksburg. West Virginia Media assigned LaCara the responsibility of redesigning *The State Journal*. He used several successful business journals, especially the *Charlotte Business Journal*, as models for the new design, which would appear on January 31, 2003. *The State Journal* later made a conscientious decision to expand its coverage of state government and the judiciary, two areas of influence that affect families and businesses across West Virginia. In one of the few immediate changes involving news, the publication halted the distribution of *The Daily Journal* through electronic mail and facsimile machine.

By mid-2002, Lorenelle White would give up her role as publisher to assume advertising sales management duties at WOWK, a sizable broadcast property that had immediate need of experienced sales leadership. West Virginia Media hired Gary Adkisson, publisher of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, to serve as publisher of *The State Journal*. Within two months, Adkisson would hire this writer to replace the editor, Jack Bailey, who would join the staff of the *Charleston Daily Mail*. *The State Journal* left its Virginia Street address in late November 2002 and moved to 13 Kanawha Boulevard West, Charleston, where WOWK-TV maintained its Charleston operations. The newspaper expanded its payroll from 18 employees to 24 by March 2003 and would adopt a new size, format, and design. In the meantime, West Virginia Media adopted the following Mission Statement for its broadcast properties and *The State Journal*:

West Virginia Media Holdings' vision is to be West Virginia's news resource. We are a statewide media business that is committed to benefiting West Virginia while serving its clients, employees, shareholders, and communities.

West Virginia Media Holdings, locally owned and managed, is the **first truly statewide media voice**, reaching more than 80 percent of West Virginians with newsgathering and entertainment capabilities while serving as a steadfast advocate for our state's growth and prosperity.

It also adopted the following News Philosophy, which appears on the West Virginia Media Web site:

West Virginia Media's vision is to be the No. 1 news resource for our viewers and readers. Our mission is to report about our state and surrounding communities **fairly, accurately and completely** with the best informed and most professional news staff.

As professional journalists, we will:

- Assure **fair and balanced** coverage of all perspectives.
- Focus on **meaningful stories** that have an impact on our viewers' lives.
- Seek background information and conduct research to present the **most accurate and in-depth stories** possible.
- While examining the specific, **offer a broader context**.
- Treat interviewees with respect.
- Ask the **tough, but fair** question.
- Report on **what's good** about our community, as well as **expose wrongs**.
- Expect to be **held accountable** for producing fair and accurate reports.

In fulfilling our public trust to observe and report the news, West Virginia Media hopes to **improve the quality of life** for all those people who call this area home.

Through collaboration with the television station news staffs, reporters for *The State Journal* appear frequently on West Virginia Media television stations to offer analysis or news coverage for the broadcast markets. As a result, West Virginia Media Holdings said all media outlets benefit as the partner stations and *The State Journal* share news content, resources, and facilities to enhance news reporting. The company said it has made a special effort to focus on in-depth reporting on state government, economic growth, local news of statewide interest, human interest, and sports.

*The State Journal* also made a subtle change in how it positioned itself in the market. While the new ownership wanted to maintain its coverage of business in West Virginia, it also wanted to present the publication as a medium for the leadership of West Virginia, including political and community leaders. The new owners reasoned that such a change would broaden the newspaper's appeal to readers and increase its strength as an advertising medium. Advertising for *The State Journal* that appeared frequently on West Virginia Media television stations made reference to its role as a publication for West Virginia's leaders.

The newspaper's management was eager to use its new resources and identified the state's long-term problems with workers' compensation as a subject worthy of exploration. *The State Journal* staff learned that key figures in state government, including the governor and legislative leadership, were concerned about the growing debt associated with the workers' compensation system, as well as the system's negative effect on the West Virginia economy. *The State Journal* staff then launched a four-week series on May 14, 2003. The series, "Broke & Broken," looked at the workers' compensation problem from a variety of perspectives.

To accomplish the project, news management had to reallocate weekly coverage responsibilities to allow two reporters to spend several weeks investigating the background behind the workers' compensation crisis. Directing the project was West Virginia Media Managing Editor LaCara, who worked with reporters Juliet A. Terry and Beth Gorczyca, graphic artist Natalie Belville, and this writer.

The Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors recognized *The State Journal* in 2003 in its fourth annual contest for excellence in state government coverage. ACRE, a

national organization of journalists who cover state governments that was formed in 1999, selected *The State Journal* for public service/in-depth reporting in the magazines and weekly newspapers category. ACRE presented the awards during the annual ACRE conference August 8-10, 2003, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

As part of the workers' compensation coverage, West Virginia Media television stations reported on the workers' compensation issue. That coverage also used the "Broke & Broken" theme. While the series appeared in *The State Journal*, West Virginia Media Holdings television stations included reports from *The State Journal's* Terry and Gorczyca as part of their coverage.

*The State Journal* again received national recognition in June 2005, when the Alliance of Area Business Journals, an international group of comparable publications based in Los Angeles, presented *The State Journal* with its gold award for best overall design among small tabloid newspapers. In addition, *The State Journal* received the second-place (silver) award in the best newspaper competition small tabloid division. AABP presented the awards June 11, 2005, at its annual summer conference in Detroit.

A June 17, 2005, story in *The State Journal* reported that AABP said 60 publications submitted a record-breaking 689 entries in 28 categories for the 2005 Alliance Editorial Excellence Awards. AABP judges provided an analysis of *The State Journal* in awarding the gold award for best overall design among small tabloids:

Every issue of this publication offers a variety of visual

solutions. Illustrations, photographs, infographics, fact boxes and other devices are all used throughout in ways that add value to the narrative text. The information graphics, in particular, are plentiful and well done. The organization of the publication – which uses section-front-style pages – adds to the inviting flow of the newspaper. The covers reflect clear attempts to provide variety and visual appeal. Typography and other design elements present a consistent feel from front to back.

In presenting the silver award in the best newspaper competition in the small tabloid division, the judges said:

From the front page, it's clear what *The State Journal* values: news. This newspaper takes the time, and space, to provide readers with depth. Stories were well reported and well organized, particularly the special report on health care.



## Management Changes

In October 2002, West Virginia Media Holdings hired Gary Adkisson, the publisher of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, to serve as publisher of *The State Journal* and vice president/publishing for West Virginia Media Holdings.

Adkisson left the company in December 2003. Robert R. Hammond, a resident of Beckley, West Virginia, and a regional executive with Community Newspaper Holdings of Alabama, succeeded Adkisson in January 2004. Hammond left the company in September 2004.

After Hammond's departure, management of West Virginia Media Holdings named this writer as publisher of *The State Journal* in its September 17, 2004, edition. I have maintained the editor's position. Christa Phillips, the former sales manager for *The State Journal*, returned in November 2004 as general sales manager. She had worked 10 years at the newspaper for Lorenelle White and left in early 2003 to join White on the sales force at WOWK-TV. Since returning to *The State Journal*, Phillips has worked to re-establish advertising accounts that she and Lorenelle White had cultivated during her previous tenure at the newspaper.

*The State Journal* staff today has 20 full-time employees, as well as two part-time employees. The breakdown of full-time employees is:

Editorial	9
Advertising sales	8
Production	2
Events/Circulation	1

*The State Journal* eliminated some administrative and distribution positions and now depends on West Virginia Media Holdings for administrative services, such as

billing and payroll. At the same time, *The State Journal* has expanded its news and sales staffs. For example, the newspaper in 2003 hired a full-time reporter who lives in Morgantown. The newspaper accepts stories routinely from correspondents who are paid for each story published. Frequent contributors live in Gerrardstown, Morgantown, Parkersburg, Princeton, Weirton, Wheeling, and White Sulphur Springs.

## Epilogue

*The State Journal* survived and ultimately prospered because of the commitment and talent of Lorenelle White. She left *The State Journal* in August 2002 to lead the advertising sales organization at West Virginia Media Holdings television station WOWK, which serves the Huntington-Charleston market. White would work in that capacity for only a few months before she was diagnosed with lung cancer. She took an extended medical leave from the company and died on May 1, 2004, at age 48.

