

DAN TOMPKINS: MOUNTAIN EDITOR

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AN ABSTRACT

Rural, isolated Jackson County, North Carolina, was the home of Dan Tompkins, editor of the Jackson County Journal of Sylva. Jackson County rests in North Carolina's Appalachian Ranges. In the early twentieth century her inhabitants were restricted because the dearth of transportation and communication facilities.

Many of the limitations on Jackson County folks were removed through the efforts of Dan Tompkins. For thirty-one years Tompkins published an honest paper on the reading level of the citizens of Jackson County. Tompkins was a progressive and active leader of his area. Through the Journal's editorial column and as representative in the General Assembly of North Carolina, he sought to break down the isolation and bring progress to Western North Carolina and Jackson County.

Tompkins dreamed of making Western North Carolina the "Switzerland of America." His dream could be realized, he felt, if the area had paved roads, tourist accommodations, a national park in the Smokies, better public facilities, and a better education for the mountain people.

Tompkins was not just a dreamer, he was a man of action. Therefore, many of Tompkins' dreams were to become realities

for Jackson County and Western North Carolina. Dan Tompkins was largely responsible for the paving of Highway 107 from Sylva to the South Carolina line. Because of his heated editorials and active support in the state legislative, Tompkins was an important force in preventing removal of Western Carolina Teacher's College from Cullowhee to Asheville. Tompkins was also instrumental in getting the state to appropriate money for expanding the facilities of the college.

To make realities of his dreams, Dan Tompkins sacrificed any financial success that might have been his. His determination to represent ably the people who elected him to public office was one cause of the folding of the Journal. Tompkins was a most generous individual; he never had very much with which to assist his needy friends materially, but he did possess what was perhaps most needed--a smile and encouragement.

Tompkins was an asset to Jackson County. His energies were given unselfishly to the benefit of progress for Western North Carolina. Jackson County and the area owe much to the powerful pen and influence of Dan Tompkins.

CHAPTER I

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY JACKSON COUNTY

A rural county named for Andrew Jackson is nestled among the Smokey, Cowee, and Balsam Mountains of Western North Carolina.¹ An early citizen, James Cathy, said in comparing Jackson County to a highland lass that "she could pillow her head on the brow of the Great Smokey; compose her body in the valley of the Tuckasseigh; [sic] outstretch her arms, the one on the Cowee and the other on the Balsam; rest the concave of her knees on the Blue Ridge, and twiddle her toes in the Chatooga and Toxaway Rivers."² Barely a decade had elapsed after Cathy's poetic description before Jackson County had to surrender territory both to the north and south.³ Jackson County, which was formed in 1851, at present is bounded by Haywood and Transylvania counties on the East; Macon and Swain counties on the West; Swain and Haywood counties on the North; and South Carolina and Georgia on the South.⁴ Jackson County's terrain is composed of elevated plateaus, rolling hills, rugged mountains, and

¹Executive Committee of the Jackson County Centennial Celebration, Panorama of Progress (Sylva, North Carolina: Herald Publishing Company, 1951), p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 11.

³Ibid., p. 13.

⁴Chamber of Commerce Sylva, North Carolina, "Jackson County, North Carolina" (Sylva) p. 1. (mimeographed.)

picturesque and fertile valleys.⁵ Throughout this area, where numerous Cherokee Indians once roamed, the beautiful, winding Tuckasegee is swelled by numerous cold mountain trout streams.⁶ Now, as always, most of Jackson County is heavily forested; the extent of forest indicates the slow growth of this isolated, mountainous county.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Cherokee warriors were silent. Jackson County had three incorporated towns, Webster, Sylva, and Dillsboro. As late as 1910 none of the towns had a population as great as 2,500.⁷ To this date only Sylva had achieved a population large enough to be classified as urban. Obviously, Jackson County, in 1910 was rural; however, if one is to understand the social, political, and economic situation in the county, attention must be given to the modest population centers that did exist.

Webster, located in the approximate geographic center of the county, was the county seat until 1913. Atop a beautiful hill overlooking the Tuckasegee, the small, rural county seat consisted of the old courthouse, a jail, two hotels, three country stores, and a drug store. In 1911 these buildings, with the exception of the jail and the old

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶Executive Committee of the Jackson County Centennial, op. cit., p. 11.

⁷United States Bureau of Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, Volume III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 302.

brick courthouse erected in 1854, burned and were never rebuilt.⁸ This disaster contributed to a growing movement to transfer the county seat from Webster to Sylva. New facilities were necessary because of the age and insufficient space of the courthouse. Finally, after much heated discussion and a popular vote, the county electorate approved removal of the county seat, despite the fact that the cost of the new building was five times greater than the cost of improving the facilities in Webster.⁹ At the time of the move in 1913 Sylva was a promising community whose destiny had been determined by the recent location of an east-west railroad through the town.

Sylva in 1912 had a population of eight hundred. The business establishments in the town included one of the largest tanneries in the state, as well as a saw mill, a planing mill, shirt and overall factory, marble works, a wholesale grocery, a wholesale millinery, two livery stables, a hardware store, five general stores, two drug stores, a meat market, two blacksmiths, a bank, a hotel, a harness shop, a jeweler, and a newspaper.¹⁰ An indication of Sylva's progressive spirit was the presence of such modern conveniences as telephones and electric lights by 1907.¹¹ The

⁸Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall, personal interview.

⁹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, June 26, 1906.

¹⁰Advertisement in the Jackson County Journal, August 9, 1912.

¹¹Executive Committee of the Jackson County Centennial, op. cit., p. 25.

social life of Sylva community was centered in its mercantile establishments and in the Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal churches.¹² The nearby small community of Dillsboro gave further promise to a bright future for the Sylva area. As county seat Sylva lay at the heart of men's activities in Jackson County.

In 1910 the population of Jackson County was 12,998. All of the inhabitants were listed as rural by the Bureau of Census.¹³ The principal income during the first decade of this century came from small, hillside, family farms. In 1947 a total of 2,250 adult workers out of 4,647 were employed in agriculture.¹⁴ Unless a young man stayed on the family farm or went to larger metropolitan areas, his choice of occupations was limited. A small copper mine near Cullowhee employed thirty-one mountain men; construction work involved 262. Besides agriculture the next largest number - 679 - worked in manufacturing. However, the Mead Company, which later employed the largest number, was not established in Sylva until 1928.¹⁵ Transportation, communication, and other utilities engaged 146; wholesale and retail 366; and business 515.¹⁶

¹²Jackson County Journal, op. cit.

¹³United States Bureau of Census, op. cit., p. 301.

¹⁴Bureau of Census, County Data Book: 1947. A Supplement to the Statistical Abstract of the United States. (Washington: Government Printing Press, 1947), p. 286.

¹⁵Executive Committee of the Jackson County Centennial, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁶Bureau of Census, op. cit., p. 286.

The jobs available did not require any advanced education. Had education been a requirement for employment, few would have qualified. Five hundred fifty four adult illiterates composed nineteen per cent of the population.¹⁷ As late as 1943, 69.4 per cent of the people over twenty-five had only five years of education; only 15.4 per cent were educated at the high school level.¹⁸ It is well to note that in the first two decades of the twentieth century the Webster school term was never longer than seven months.¹⁹ Moreover the teachers of the more than fifty one-room schools²⁰ seldom had more than a seventh grade education.²¹ Attendance was especially low during the winter months. The winter weather was so rough and travel conditions so inadequate that students could not reach the schools.²²

Travel was not a problem merely for students. Travel in the county was either by foot, horseback, or horse and buggy. None of these were dependable modes of travel, for with rain the mountain roads were so poor that horses and buggies would mire in the mud. Mrs. Everett Brown related a story of her travels on Jackson County roads as follows:

¹⁷Bureau of Census, County Data Book: 1910. A Supplement to the Statistical Abstract of the United States. (Washington: Government Printing Press, 1910), p. 303.

¹⁸Bureau of Census, 1947, op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁹Statement by Mrs. David Brown, personal interview.

²⁰Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 6, 1909.

²¹Statement by Mrs. Ida Moss, personal interview.

²²Ibid.

It was Christmas, 1905. School was out at Cullowhee. We were going to Sylva, riding in a three seated hack pulled by two horses. We got close to where Rolling Green Motel is now and the hack sunk down to the axle. We unloaded our baggage so the horses could pull the hack. We had to walk with the baggage clear through Lovesfield Community. It took us three hours to get from Cullowhee to Sylva, eight miles. We missed the morning train and had to spend the day waiting for the afternoon train.²³

There were no bridges over many of the roaring mountain streams and rivers.²⁴ The first car in the county was owned by Dr. Albin Nicholas in 1915.²⁵ With the car he was still unable to travel the vast majority of the roads often or for any distance. Even in 1922 when there were more cars, such as the sports model Durant owned by Mrs. Ida Moss, road conditions did not make for pleasant afternoon drives.²⁶ Even the streets of Sylva were knee deep in mud during the winter and rainy seasons.²⁷ The Jackson County Journal in blazing print gave the condition of the roads in 1908, complaining of: "The mud! Mud!! Mud!!!"²⁸

The citizens of the county were aware of the necessity for better roads, yet little was done toward building permanent roads. Some road work was done by local citizens who contributed a few days of labor each year toward keeping

²³Statement by Mrs. Everett Brown, personal interview.

²⁴Statement by Mrs. David Brown.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Statement by Mrs. Ida Moss.

²⁷Statement by Mr. John Morris, personal interview.