Upon Lorenelle White's death, the newspaper eulogized her with stories and the following editorial:

Lorenelle L. White  
1955-2004

Lorenelle White was a builder and teacher.

Motivated, tireless and charming, Lorenelle arrived at *The State Journal* in 1990 and made it her home. It was the start of a 14-year relationship. She immediately built the struggling newspaper's sales organization and set the publication on a growth path that stands today as testimony to her success.

Many knew her simply as Lorenelle, a distinctive name for a distinctive and distinguished woman. West Virginia's leaders recognized her energy, enthusiasm and intellect, inviting her to contribute to a variety of boards and public endeavors that enrich the state she called home.

It was fitting that Lorenelle and her husband, Bill, bought *The State Journal* in 1997. She committed her talents to return the publication to a weekly publishing schedule. All along, she was benevolent and generous. She sought out talented and energetic employees and depended on them to build a newspaper that strived to improve its service to readers. She taught them how to succeed and how their success could benefit West Virginia.

She believed in the men and women who lead West Virginia. She was one of them, a peer and colleague who valued the opportunities that economic success creates for our communities and the entire state.

Lorenelle's passing at such a young age has prompted many of West Virginia's leaders to reflect on her many contributions to build a better West Virginia. They are resolute in their respect. They are firm in their admiration.

We join them in mourning the loss of Lorenelle White. We know she

would have us carry on her work. We unite with her family and her many friends and admirers in celebrating her accomplishments. She leaves a legacy of leadership that endures.

We all shall miss you, Lorenelle.

## *The State Journal Timeline*

**September 17, 1984** – West Virginia Secretary of State issues articles of incorporation for The State Journal Corporation.

**October 1, 1984** – Publisher Robert C. Payne is elected chairman of the corporation board; Fred F. Holroyd, secretary; Henry E. Payne, III, treasurer; Dan Page joins staff as editor; Dee Rumbaugh is sales manager

**October 22, 1984** – The first edition of *The State Journal* is published as “West Virginia’s business newsweekly” and makes its debut at the Charleston Chamber of Development and Commerce trade show, the Cavalcade of Trade, at the Charleston Civic Center in Charleston, West Virginia.

**December 3, 1984** – *The State Journal* begins weekly publishing schedule.

**March 15, 1985** – During a Board of Directors meeting, Robert C. Payne is elected chairman; Fred F. Holroyd is elected secretary; Henry E. Payne, III withdraws from the board of directors.

**October 14, 1985** – *The State Journal* makes extensive use of Macintosh desktop publishing and pagination system in the layout and outputting of news pages.

**November 23, 1985** – Board of Directors discusses severe financial losses; president reports that five new shareholders have acquired 27.5 shares at a cost of \$27,500 and that the Robert C. Payne and Fred F. Holroyd have co-signed a note with Charleston National Bank for \$50,000.

**December 2, 1985** – Publisher Robert C. Payne announces in the newspaper’s December 2, 1985, issue that *The State Journal* will reorganize and become a monthly publication. The staff is reduced dramatically.

**March 15, 1986** – *Editor & Publisher*, the national newspaper trade weekly magazine, publishes a lengthy story by George Garneau regarding *The State Journal*’s use of inexpensive personal computers to paginate the newspaper.

**December 10, 1986** – The Board of Directors discusses difficulties in finding advertising sales manager.

**May 1, 1987** – The Board of Directors discusses financial problems and lack of operating capital

**December 1, 1988** – Robert C. Payne and Henry E. Payne, III discuss difficulty in finding sales manager. At Henry Payne’s suggestion, Dan Page receives 40 shares of stock, about 11 percent of the total.

**October 1989** – Robert C. Payne moved Business Computer Service and *The State Journal* to ground-level office space in a municipal parking building at McFarland and Virginia streets, Charleston.

**November 13, 1989** – Henry E. Payne, III, Robert C. Payne, and Lizbeth Robey discuss the newspaper's losses. Henry E. Payne becomes chairman and will vote Robert C. Payne's stock. Dan Page is appointed vice president; Lizbeth Robey, who has served as accountant, becomes secretary and director.