²⁸Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, February 21, 1908.

up the roads near their homes. On another occasion the editor of the Journal said, "We reckon you will get a Journal next week, if you don't it is because we're working on the roads."²⁹

Although the roads were hazardous within the county, it was somewhat easier for people to come into or leave the county via the railroad. There were four daily passenger trains running through the picturesque valleys and gorges from Murphy via Sylva to Asheville. The passenger trains were relied on heavily by Jackson County travelers since the cost was inexpensive. A ticket from Asheville to Sylva cost seventy-one cents, and for only a few cents more one could travel to Murphy. When school was dismissed at the normal in Cullowhee, extra baggage cars had to be added.³⁰

Though the railways were used extensively, the trains were slow and often late because of the inadequate tracks. The tracks had a greater adverse effect on freight cars. Even though there were two daily freight trains traveling east and two west, freight transportation was slow and uncertain. The atrocious tracks and small engines made it impossible to pull heavy loads.³¹

While the trains were slow and unable to carry much freight, they did bring communications from outside Jackson

²⁹Ibid., October 31, 1913.

³⁰Statement by Mr. Chester Scott, personal interview.

³¹Ibid.

County's mountainous region. But once the news arrived in Sylva, it was slow in spreading over the county. Travel conditions, which have already been noted, limited unnecessary trips. Neither was communication by telephone an easy matter; the telephones were few and far between. When an emergency arose, people would walk for miles to reach the nearest phone.³² With the inconvenience of so few telephones, there was piecemeal spreading of news by telephone.³³ There were no radios in Cullowhee, North Carolina, before 1922.³⁴

Therefore, the only news, with the exception of the stories brought in by the travelers, came to the county in the form of newspapers. Subscribing to a large metropolitan paper was an extra expense that most could not afford. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, probably as few as twelve families owned subscriptions to the Atlanta Journal;³⁵ even fewer subscribed to the New York World. After 1925 the Asheville Citizen was available in Sylva, but again the subscription list was insignificant.³⁶ News gathered from these sources seldom spread outside the immediate families who were able to read it.

A means of local communication which would transmit news of local interest was needed. This need was met for

³²Statement by Mrs. Carlula Bryson, personal interview.

³³Statement by Mrs. David Brown.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Statement by Dean William E. Bird, personal interview.

³⁶Statement by Mrs. David Brown.

short durations by several local newspapers, for Jackson County had five local papers in a twenty year period. They were the Webster Herald; the Tuckaseegee Democrat (Webster); the Sylva Sentinel; the High School Advocate (Sylva); and the Jackson County Journal (Webster and Sylva). The Webster Herald, the first paper in Jackson County, was edited by William C. Tompkins and Frank Tompkins in the mid - 1880's. The Tompkins' brothers were medical doctors who had had newspaper experience in Kansas and Colorado before moving to Webster in 1884.³⁷ The Tuckaseegee Democrat, edited by Felix and Nellie Luck, was published in Webster during the period from December 1, 1888, until October 26, 1896.³⁸ The third paper, the Sylva Sentinel, lasted even a shorter time - a little over eight months in 1897. Felix Luck was also editor of this paper.³⁹ Misses Margaret Clegg and Lula Potts hoped to promote high schools through their paper, The High School Advocate, but they published only one time, on February 1, 1899.⁴⁰ With the short duration of the early papers, one would expect to see the fifth attempt fail just as quickly. It seemed for awhile as if this would happen, for

³⁷Special Staff of Writers, North Carolina Rebuilding An Ancient Commonwealth: North Carolina Biography, Volume IV. (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1928), p. 175.

³⁸Microfilm File of Jackson County Papers, Western Carolina College Library, Cullowhee, North Carolina, filmed in 1958 by North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰The High School Advocate (Sylva) February 1, 1899.

the Jackson County Journal passed through the hands of five different editors in a six year span. But in 1912 a spirited man with newspaper ink in his veins became editor of the Journal. Daniel Dean Tompkins took on a job that he struggled with for thirty-one years.

He was an important factor in the progress of Sylva and Jackson County. He published an honest and forthright paper which brought about many reforms and influenced many public policies.

Daniel Dean Tompkins was the product of an educated and cultured family.¹ He was born August 15, 1879, the third son of Dr. William Frank Tompkins and Annie Lock Tompkins.² His father was born in Michigan in 1850 and was reared in Kansas and Colorado. Dr. Tompkins took his professional training in the Louisville, Kentucky, Medical College. His first practice was at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and still with a young man he established himself permanently in Webster, North Carolina. In a brief period he built up a very large country practice, but found time to hunt and enjoy Miss Annie Lock. An unselfish man, he did not have injured his own health by the hardships he endured traveling over particularly inaccessible roads at all hours of the day or night, in all kinds of inclement weather. Never did he turn a deaf ear to any cry for help. Dr. Tompkins was also an active Republican; in fact he was chairman of the Executive

¹Statement by Hon. Edith Hill, personal interview.

²Statement by Miss Annie Lock, personal interview.

CHAPTER II

DAN TOMPKINS, THE MAN

Dan Tompkins' thirty-one year tenure as editor had its rewarding moments. He was an important factor in the progress of Sylva and Jackson County. He published an honest and forthright paper which brought about many reforms and influenced many public policies.

Daniel Dean Tompkins was the product of an educated and cultured family.¹ He was born August 15, 1890, the third son of Dr. William Frank Tompkins and Annie Luck Tompkins.² His father was born in Michigan in 1862 and was reared in Kansas and Colorado. Dr. Tompkins took his professional training in the Louisville, Kentucky, Medical College. His first practice was at Colorado Springs, Colorado. But while still a young man he established himself permanently in Webster, North Carolina. In a brief period he built up a very large country practice, but found time to court and marry Miss Annie Luck. An unselfish man, he may well have injured his own health by the hardships he endured traveling over practically impassable roads at all hours of the day or night, in all kinds of inclement weather. Never did he turn a deaf ear to any cry for help. Dr. Tompkins was also an active Republican; in fact he was Chairman of the Executive

¹Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall, personal interview.

²Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

Committee of his party in the Ninth Congressional District of North Carolina.³

The paternal grandfather was Dr. William Calvin Tompkins, who was born at Clyde, New York, in 1823. In addition to his medical practice, he was no foreigner to the demands of the fourth estate. His journalistic work took him to Kansas and Colorado, where he owned and published newspapers. In 1884 he moved to Webster, where he continued to practice medicine and publish a newspaper, the Webster Herald.⁴

Dan Tompkins' mother was born on Aspin Grove Plantation, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, September 23, 1867.⁵ Miss Annie Luck was the daughter of Felix A. Luck, editor of the Tuckasee Democrat (Webster) and the Sylva Sentinel.⁶

Daniel Dean Tompkins' immediate family included two brothers, Frank, (1886-1906),⁷ and Harry, (1888-1894).⁸ Harry died when Dan Tompkins was only four. Frank, the eldest brother, was killed while working on railroad construction near Saluda Mountain, North Carolina. His father died

³Special Staff of Writers, North Carolina Rebuilding An Ancient Commonwealth: North Carolina Biography, Volume IV (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1928), p. 175.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 19, 1943.

⁷Inscription on Tombstone, Methodist Cemetery, Webster, North Carolina.

⁸Ibid.

when Dan Tompkins was six.⁹ At the time of Dr. Tompkins' death, Mrs. Tompkins moved the remainder of her family into her father's home. There Tompkins' mother reared him with the assistance of three aunts and his maternal grandmother. All the family lavished attention on Dan, their favorite, and spoiled him.¹⁰ While living with his grandfather, young Dan became imbued with the newspaper business.

Education was the goal of the successful journalistic. Dan Tompkins received his elementary education in Webster; however, he attended high school in Waynesville, North Carolina, where his mother had taken a position as housekeeper for a doctor. He graduated in 1908 and immediately entered college at Wake Forest.¹¹ At Wake Forest he was in the academic department as a law student.¹² After two years he left school and returned to Webster to seek employment.

After returning to the Tuckaseegee Valley, he independently continued his education by wide reading. He loved to read and did so with devotion for the remainder of his life.¹³ Tompkins was recognized as the most intellectual

⁹Statement by Mrs. David Brown, personal interview.

¹⁰Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall.

¹¹Statement by Mrs. Everett Brown, personal interview.

¹²Special Staff of Writers, Ibid., p. 176.

¹³Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

man ever reared in Jackson County,¹⁴ and was considered to be self-educated.¹⁵

Dan Tompkins' intelligence and heart were the only large things the "little devil" possessed.¹⁶ His nickname, "little devil," described him well. He was the shortest man in the United States Army during World War I.¹⁷ Dan Tompkins was five feet two inches tall and weighed 125 pounds during his adult life.¹⁸ His eyes, which often portrayed his mischievous character, were grey; his hair was brown and his complexion fair.¹⁹

Dan Tompkins was described in colorful terms by those who knew him best, for he was very popular with the "folks" of Jackson County. He possessed a bubbling personality that endeared him to everyone. Dan Tompkins loved to entertain; he had a natural wit which made him attractive to all as a comedian.²⁰ Being the "live wire" that he was,²¹ naturally he was a "good mixer."²² Entertainment was not

¹⁴Statement by Mrs. Wilma Jones, personal interview.

¹⁵Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

¹⁶Statement by Mr. John Morris, personal interview.

¹⁷Statement by Mrs. Willa Allison Jones, personal interview.

¹⁸Statement by Mr. Leon Sutton, personal interview.

¹⁹Honorable Discharge United States Army, Recorded June, 1922.

²⁰Statement by Mr. Hugh Battle, personal interview.

²¹Statement by Mr. Leon Sutton.

²²Statement by Mr. Glen Hughes, personal interview.

his only concern; for he was always "Johnny on the Spot" when his neighbors needed his assistance.²³

Tompkins went out of his way to help the people of Sylva and Jackson County. He was so charitable that when he had only a dime in his pocket and pressing debts, he would not hesitate to give his last cent to anyone whom he felt needed it or asked for help.²⁴ "Dan really helped people"²⁵ and therefore was considered an "extra good neighbor."²⁶ Dan Tompkins enjoyed his neighbors and spent much time with them in recreational activities.

His favorite pastime was spending an afternoon at Cullowhee (Western Carolina Teacher's College) enjoying a football game.²⁷ Like everything he loved or believed in, Tompkins took football seriously. During one game played at Cullowhee, he disagreed with the referee. As the tide of game continued to turn against the Western Carolina team, he could stand on the sidelines no longer - Tompkins chased the referee down the football field with his umbrella.²⁸ Another sport that he especially enjoyed was baseball. Editor Tompkins once said "With a world

²³Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall, personal interview.

²⁴Statement by Dr. Wayne McGuire, personal interview.

²⁵Statement by Mrs. Carlula Bryson.

²⁶Statement by H. E. Battle, Sr., personal interview.

²⁷Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

²⁸Statement by Mr. Jim Gudger, personal interview.

series and a presidential campaign on our hands we have little time for trifling matters."²⁹ His love of baseball was evident through the space which he gave to a series called "Diamond Notes"³⁰ in the Journal. Although he was a fanatical football and baseball fan, the only sport that he ever participated in was an occasional golf game.³¹

Fishing was also a favorite activity and one at which he excelled.³² Through the Journal, he informed his readers frequently, "Boys' they are biting."³³ Another time he wrote,

We caught more than 25 trout one day this year and narry a daily paper mentioned it. Mr. Coolidge caught five and it was the leading news of the days. Dollars to donuts our trout were as good as his.³⁴

Dan Tompkins might have had close competition as fisherman, but when it came to hiking, there was no match. He walked on the Southern Railroad tracks from Sylva to Murphy many times; he also hiked several times from Sylva to Asheville.³⁵ It has already been noted that whatever Dan Tompkins did, he did enthusiastically.

²⁹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, October 8, 1920.

³⁰Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, June 23, 1916.

³¹Statement by Miss Sadie Luck.

³²Statement by John Morris.

³³Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, April 28, 1926.

³⁴Ibid., July 14, 1926.

³⁵Statement by Mr. Raymond Sutton, personal interview.

On Sunday morning Tompkins could always be found at the Sylva Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He was a devout member of the church, serving for years as teacher of the adult men's class. His thorough knowledge and understanding of the Bible made him a very good teacher.³⁶ He also served his church as steward.³⁷ He did not hesitate to disagree with the Bishop when the question of unification of the Northern and Southern Methodist Churches came up for discussion.³⁸

Tompkins not only practiced his beliefs but often wrote of his moral and religious convictions. Many times his beliefs appeared in the form of poetry. For example, when commenting on true Christmas spirit, he once wrote:

To bring light to the dark places of the earth;
 To bring happiness into weary hearts;
 To turn the tears of poverty stricken little
 children into smiles and laughter;
 To lessen the load of some heroic mother;
 To clothe suffering bodies;
 To feed stomachs aching for food;
 To fill bins with fuel;
 To fill empty stockings;
 To renew faith that is faltering;
 To give courage to those who are falling;
 To have good will for all men;
 This is the Spirit of Christmas.
 In a world that is in distress, brought about by
 its own folly, the Christmas tide should bring
 new determination to carry on, to follow the
 Star into the Twilight.
 There is Balm in Giliad
 There is a cure for the ills of the world;

³⁶Statement by Mr. John Morris.

³⁷Special Staff of Writers, ibid., p. 176.

³⁸Statement by Mr. Raymond Sutton.

But it is found not in pomp and circumstance;
 Nor clash of arms;
 Nor blare of trumpets;
 Nor gold, nor silver, nor precious stone,
 Nor spices from far Arabia.
 Not in the things which the sons of men are wont
 to lay their store, is to be found happiness,
 contentment, peace;
 But they are here for those who have eyes to see
 beyond the veil, for those who have ears
 attuned to hear the music of the invisible
 choir.
 To love peace, and brotherhood, and fellow man;
 To those who aspire to mighty deeds,
 To those who put their trust in gold,
 To those who speak the language of earthen tongues
 is not given to learn the secret of success.
 But unto him who follows the Star in meekness, and
 humility, it is given to find the manager, [sic]
 and learn the story of Love that transforms men's
 souls and sets them singing the halleluja [sic]
 chorus of the Angelic host even among the
 drudgeries and humble tasks of the world.
 Wise men came from the east, twenty centuries ago
 to worship at the manger cradle; and they were
 wiser than they knew.
 Only God could have thought of a scene so simple
 and yet so sublime, that its very simplicity
 would confound all the doctrines and philosophies
 of ages, and overturn kingdoms and principalities,
 in its onward march to the inevitable time
 when all men shall follow the course of the
 wise men, as guided by the Star, they come to
 pour out the jewels of their hearts and the
 fragrance [sic] of their souls before the humble
 manager. [sic]
 Only, Him [sic] who has learned that it is the
 simple, the homely the humble things that are
 really great can truly worship in the stables
 of the Bethlehem Inn.
 Look up. Live. Rejoice. For the old, old story
 of a peasant lady and lovely child is still
 ringing around the world.
 Come, worship with us at the manger, and every
 care will become trivial.
 Every burden light--every envy forgotten--every
 wound healed.³⁹

³⁹Tompkins, Daniel Dean, "The Spirit of Christmas,"
The Jackson County Journal, December 25, 1930, p. 1.

Tompkins fervor was not limited to religion. Before volunteering for the military service on July 17, 1917, he helped to organize the 105th Signal Corps at Sylva in June, 1917.⁴⁰ The corps became a part of the 30th Division, with Tompkins as sergeant.⁴¹ He was stationed at Camp Servier, South Carolina, until May 20, 1918, when he was assigned to Headquarters Detachment, One Hundred and Fifth Field Signal Battalion, Thirtieth Division, American Expeditionary Forces, and was sent to Camp Melts, Long Island, New York. He sailed to Europe, landing in England, June 6, 1918, and from there went to Calais, June 18, 1918.⁴² Dan Tompkins participated in all of the battles fought by his division in France, Belgium, and Flanders. The battles in which he was engaged were as follows: Voormezuela, Belgium, August, 1918; Belcourt, Nauroy, Estress, Montrehain, Brancourt, Premout, Busigny, Voux-Andigny, Escaufact, St. Benin, Sauplet, Beaville, and Mazinghien, France, September 29 through October 19, 1918.⁴³ While in the army, Tompkins never qualified as a marksman or a mounted soldier.⁴⁴

When the news came over the radio that Germany had accepted the Fourteen Points, Dan Tompkins was with his friend, John

⁴⁰Statement by Miss Sadie Luck.

⁴¹Statement by Mr. Raymond Sutton.

⁴²Special Staff of Writers, ibid., p. 176.

⁴³Honorable Discharge United States Army, Recorded June, 1922.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Morris of Sylva, in France. Morris was the company radio officer and received the news over the radio as guns were blaring outside the radio cabin. Elated with the news, Morris told Tompkins with the sounds of the battlefield for background. Tompkins replied tartly, "Why in the hell don't they stop shooting then?"⁴⁵

Tompkins never forgot his war time experiences. He was often called on to make speeches, some announced, but many more impromptu. He could talk on any subject with authority, but all his speeches started the same way regardless of the announced topic. They began either with a war story or "I can still hear the guns firing."⁴⁶ With the war heavy on his mind, he began to write editorials to help veterans.

Not only did he write editorials for the benefit of veterans, but he joined veterans groups as well as other local civic organizations. Tompkins was a leader in establishing the William E. Dillard Post Number 104 of the American Legion, and he was an active member until his death. He served the Post in a number of different positions; Commander, District Commander, Post Service Office, and County Service office of Jackson County. Dan Tompkins was also affiliated with Sylva Lodge Number 513, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of which he was master in 1928, the Bryson City Chapter Number 63, Royal Arch Masons, Waynesville Commandery Number 31, Knight Templar, and the Sylva Chamber of Commerce.

⁴⁵Statement by Mr. John Morris.

⁴⁶Ibid.

He assisted in organizing Sylva's Chamber of Commerce and acted as the first president in 1925-26, later serving again in 1931.⁴⁷

With all his activities it would seem that Dan Tompkins had little time for his personal life. But it was only a few years after he returned from France that he met Miss Emily Weigle of Augusta, Georgia, who was vacationing in Sylva with relatives of the Tompkins'.⁴⁸ Miss Weigle was a "typical southern aristocratic lady."⁴⁹ On Christmas Day, 1926, Dan Tompkins proposed marriage to Emily Weigle,⁵⁰ whom he married five years later on June 23, 1931.⁵¹ The new Mrs. Dan Tompkins was warmly received in Sylva by her husband's many friends. She, who was six inches taller than her husband, immediately entered into community activities in Sylva. She accepted a position as teacher of the second grade at Sylva Elementary School and continued in that position until her death in 1959.⁵²

Dan and Emily Tompkins lived with his mother and two aunts in the latter's Sylva home during the winter. The summers were spent alone in the old Tompkins family home at

⁴⁷Statement by Raymond Sutton.

⁴⁸Statement by Miss Sadie Luck.

⁴⁹Statement by Mr. Bjorn Ahlin, personal interview.

⁵⁰Statement by Mrs. Everett Brown, personal interview.

⁵¹Statement by Miss Sadie Luck.

⁵²Statement by Mr. John Morris.

Webster. In the cool of the summer evenings, Dan Tompkins sat on his front porch in his easy chair casually tilted on the back legs, his feet propped on the banisters, his thumbs tucked under his arms, with a contented look on his face.⁵³ The Tompkins enjoyed the privacy of their summer home. However, many afternoons they enjoyed entertaining their friends in their beautiful home which was well equipped with antiques.⁵⁴

Although no children were born to the Tompkins, both evidenced fondness and genuine interest in children.⁵⁵ They were happily married and seemingly adored each other.⁵⁶ His wife spoiled him just as his mother and aunts had always done.⁵⁷

Mrs. Tompkins provided significant financial assistance. Because of the diversified interest and time spent in writing, politics, civic organizations, and reading, Tompkins was forced to depend on his wife for supplementary income. It is doubtful whether the family could have survived financially without her teacher's salary.⁵⁸ Tompkins probably never did

⁵³Statement by Mrs. Mary Louise Buchana.