**January 1990** – Lorenelle White joins *The State Journal* advertising sales staff and soon becomes sales manager.

**May 3, 1990** – Board members Henry E. Payne, III, Dan Page and Lizbeth Robey discuss improved advertising sales performance under sales manager Lorenelle White.

**November 23, 1991** – Board members Henry E. Payne, III, Dan Page, and Lizbeth Robey discuss improved sales and profit picture. A debt to Internal Revenue Service and the sales manager's contract are discussed. Henry E. Payne reports that shareholders want to see a profit of 12 to 15 percent of gross sales

**July 7, 1992** – Board members Henry E. Payne, III, and Dan Page and Lizbeth Robey and advertising sales manager Lorenelle White discuss the resignation of editor Dan Page. Assistant Editor Abbey Zink is named editor effective July 13. Lorenelle White is named general manager.

**June 30, 1993** – *The State Journal* pays off note to Wesbanco Sissonville and satisfies its lien to the Internal Revenue Service.

**December 27, 1993** – Henry E. Payne, III, Robert C. Payne, Lizbeth Robey, and Lorenelle White discuss improved sales and profits for year. The company upgrades and modernizes computer equipment and provides a new compensation plan for general manager. The company authorizes the first dividend to shareholders at \$70 per share.

**February 1993** – Jack Bailey joins the news staff as reporter.

**November 16, 1994** – Henry E. Payne, III, Lorenelle White, and Lizbeth Payne discuss and expected 10 to 12 percent increase in annual sales; profits should exceed the 15 percent goal. They agreed to expand the paper to 24 issues in 1995 with special areas of focus in half of the issues. The board decided to pay no dividends paid to preserve capital. Henry E. Payne, III wants the newspaper to restore its role as the *Wall Street Journal* of West Virginia

**September 20, 1995** – Henry E. Payne, III, Lorenelle White, Lizbeth Robey, and Robert C. Payne plan 24 issues for 1996, when new revenue will help offset increased publishing/newsprint costs.

**June 1996** – Editor Abbey Zink resigns. Staff member Jack Bailey becomes editor.

**March 31, 1997** – The board approves the sale of all stock to Lorenelle White and William E. White, her husband.

**June 26-28, 1998** – Lorenelle and William E. White discuss plans to restore the newspaper's weekly publishing schedule in 1999. *The State Journal* expands and acquires additional space in municipal parking garage offices on Virginia Street.

**June 1999** – *The State Journal* establishes its first Internet Web site.

**July 1999** – *The State Journal* establishes *The Daily Journal*, a daily news service available by facsimile and e-mail.

**January 2000** – Sales of *The State Journal* in 1999 exceed \$1 million for the first time in company history.

**November 26, 2001** – West Virginia Media Holdings LLC, a statewide media company, announces the acquisition of *The State Journal*. News reports say Lorenelle White will remain publisher. The *Charleston Gazette-Mail* publishes a story about the sale in its November 25, 2001, edition.

**October 2002** – Gary Adkisson, formerly publisher of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* in Bluefield, West Virginia, becomes publisher of *The State Journal* and vice president/publications of West Virginia Media Holdings. He succeeds Lorenelle White, who was named sales manager of WOWK-TV.

**November 2002** – Dan Page becomes editor of *The State Journal*, succeeding Jack Bailey, who would join the staff of the *Charleston Daily Mail*.

**January 2004** – Robert R. Hammond, formerly a regional executive for Community Newspaper Holdings Inc. and former publisher of the *Register-Herald* in Beckley, is named publisher of *The State Journal* and vice president/publications for West Virginia Media Holdings. A resident of Beckley, West Virginia, Hammond succeeds Gary Adkisson.

**May 1, 2004** – Lorenelle White, former owner and publisher of *The State Journal* and sales manager of WOWK-TV, dies from lung cancer at age 48.

**August 2004** – Robert R. Hammond leaves his post as publisher of *The State Journal* and vice president/publishing for West Virginia Media Holdings.

**September 2004** – Dan Page is named publisher of *The State Journal*. He remains editor.

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