⁵⁴Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Statement by Mrs. Mary Louise Buchana and by Mrs. Edith Hall.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Statement by Dr. Wayne McGuire and by Mr. Leon Sutton.

a days' manual labor in his life.⁵⁹ He was not a drinker nor a gambler, but he was "sort of a free wheeler."⁶⁰ Therefore, the Tompkinses were never a family of financial means.⁶¹ In preference to diligent labor, Tompkins chose standing on the streets of Sylva and talking with the farmers who came into town. He knew them all.⁶²

It was standing on the corners, talking with his friends, the people of Jackson County, that Editor Tompkins gathered the local news that he published in the Journal.⁶³ He had begun writing for the Journal in 1910, when he returned to Webster from Wake Forest.⁶⁴ He became editor of the paper June 7, 1912,⁶⁵ at a time when he was still working part-time in Hooper's Drug Store.⁶⁶

Immediately after becoming editor and publisher of the Jackson County Journal, Dan Tompkins began to make progressive changes in the paper. In less than a month he had enlarged it from four to eight pages.⁶⁷ These additional pages provided more space for human interest stories, better coverage

⁵⁹Statement by Mrs. Wilma Jones, personal interview.

⁶⁰Statement by Mr. Leon Sutton.

⁶¹Statement by Dr. Wayne McGuire.

⁶²Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall and by Mr. Leon Sutton.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Special Staff of Writers, p. 176.

⁶⁵Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, June 7, 1912.

⁶⁶Statement by Dr. D. D. Hooper.

⁶⁷The Jackson County Journal, July 12, 1912.

of local news, additional advertisements, and the introduction of serial stories and sports.⁶⁸ The second change he made in the paper was in its format--the printing of five columns rather than four.⁶⁹ Another progressive and informative change adopted was the use of a bulletin board in the Journal office window to keep Jackson County folks informed of the latest news received by telegram.⁷⁰

In less than two years, Editor Tompkins was able to publish a twelve page paper. With this additional space the Journal brought more state and local news to the readers than they had ever had. A new section was added to the front page, "Grist of the Week's News," a synopsis gleaned from large dailies and presented in paragraph form.⁷¹ Moreover an intimate and colorful series was begun which was written by a local citizen who signed his column each week, "The Old Boy."⁷² His articles included jokes on local and county gossip, and discussions on morals, religion, and local politics. The author of this thesis believes that Editor Tompkins composed "The Old Boy" articles, for the style of writing and the ideas were so often identical with those expressed in the editorials.

⁶⁸Ibid., September 9, 1913, May 22, 1914, etc.

⁶⁹Ibid., July 26, 1912.

⁷⁰Ibid., November 1, 1912.

⁷¹Ibid., May 22, 1914.

⁷²Ibid., June 18, 1915.

The editorials and the front page, until 1915 were always devoted to local news. Even with World War I raging in Europe, little attention was given news of the war until the United States and more particularly, Jackson County, became involved. However, though, from March until April, 1915, the third page did carry a monthly resume of the war which was mostly human interest. Tompkins was writing for a public that could say, "we liked the Journal because it was stuff and people we knew, not all that stuff we didn't know anything about anyway."⁷³ So his war coverage was not an account of the actual progress of the war; but human interest stories that the many disterested and isolated citizens of Jackson County desired to read.

By 1916, however, the paper had grown to include more national news and pictures. Even a section for women had been added that covered fashion designs for children and ladies with pictures of latest styles.⁷⁴ Another very interesting section "Easy Lessons in French For the Soldier Boys" was initiated September 21, 1917.⁷⁵

The above mentioned changes in the Journal were halted when Tompkins volunteered for military service and left both Sylva and the Journal. While he was away the paper was managed by Everett Brown, a life long friend and employee, who edited the paper with fewer pages than before

⁷³Statement by Mrs. Edith Law, personal interview.

⁷⁴Woman's Section the Jackson County Journal, July 17, 1916.

⁷⁵The Jackson County Journal, September 21, 1917.

the war.⁷⁶ His policies were similar to those of Editor Tompkins; his major emphasis was that of advocating home support for the soldiers. One frequent question which headed the editorial column was: "What are the people at home doing to encourage the boys at camp?"⁷⁷

Although Tompkins was no longer editor in fact, he continued to contribute to the Journal. He wrote a series of letters published under the heading of "Camp Chatter," in which he informed Jackson County readers what Jackson County men were doing in the army camps.⁷⁸ Once he was shipped to France his letters became fewer and fewer.

The war ended and once more Editor Tompkins returned to work on the Journal. Tompkins, the returned soldier, believed that the war had insured a wonderful future for all, that it had wiped out all prejudices and therefore everyone should strive toward a common goal.⁷⁹ Tompkins' goal was to improve conditions in Sylva and Jackson County. His ideas and objectives were to be, inevitably, shared editorially.

⁷⁶Ibid., August 3, 1917.

⁷⁷Ibid., August 31, 1917.

⁷⁸Ibid., September 7, 1917, October 5, 1917, July 26, 1918, and September 6, 1918.

⁷⁹Ibid., June 20, 1919.

CHAPTER III

EDITORIAL POLICIES

Editor Tompkins had bright hopes for the future of Sylva and Jackson County. He was devoted to the progress of both; his life was given to ideas and dreams for building up Western North Carolina by improving Jackson County. Tompkins hopes and efforts were evident in the editorials of the Journal.

On the third page, first column of every edition, the readers of the Journal found Tompkins' editorial comments and paragraphs. The editorials were short, concise, and directly to the point. Tompkins wrote what he believed was true and best for Jackson County regardless of consequence.¹ In his editorials his readers found wit, sarcasm, moral judgments, and the Democratic political view on local, state, and national affairs.

Tompkins' column carried one theme consistently: "To put the Jack in Jackson County."² This he felt could be done through improving roads, initiating longer compulsive school terms, building up Western Carolina Teacher's College, encouraging manufacturing establishments to locate in the county, and making public works improvements in Sylva.

¹Statement by Mrs. Everett Brown, personal interview.

²The Jackson County Journal.

Improving the appearance of Sylva was the plea of the young editor in the early years of his career. His desired to see the streets of Sylva cleaned.³ Impelled by Tompkins' frequent appeals in the Journal, the city council passed an ordinance to have the streets cleaned, but little was accomplished. Thus Tompkins reminded the city council, "The Journal was under the impression that an ordinance was passed sometime ago ordering the removal of the impediments and unsightly objects from the street running parallel with the railroad. Those fines of \$10 a day would help the schools this winter."⁴ Horses left along the streets while farmers shopped resulted in unsanitary conditions and unsightly messes on the main streets. Editor Tompkins pointed out that the farmer supported the town; therefore, the business establishments should provide public water and a hitching lot for the farmer's horses.⁵ It was only a short time after his series suggesting the hitching lot that one was made available.⁶ Tompkins also, somewhat less successfully, requested that the people of the town help keep Sylva clean by using the city dump instead of making their own.⁷

³Ibid., June 6, 1913.

⁴Ibid., July 10, 1914.

⁵Ibid., January 10, 1919.

⁶Ibid., March 7, 1919.

⁷Ibid., March 23, 1919.

Pleased with the accomplishments of his clean up Sylva campaign, Editor Tompkins was encouraged to demand more significant improvements for Sylva. He hoped to develop the tourist trade by urging the building of better accommodations. This suggestion was made almost weekly in 1924, in the editorial column, by a one sentence statement of fact, printed in a manner designed to draw special attention to it. For example,

Sylva
Needs
A
New
Hotel.⁸

The year 1925 came and still Sylva had no new hotel; the demand for such a hotel was again expressed. "Every day in every way Sylva needs a new hotel more and more."⁹ The headlines on September 16, 1925, stated triumphantly: "Sylva Gets A New Hotel."¹⁰

About the same time Editor Tompkins had begun a new campaign to bring industry to Jackson County. Again his method was the same, a one sentence statement of fact: "Sylva needs a flock of furniture factories."¹¹ This need was restated in the Journal until Mead announced that

⁸Ibid., October 10, October 17, October 24, and October 31, 1924.

⁹Ibid., June 24, 1925.

¹⁰Headlines in the Jackson County Journal, September 16, 1925.

¹¹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, July 29, 1925.

it would build a plant in Sylva. Tompkins expressed his feelings thusly:

Hot Dog! [sic]

Hot diggity dog!

Yes, sir! She's Sylva's baby!

It was not a furniture factory but it was employment for Jackson County citizens.

Another need of Jackson County was keenly felt by Editor Tompkins. Inspired by his father's concern for medical care, he lamented the lack of facilities for treating the sick of Jackson County. This problem he also popularized through his columns. He wrote: "Another thing badly needed in Jackson County is a hospital"¹³ and "Sylva is ready to have a hospital with pretty nurses in [sic] everything."¹⁴ Later in blazing headlines Editor Tompkins announced "Hospital Nears Completion."¹⁵ Although the hospital was established, its financial difficulties were many. Tompkins employed his pen to prod the citizens of Jackson County to send contributions to help finance the hospital.¹⁶ He never reported the results of the drive for local support, but the hospital did remain in operation.

¹²Ibid., December 3, 1927.

¹³Ibid., January 9, 1925.

¹⁴Ibid., October 6, 1926.

¹⁵Ibid., March 10, 1927.

¹⁶Ibid., December 8, 1930.

Tompkins was indeed an advocate of progress. This was especially evident in his efforts to improve the county's roads. The methods he used in urging road improvements were unique even for him. It was not rare to see just the one word, "Roads!", heading the editorial column.¹⁷ Tompkins advocated several ways of improving the roads. One of the first suggestions was to use convict labor to build roads;¹⁸ secondly, he suggested that citizens work on roads near their homes.¹⁹ In the early years of World War I the idea of using German prisoners to build a highway from Asheville to Atlanta through Sylva was suggested by the Journal.²⁰

Editor Tompkins feared that without roads Jackson County would be left off the map;²¹ moreover, he realized that the county could be the key to the road situation in Western North Carolina.²² He wanted to see roads radiate out from Jackson in all directions. When the state announced roads coming into Sylva, the Journal was ecstatic. He wrote, "Sylva is not as famous as Rome, but all roads lead here just the same."²³ When the actual paving started, Dan

¹⁷Ibid., June 14, 1912.

¹⁸Ibid., June 24, 1913.

¹⁹Ibid., October 31, 1913.

²⁰Ibid., May 18, 1917.

²¹Ibid., January 24, 1919.

²²Ibid., February 7, 1919.

²³Ibid., November 11, 1925.

Tompkins celebrated by using one of his favorite slang expressions: "Four concrete mixers pouring roads leading into Sylva. Hot Dog!"²⁴ There were two improvements in roads that the public spirited editor desired. He wanted the streets of Sylva and the road to Cullowhee paved. He sought four miles of paved streets for Sylva.²⁵ His editorials in the years 1924, 1925, and 1926, concentrated on the need for paving roads. Major emphasis was placed on the county road number 106 from Sylva to Cullowhee.²⁶ He wanted the road paved from Sylva to Tuckaseegee as close to the school at Cullowhee as possible.²⁷

There were several reasons why Dan Tompkins stressed the necessity of paving Highway 106. He believed that "...106 must be paved if Cullowhee Normal is to prosper."²⁸ Highway 106 Tompkins pointed out was the "only ingress and egress to Cullowhee School."²⁹ The Journal suggested that it would be financially beneficial to Jackson County and Western North Carolina to pave Highway 106 to the South Carolina line.³⁰ Tompkins observed that the "wheels of

²⁴Ibid., June 9, 1926.

²⁵Ibid., August 11, 1926.

²⁶Ibid., January 19, 1927.

²⁷Ibid., June 30, 1926.

²⁸Ibid., March 6, 1927.

²⁹Ibid., March 16, 1927.

³⁰Ibid., February 23, 1927.

commerce stop in winter"³¹ because of the weather. If Highway 106 were paved to the South Carolina line, it would be a permanent truck link from South Carolina to Tennessee.³²

When no action was taken to improve Highway 106, Tompkins adopted a new theme for his editorial column. He complained: "Still have the O left in highway 106."³³ However at the same time he was able to report, "At any rate Sylva is permanently out of the mud; and the trout season opens in nine days."³⁴ Tompkins was jubilant, "Sylva is now a concrete example of a well paved town."³⁵

When it was announced that Highway 106 would be paved, Tompkins recommended that the improved road be sixteen feet wide,³⁶ but the state had already made plans for a twelve foot road.³⁷ At his own expense Tompkins made numerous trips to Raleigh and to Columbia to propagandize a sixteen foot wide road.³⁸ Tompkins was instrumental in achieving a compromise. On April 20, 1927, he reported that "the state compromised from 12 feet to 14 feet as Jackson County

³¹op. cit.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., March 16, 1927.

³⁴Ibid., March 23, 1927.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., April 13, 1927.

³⁷Ibid., April 20, 1927.

³⁸Statement by John Morris, personal interview.

wanted 16 feet."³⁹ Even so the state was slow in starting construction on 106. Tompkins, who had always felt Western North Carolina was neglected by Raleigh⁴⁰ now believed that the rest of the state was afraid that a paved 106 would take commerce from them.⁴¹

It was two years after the compromise before the state appropriated money for paving the road from Sylva to Cullowhee. The state agreed to pay \$65,000 for a hard-surfaced road for a distance of six miles; the estimated cost of the road was \$200,000.⁴² Although actual road construction had not begun by December, 1930, Tompkins had not let Jackson County forget the road. He predicted of 1931 that this "year we get a paved road to Cullowhee or know why."⁴³ Across the top of the editorial column two years later, the readers saw, "Hot Dog. Paving to Cullowhee is to actually be done."⁴⁴ In May, 1935, when road construction was finally begun, Editor Tompkins was elated, "The Journal has been advocating the construction of this highway for a quarter of a century. It has been our life's task, and if we are to see the dream come true, we believe

³⁹op. cit.

⁴⁰Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

⁴¹Ibid., June 22, 1927.

⁴²Ibid., June 13, 1929.

⁴³Ibid., November 20, 1930.

⁴⁴Ibid., October 27, 1932.

our life has been worth something to this, our native county."⁴⁵

Along with the mud, Dan Tompkins hoped to see illiteracy eliminated. He desired a good education for farm children and he felt that the state legislature should make it available.⁴⁶ Tompkins knew that Jackson County could not support the schools of the county without state assistance; therefore, he urged the legislature editorially to pass an education bill for poorer counties.⁴⁷ His hope for Jackson County was that the state would establish a Farm Life School in Webster,⁴⁸ which would develop programs of the highest standards in farm building and homemaking.⁴⁹ Tompkins favored a six month school term and county enforcement of compulsory attendance laws.⁵⁰ The curriculum of the local schools was not neglected by Tompkins. He said emphatically in his column: "Sex hygiene is not a subject to be taught in the school room."⁵¹ Another time he expressed doubt as to whether chemical experiments should be conducted in the high schools for he feared that injuries might result.⁵²

⁴⁵Ibid., May 23, 1935.

⁴⁶Ibid., January 10, 1913.

⁴⁷Ibid., March 14, 1928.

⁴⁸Ibid., March 27, 1914.

⁴⁹Ibid., February 23, 1917.

⁵⁰Ibid., July 18, 1913.

⁵¹Ibid., July 17, 1914.

⁵²Ibid., October 28, 1933.

By contrast sports in the schools of Jackson County always had the support of the Journal.⁵³

The most heated editorials in the Journals devoted to opposing the establishment of a Western Carolina Training School at Asheville which probably would have resulted in the removal of Cullowhee Normal to Asheville. Tompkins believed that if a teachers' training school were built at Asheville, it would be a state supported institution which would benefit only Buncombe County. Besides, he added, there were already two fine teacher training schools in the state, one at Cullowhee, the other at Boone.⁵⁴ When the possibility of moving Cullowhee Normal to Asheville came up for discussion in 1921, Tompkins was furious. He placed a most sarcastic editorial on the front page of the Journal.

By all means move the University of North Carolina to Asheville and while we are at it let's just pick up the state capital and locate it somewhere in Buncombe since that one they have in Raleigh is out of date anyway and the harbor at Southport should be along the French Broad somewhere near Smith's Bridge, they've got all the water they need along the coast without it anyway.⁵⁵

The removal did not take place.

Tompkins knew that Jackson County would profit by the growth of the region of which it was a part. Western North Carolina could be developed as a tourist attraction to the

⁵³Ibid., February 14, 1928.

⁵⁴Ibid., January 15, 1915.

⁵⁵Ibid., January 14, 1921.

advantage of Sylva and Jackson County. He believed that Western North Carolina could be the "Switzerland of America"⁵⁶ and wealthier than any other part of the country if Western North Carolina had modern hotels and tourist cottages, products raised to sell at home, and good roads.⁵⁷ In keeping with this attitude the Journal was one of the first supporters of the Smokey Mountain National Park Movement.⁵⁸ Editor Tompkins stated that the "park means salvation for this section."⁵⁹ He knew the people of the South wanted the park nearly as much as the citizens of Western North Carolina, so he advised the readers of his column thusly, "Park! Park! When the people speak! Let us dogs bark."⁶⁰ He believed, "Thousands will come to the park to spark__"⁶¹ and would leave money with the mountain people. Financial gain was considered to be the real regional advantage of the park,⁶² but he also considered it as a "rich heritage for the children of men who dwell under the American flag."⁶³

⁵⁶Ibid., September 22, 1911.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Statements by Miss Sadie Luck and by Mr. John Morris, personal interviews.

⁵⁹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 12, 1925.

⁶⁰Ibid., August 26, 1925.

⁶¹Ibid., September 23, 1925.

⁶²Ibid., September 9, 1925.

⁶³Ibid.

In 1927 the Journal announced that the park was assured.⁶⁴ With this accomplishment Tompkins said, "We have landed the Smokey Mountain Park; the thing is to buy the land."⁶⁵ He had set the stage for his next big campaign--purchasing land for the park. Tompkins wrote and talked to the land owners, pointing out the advantages of the government's protection of the virgin forests.⁶⁶ Needless to say, when the park was dedicated the Journal enthusiastically urged the mountain people to be in Sylva when President Roosevelt passed through on his way to the dedication.⁶⁷

Tompkins, a public spirited editor with the interest of his readers always in mind, could not help but develop an interest in politics and good government. His political views were those of a "dyed in the wool" Democrat in local, state, and national politics. In the early years of his journalistic career, party politics were not as important to him as they later became. Despite his personal convictions, after an election, Tompkins held that a man was no longer a Democrat or a Republican but an elected official.⁶⁸

Editor Tompkins made it a policy of the paper never to espouse the cause of a local candidate in his paper, though

⁶⁴Ibid., February 16, 1927.

⁶⁵Ibid., March 22, 1928.

⁶⁶Statement by Mr. John Morris, personal interview.

⁶⁷Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 29, 1940.

⁶⁸Ibid., December 6, 1928.

after a primary, he usually in some favorable way mentioned the Democratic candidate. The principal concern of the Journal was to inspire the citizens of Jackson County to vote. Voting in the eyes of Tompkins was more than a privilege-- it was a duty of every citizen.⁶⁹ Politics could be clean only if every adult citizen, including women, voted. Tompkins wrote that women "could clean up politics as they do everything else"⁷⁰ if they would register and vote. After an election the Journal always urged its readers to support their elected officials regardless of party.⁷¹

Even with his great interest in politics there was very little coverage of national elections. The candidates might be pictured with their wives or in front of their homes; yet, there was never any discussion of platforms or qualifications. After the national election returns were in, the Journal typically contained some comical pledge of support. For example:

The top 'o the morning to you , Mr. Coolidge!

And Debs is still in prison, but he received the greatest vote a socialist ever got.

As long as you are president you will be a (as) much our president as anybody's although the writer didn't vote for you.

We greet you and wish you well.⁷²

⁶⁹Ibid., October 31, 1924.

⁷⁰Ibid., October 8, 1924.

⁷¹Ibid., December 6, 1928 and November 5, 1920.

⁷²Ibid., November 5, 1920.

The wit of Dan Tompkins forever showed in his editorial column. He seemed especially to enjoy making puns with the names of important political figures. In 1924 he advised the party faithful that the "main task of the Democrats this summer, will be to make it hot for Coolidge."⁷³

The Journal's editorial column did not necessarily reflect front page news on the national level.

The Mexican Crisis during the Wilson years received little attention in the Journal other than in the editorial column. By 1916 Tompkins was predicting war with Mexico because he felt it was being forced on the United States. With patriotic fervor he wrote,

But our people will not hesitate. We have a just cause; our hands are clean and once more the Eagle will spread himself as the emble [sic] of a warlike people. The stars are stars of hope for the millions of half starved peons in unhappy Mexico.⁷⁴

If scant attention was given to the Mexican Crisis, even less was devoted to the war in Europe. Prior to August, 1914, Europe was virtually non-existent so far as Tompkins' was concerned. But the outbreak of war startled and alarmed him. He lamented sadly that the "whole of Europe is in arms. The dread of the century, the nightmare of statesmen, the crime of the age is being enacted."⁷⁵

⁷³Ibid., May 2, 1924.

⁷⁴Ibid., February 28, 1913 and June 30, 1916.

⁷⁵Ibid., August 7, 1914.

The Journal placed the responsibility for the war on Germany's lust for land,⁷⁶ the greed of Russia and Austria, and the desire of these autocratic states to demonstrate their power.⁷⁷ Tompkins expressed hope that the war would mark the end of monarchy.⁷⁸ Moreover, he felt the war was not justifiable and hoped to see Russia, Germany, and Austria suffer.⁷⁹

By the spring of 1915 Tompkins was expressing doubt about the outcome of the war. He feared that there could be no hope of peace until one nation is under absolute submission-- then it will last only until another nation has the hardihood to dispute the mastery [sic] of the victor in the present conflict."⁸⁰ He also doubted whether America could enter the war and keep a clear conscience. Tompkins questioned whether Wilson had the backing of the American people and whether the people really understood the war that they were gradually being drawn into.⁸¹

But once the nation had actually become involved, Dan Tompkins raised the banner of patriotism. Melodrama filled his editorial columns. On one occasion he wrote:

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., August 21, 1914

⁷⁸Ibid., August 14, 1914

⁷⁹op. cit.

⁸⁰Ibid., April 30, 1915

⁸¹Ibid., July 15, 1915 and July 25, 1915

The die is cast. The hour has struck. The battle flag of America is unfurled. The Eagle is unleashed. The Congress has spoken. The Republic is at war. We are to be tried with fire. The conflagration started in Serbia, has crossed the Atlantic and is upon our shores.

There have been differences of opinion as to what was best to do in the trying circumstances under which we have been laboring but that must all be laid aside. Our government has decided and we are now at war. Every man, every woman, every industry in the United States must be thrown into the scale. Every ounce of our energy in America must be used in the prosecution of the war. We are fighting for our country. Our institutions, our government, our liberties must be preserved. We must fight. The fate of the Republic is at stake. This is the supreme hour of trial. This is the Gethesemane of the American State. It is no child's play. It is grim war. We have prayed God that this cup might pass. We now prepare to drink it to the bitter dregs as men. The fight is on. The Republic goes forth to war. May the God of fathers give us strength and wisdom for the task that lies before us, and may he hasten the dawn of the glorious Peace, and Justice, and Liberty.⁸²

America had declared war. For Tompkins this declaration meant that the fate of the outcome was sealed. "Hear ye nations of the world give ear ye islands of the sea. The Republic is mobilizing [sic] her sons for the conflict against autocracy. Rejoice, oh ye, peoples for your deliverance is at hand."⁸³ Tompkins had two principal reflections on America's entry into the war. First he feared that "America is ask [sic] to join the dance of death and add the wails of the American mothers to the lamentations [sic] of the European Rachel crying for her children."⁸⁴ Secondly, he

⁸²Ibid., April 6, 1917.

⁸³Ibid., April 13, 1917.

⁸⁴Ibid., April 30, 1918.

believed that hope might rise out of despair. Perhaps by joining the allies the United States would have more influence at the peace conference.⁸⁵

Most of the war editorials were concerned with the effect of the war on Jackson County and the County's responsibilities in the war. Jackson County citizens were urged to be patriotic and to help win the war by raising food, canning food, being as frugal as possible, buying few clothes, and writing letters to the soldiers.⁸⁶ Citizens were asked also to kill rats because they ate valuable food necessary for soldiers and citizens.⁸⁷ The war slogan of the Journal was, "Trust in God and keep the crops growing."⁸⁸

The Journal was concerned over Jackson County's wartime apathy. Saving bond quotas were not met and the desertion rate was higher among Jackson's soldiers than among men from any other county in Western North Carolina.⁸⁹ Tompkins' concern inspired a long dramatic editorial:

What of my mountians? What of their people?
 What will they do, and what will be their answer
 to this new challenge to the right of men to
 freedom? Theirs is a noble heritage. Theirs is a
 noble race. Then light again the fiery cross and
 send it forth to call the children of the lowland
 Dutch, who wore the orange and defied the Spanish

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., August 30, 1918.

⁸⁷Ibid., September 20, 1918.

⁸⁸Ibid., May 11, 1917.

⁸⁹Ibid., March 29, 1918.

tyrant. Produce and save and buy the bonds of liberty. Kill the seeds of incipient [sic] sedition wherever they appear, and nail the German lie as the blasting breathe [sic] of hell that it surely is whenever it is spoken. Drive the wardodger to show his hand. Toil and save and pray without ceasing unto the God of our fathers....⁹⁰

After the plan to conscript soldiers was announced, Washington officials expressed apprehension that there might be a general armed resistance to the draft from the people of the mountain areas of North Carolina.⁹¹ This announcement stirred the editor of the Journal, who responded spontaneously through his column.

A careful study of American history will bear out the statement and there does not dwell, between the Atlantic and the Pacific, a more patriotic a more courageous [sic], a more liberty loving nor a more thoroughly American people in tradition, in speech or in thought, than the folks of the North Carolina hills....⁹²

During all the time that the United States was involved in World War I, the Journal never once printed a headline or editorial commenting on or reporting the progress of the war. Occasionally on the fourth page there would be pictures of military leaders, airplanes, ships or maybe a street scene in some wartorn European village. But never was there any actual war news coverage.

After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles the Journal reported, "Jehovah has triumphed. His people are

⁹⁰Ibid., April 18, 1918.

⁹¹Ibid., August 10, 1917.

⁹²Ibid.

free."⁹³ In the same editorial the Journal noted that "Germany must pay for her crimes. Her territory is restricted. Her military is broken. Her navy is no longer on the seas. Heligoland is dismantled."⁹⁴

Tompkins, who believed in the League of Nations and in America's place as a world leader, felt that the idea of the League was "not a new doctrine but the spirit of America extended to cover the world."⁹⁵ When the Senate refused the League, the Journal categorized the Senate as follows: "The senate [sic] is appearing in the role of Nero of old and is fiddling away with vanities, while the world is aflame with prejudices and anarchy."⁹⁶ Partisan politics, he felt, had been responsible for weakening the League of Nations and undermining the Treaty of Versailles.⁹⁷ Therefore he advised, "Let Politics stop at the three mile limit, and deal with our sister nations for the welfare of all mankind."⁹⁸

The end of the war inspired Tompkins with bright hopes for peace and a promising future for all. With prejudices

⁹³Ibid., July 4, 1919.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid., January 26, 1917, July 18, 1919 and October 3, 1919.

⁹⁶Ibid., October 3, 1919.

⁹⁷Ibid., January 27, 1927.

⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., March 28, 1929.

removed by the war, he felt, men might strive together for the common good of all mankind. He was so convinced that peace was assured he favored abolishing military training. Besides, Tompkins believed that the cadets did not know how to fight and that the only thing West Point produced was a class system in the army.⁹⁹

Only a few years passed before Tompkins "wonderful future" had been dispelled by economic crisis. He described the depression and its consequences in his usual concise statement of Democratic attitudes. The depression caused greater interest in national affairs than any other topic down to the 1930's. Dan Tompkins freely expressed his convictions:

We didn't vote for Hoover. We wouldn't vote for him today and probably we wouldn't vote for him tomorrow, but just the same we are sorry for him, because it is an absolute and an utter impossibility for him or any man to measure up to the expectations of the American people.¹⁰⁰

With Hoover in office only a short time Tompkins was not any too optimistic. He commented: "We have had three weeks now of the Hoover brand of prosperity; and can tell little difference from the kind we are used to, which originally bore the Coolidge label."¹⁰¹

The conditions on the national scene were being felt in Jackson County as well. On July 16, 1929, the Tuckaseegee

⁹⁹Ibid., July 11, 1919, June 20, 1919, July 25, 1919.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., February 21, 1929.

¹⁰¹Ibid., March 28, 1929.

Bank of Sylva was reported closed by the Journal. The effect of the depression on Jackson County was not as evident in the editorial column as in the advertisements. For the first time strictly cash terms began to appear on most ads in the Journal.¹⁰² When Tompkins did comment on the poor state of economic conditions, it was with his own special brand of humor. For example: "Anyway girls don't have to worry about getting runs in silk stockings this year."¹⁰³

There was no doubt in Tompkins' mind but that the depression was caused by the Republicans, Coolidge and Hoover.¹⁰⁴ He also felt that when prosperity returned it would be through none of their efforts. "Nobody will shoulder the responsibility for the business depression. Just wait until the sun shines, Nellie, and see if Hoover doesn't claim the credit for his party and himself."¹⁰⁵

One evident effect of the depression on Jackson County was to reduce the number of marriages. As Tompkins said, "It takes brave and loving hearts to go happily to the altar during hard times."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Advertisement in the Jackson County Journal, July 16, 1929, July 26, 1929 and August 8, 1929.

¹⁰³Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 22, 1929.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., April 14, 1929, September 26, 1929, and March 28, 1929.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., October 9, 1930.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., October 28, 1930.

Throughout the Hoover Administration Tompkins looked to Franklin Roosevelt as the salvation of the United States. "If Franklin Roosevelt runs for president we are for him. In fact, we are for him anyway."¹⁰⁷ However, when Roosevelt was elected and the congress began to enact his New Deal, the Journal gave it very little coverage. The coverage that the Roosevelt policies did receive was often very sarcastic. Tompkins commented editorially: "Having guaranteed bank deposits the next thing is to guarantee money to deposit"¹⁰⁸ and "Steel coming into the N. R. A. should strengthen it."¹⁰⁹

During the depression the Journal editorials ranged widely as more and more international comments were printed by Editor Tompkins. Most of the observations he made were written about events that led to the Second World War. As early as 1932 Tompkins noted that, "Some day, if Japan keeps up her present tactics, she is going to step on the wrong fellow's toe and then the reaction will mash her nose all over her independent face."¹¹⁰ When Germany left the League, Tompkins did not feel war was eminent, but that Hilter was just attempting to show his might to Germany.¹¹¹ But as war became more and more likely, Tompkins said, "We

¹⁰⁷Ibid., August 22, 1929.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., June 15, 1933.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., August 24, 1933.

¹¹⁰Ibid., March 2, 1932.

¹¹¹Ibid., October 12, 1933.

are a pacifist. We are opposed to war."¹¹² However the Journal admitted that, "This paper dislikes Hitler and most of his works."¹¹³ Tompkins did not want the United States to become involved and hoped that her location might keep the United States out. "The Atlantic Ocean is a great institution. We are strongly in favor of it, and wish it were seven times as wide as it is."¹¹⁴

World War II, according to the Journal, was "made by Hitler for his own aggrandisement [sic] and to bring his nation nearer to his dream of world domination."¹¹⁵ Germany, in the candid opinion of Tompkins, had started the greatest battle of all times and upon that battle the destiny of democracy and liberty rested.¹¹⁶

As the war in Europe grew worse, Tompkins began to realize that, "No man liveth unto himself alone."¹¹⁷ Thus he was not surprised when Roosevelt proclaimed a state of emergency as the tide of the war crept nearer the American shore.¹¹⁸ Then came Pearl Harbor and the headlines of the Journal read: "U. S. Is At War With the Nipponese. Huns

¹¹²Ibid., August 19, 1937.

¹¹³Ibid., August 31, 1939.

¹¹⁴Ibid., May 22, 1940.

¹¹⁵Ibid., September 14, 1939.

¹¹⁶Ibid., May 16, 1940.

¹¹⁷Ibid., June 20, 1940.

¹¹⁸Ibid., May 21, 1941.

and Waps Declare War on United States."¹¹⁹ Tompkins believed, "From the beginning the war was directed as much at us as anybody."¹²⁰

In response to the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Tompkins wrote that all was not as it should have been at Honolulu. He desired to know what was wrong and he felt all America should be told. He asked if the bombing was due to blundering or neglect. He pondered what happened to the intelligence forces, the aircraft fliers, and the anti-aircraft guns.¹²¹

However, Tompkins felt the United States was entering the war under good conditions for defense. The United States had England and Latin America for friends. Moreover, he was confident that the marine corps would write a new and brilliant epic for America.¹²²

Just as in World War I, the Journal was emphatic in urging home support for the war effort. One very blunt piece of advise was, "Keep your mouth shut, work hard."¹²³ For Tompkins believed that unconscious sabotage was committed by Americans who were loafing instead of working, spreading

¹¹⁹Ibid., December 11, 1941.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid., December 11, 1941 and December 18, 1941.

¹²³Ibid., August 6, 1942.

false rumors, belittling American Allies, and more interested in themselves than the war. Dan Tompkins did not mind that the war made some sacrifices necessary. He seriously asked his readers: "Isn't it fun--to walk instead of ride, to stay home nights instead of going out--to work the garden rather than golf?"¹²⁴

In a special Serviceman Christmas Edition published on October 29, 1942, Tompkins offered encouragement to the soldiers. He wrote that all the fury of Hell could not take away the peace of Christmas. He urged that men not forget that "Amid it all we have Peace. The peace that the Prince came to give. That peace of heart and soul that comes only to men and women of great faith, who are willing to sacrifice for that faith."¹²⁵

With his strong feelings for peace, Tompkins had long admired Woodrow Wilson, whom he felt had always strived to provide peace for the world. Tompkins believed that the American people had "stoned" Woodrow Wilson.¹²⁶ Wilson in Tompkins opinion had tried to lead the American people to the promised land but only in 1942 were they able to see what Wilson had attempted to do for America. Tompkins expressed hope that the second war had brought the United States to the point where Wilson wanted to lead them at the close of

¹²⁴Ibid., September 17, 1942.

¹²⁵Ibid., October 29, 1942.

¹²⁶Ibid., December 31, 1942.

World War I. If the United States were ready to accept her role of responsibility, it would not be long before "every man shall dwell under his own vine and figtree with none to molest or make him afraid."¹²⁷

In the last months that he published the Jackson County Journal Tompkins was predicting that the "Day of Wrath"¹²⁸ was approaching for Germany. It would not be long, he concluded, before the Nazi would be praying for mountains to hid them.¹²⁹ One of the last editorials in Tompkins' Journal speculated sadly: "It were better for a man that a millstone were tied about his neck and he cast into the depth of the sea than he offend one of the little ones," said the Master-- think of all the little ones in Holland, Poland, Greece, and China."¹³⁰

Even though it was the last of many editorials little difference can be found in comparing it with one of the earlier editorials. In Tompkins' many years of experience he made few changes in his style of writing. The Journal's editorial column was far from the ordinary as ones reads today in the large dailies. It undoubtedly expressed what Tompkins believed and it was written in the shortest form possible in most instances. Tompkins wrote directly to the point regardless of consequence. After reading only a few of the papers, one

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid., September 9, 1943.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid.

would find that he knew much about Tompkins the man, the politician, and the dreamer. From a careful review of his column, the reader might describe Tompkins as a man of vision in many cases but narrow in others, informed on many topics but completely off base on others. His views concerning Jackson County were most progressive. The paper was Democratic and stood for honest government. Tompkins' personality as well as his beliefs were evident in the editorials. Tompkins was intelligent, sarcastic, witty, serious, sympathetic, and religious. His editorials and the paper in general gave inadequate coverage to state, national, and international news. This is understandable for the early years of publication when communication was slow; however in the latter years lack of communications does not excuse the neglect inadequate news coverage. Had Tompkins not been so involved and interested in politics he could have given the readers a more informed paper. Thus his political involvement damaged the paper and eventually contributed to the fall of the Journal.

CHAPTER IV

MOUNTAIN POLITICIAN

The editorial column was not the only means by which Dan Tompkins urged improvements and vital reforms. He sought to accomplish his goals through active participation in politics, for during most of his adult years he held some public office. His longest tenure in one office, as mayor of Sylva, was for twelve years.¹

Mayor Tompkins led Sylva in many progressive steps in town improvement. One of the objectives uppermost in Tompkins' mind was keeping Sylva clean. As editor he urged improvement in the appearance of Sylva through cleanliness, and as mayor he sponsored clean-up programs.²

His major accomplishments, however, were in the area of street improvement. Tompkins' Journal promoted paved streets for Sylva; as mayor he saw four miles of Sylva's streets paved. Among the streets paved were: Jackson, Mill, Allen, Spring, Balsam, Savannah, Keener, Hampton, Rose, Ridgeway, Sylvan Heights, Brendle, and King.³ The Dillsboro road was also paved at the same time. Tompkins was also influential in the construction of Scott's Creek

¹Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

²Record of Minutes, Town of Sylva, North Carolina, 1925, p. 45.

³Record of Minutes, Town of Sylva, North Carolina, 1926, p. 50.

Bridge.⁴ While Tompkins was mayor, the city council voted to sell bonds amounting to \$50,000 for a water and sewer system in Sylva.⁵ In 1929 he and the council added street lights to many of the streets extending out from Main and Mill Streets.⁶ Mayor Tompkins was evidently genuinely interested in Sylva. Certainly he was not hoping to prosper on the fifteen dollar per month salary.⁷

Dan Tompkins not only served his town as mayor but as Registrar of voters in 1937,⁸ Judge in 1935,⁹ and Judge of Elections in 1943.¹⁰ Tompkins helped to organize the Sylva Chamber of Commerce and served as its first president. He was president of the Chamber of Commerce several times after its organization.¹¹

Tompkins was not as successful in winning the opportunity to serve in state-wide offices. Defeated as many times as he was victorious, Tompkins served three terms in the House

⁴Statement by Mr. E. J. Nicholson, personal interview.

⁵Op. cit., March 23, 1926, insert between pages 52-53.

⁶Record of Minutes, Town of Sylva, North Carolina, 1929, December 23, 1929.

⁷Statement by Mr. E. J. Nicholson, personal interview.

⁸Record of Minutes, Town of Sylva, North Carolina, 1937, Sheet 74.

⁹Record of Minutes, Town of Sylva, North Carolina, 1935, Sheet 56, Book Number 4.

¹⁰Record of Minutes, Town of Sylva, North Carolina, 1943, May, 1943.

¹¹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, April 9, 1931.

of Representatives.¹² His first attempt was in the Democratic Primary of 1920 as a candidate for representative. Dan Tompkins ran for representative as he felt a returned soldier would receive recognition and could be useful to the country.¹³ In the primary Tompkins was second man, but his opponent did not receive a plurality. Rather than calling for a second election, Tompkins withdrew saying that he was "too much of an American and a democrat not to support Buchanan."¹⁴

In 1924 Tompkins raised his sights and sought election to the state senate. He promised to work for a hard surface road from Sylva to Cullowhee Institute which he felt would help promote growth of the college.¹⁵ He advertised himself as a native of Jackson County, a former soldier, a well known newspaper man, and a Democrat.¹⁶ But once more he was defeated in the primary, this time by less than a hundred votes.¹⁷ Many of his friends urged him to contest the election, but Tompkins would not do so.¹⁸ Instead he responded in typical fashion:

I made a good clean fight for the nomination upon my record as a man as a citizen and as a soldier.

¹²Statement by Mr. Raymond Sutton, personal interview.

¹³Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, June 11, 1920.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., May 23, 1924.

¹⁶Ibid., May 30, 1924.

¹⁷Ibid., June 13, 1924.

¹⁸Ibid., June 20, 1924.

A good citizen and a good soldier knows how to meet defeat [sic] as well as victory. I shall never again be a candidate before the people of my county for any office. I have always worked for the success of my party, and the party and the people owe me nothing as the triumph of the principles in which I believe is sufficient reward for me.¹⁹

Four years later, contradicting what he had previously said, Tompkins ran in the Democratic Primary for Judge of Recorder's Court and won.²⁰ However, in the general election he was opposed and defeated by the Republican candidate, George Sutton.²¹ His reaction to a Republican beating him was: "All of us live and learn. The next time we decide to run for a public office, we shall take a vacation."²²

Friends of Dan Tompkins were interested in his ability to work for Jackson County and were always insisting that he enter a political campaign. So once more on April 28, 1932, Tompkins announced his candidacy for the General Assembly.²³ In the announcement he said: "Frankly, I am not a seeker of the honor, but if the Democracy of Jackson wishes me to do so, I will serve at the head of the ticket to do the very best of my ability."²⁴ His platform was to reduce taxes, to build Highway 106, and to advance Western Carolina Teacher's

¹⁹Ibid., June 13, 1924.

²⁰Ibid., May 24, 1928.

²¹Ibid., November 8, 1928.

²²Ibid., April 19, 1928.

²³Ibid., April 28, 1932.

²⁴Ibid.

College.²⁵ Tompkins quoted the Bervard News which was rather shocked at his announcement, commenting: "Time brings changes in men and things. Two years ago Brother Tompkins expressed a desire to know how in the eternal a newspaper man could afford to run for office."²⁶ This time Tompkins won, defeating Professor Robert Lee Madison of Western Carolina Teacher's College by less than two hundred votes in a poll of over two thousand.²⁷ Through the Journal's editorial page he thanked his friends for their votes and professed to feel a keen sense of responsibility. Dan Tompkins was elated over his victory, for he knew that he had defeated a man held in high esteem by the people of Jackson County.²⁸

In the 1933 session of the North Carolina General Assembly Representative Dan Tompkins served on the committee of Education, the Committee on Game, and the Joint Committee on Printing.²⁹ The bills introduced by Tompkins were all in the interest of Jackson County. His first year he succeeded in getting eight bills through the General Assembly, which seems an excellent record for a man with no legislative

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., May 26, 1932.

²⁷Ibid., June 9, 1932.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹House of Representatives of North Carolina, House Journal Session 1933, (Raleigh: Edward and Broughton Company State Printers, 1933), pp. 27, 28, and 30.

experience. Among his successes in the General Assembly of 1933 were: an act authorizing the Board of Commissioners of Jackson County to assume certain bonded indebtedness of Dillsboro township;³⁰ an act to amend Section of 1443 volume III of Consolidated Statutes relating to Jackson County;³¹ an act authorizing the legislature to fix the fees of the Clerk of the Superior Court;³² an act requiring the Register of Deeds to prepare a tax list and provide compensation;³³ an act prohibiting the sale of fireworks;³⁴ an act to amend Chapter 252 Public Laws 1931 relating to payment of criminal costs before a Justice of the Peace in Jackson County;³⁵ an act to apply to incompetent or insane persons if they have \$300 or less for a minor child or insane person to pay same to office of Clerk of Superior Court who will disburse without the appointment of a guardian;³⁶ and a bill which authorized the Board of Commissioners of Jackson County to retire their bonded indebtedness.³⁷

³⁰General Assembly of North Carolina, Public Local Laws Session of 1933, (Raleigh: Published by Authority, 1933), p. 189.

³¹Ibid., p. 80.

³²Ibid., p. 106.

³³Ibid., p. 165.

³⁴Ibid., p. 358.

³⁵Ibid., p. 353.

³⁶Ibid., p. 517.

³⁷Ibid., p. 506.

The bills which were not passed were: an act authorizing the Board of Commissioners of Jackson County to hypothecate certificates of tax sales by that county and to delay foreclosure proceedings;³⁸ an act providing a special tax for Jackson County;³⁹ and an act to place Mrs. Emily J. Henson on Pension Roll.⁴⁰ The greatest disappointment for Representative Tompkins was the defeat of a bill which was entitled "an act to require the state highway commission to take over a certain road leading to Cullowhee Gap in Jackson County."⁴¹

In 1939 Dan Tompkins was again in the House of Representatives; this time he was not the elected representative of the county but served as reading clerk for the House of Representatives. He gained that position by his reputation as a Democrat and through the influence of his good friend, Dan Moore who was well known in the House of Representatives and is now North Carolina's Governor.⁴² As reading clerk Tompkins supported a bill providing eight months of public school and helped secure its passage. He worked for the veterans of World War I by favoring the enactment of a law giving preference to veterans, their wives, and the disabled

³⁸House of Representatives of North Carolina, House Journal Session, 1933, (Raleigh: Edward and Broughton Company State Printers, 1933), p. 240.

³⁹Ibid., p. 789.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 747.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 935.

⁴²Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall, personal interview.

in job placement. In the same session he offered an amendment to exempt the Bible from taxation.⁴³ This passed.

Satisfied with his experience and accomplishments after two years in the House of Representatives and feeling that Western North Carolina was neglected by the rest of the state, Dan Tompkins decided to offer himself as a candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 1940.⁴⁴ He announced his candidacy on March 24, 1940. Tompkins' platform was based on his life-long political beliefs. The candidate stood for progress; clean, honest, economical government; and independence from big business backers.⁴⁵

Tompkins worked diligently to win the Democratic Primary. He campaigned on the streets of Sylva, visited the people of Western North Carolina, and used the Journal as a means of communication with the electorate. Editor Tompkins had always urged the people of Jackson County to vote, but never had he made as strong a plea as during the months before the Democratic Primary of 1940. Through the editorial column he urged citizens to vote in the primary. He advised: "We mountain people can't lose our prestige [sic] vote."⁴⁶ Tompkins felt the only thing that could keep him from being elected was a light vote in the mountains.⁴⁷ His campaign

⁴³Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, March 24, 1940.

⁴⁴Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

⁴⁵Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, March 24, 1940.

⁴⁶Ibid., May 22, 1940.

⁴⁷Ibid.

slogan became, "Let's make the mountains solid for a mountain Democrat."⁴⁸ In the Jackson County primary Tompkins received 2356 votes; his closest opponent, Harris, received 119 votes.⁴⁹ Despite a strong showing by Tompkins in the mountains, Harris won the state primary contest. Tompkins accepted defeat gracefully, noting in the Journal that Harris was a fine, capable gentleman. His only complaint was that the victor was not a westerner.⁵⁰ In the general election Tompkins and the Journal supported Harris, and, as usual, encouraged the voters thusly: "You are an American citizen. Therefore vote. Vote as this paper would prefer you to vote, if you can see it that way; but no matter how you vote--vote!"⁵¹

With his failure in this political contest, Dan Tompkins refused his friends the following year when they asked him to run for state senator. He felt that he could accomplish more in the House of Representatives;⁵² therefore, he announced his decision to run for representative. He was elected in November, 1942.⁵³

In the 1943 session of the General Assembly Representative Dan Tompkins served on the appropriations committee, the congressional districts committee, and the conservation and

⁴⁸Ibid., May 14, 1940.

⁴⁹Ibid., May 30, 1940.

⁵⁰Ibid., October 24, 1940.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., March 19, 1941.

⁵³Ibid., November 12, 1942.

development committee.⁵⁴ He presented a bill to promote vocational education, but it was defeated in the house.⁵⁵ Once more he attempted to assist the veterans but was unsuccessful in securing enactment of a veterans' job preference law.⁵⁶ He met defeat also in attempts to aid dependent children⁵⁷ and to establish local control over the sale of liquor.⁵⁸ Two of his proposals were passed by the General Assembly. House Bill 168 admitted Indians, for the first time, to the state hospitals for the mentally ill at Morganton,⁵⁹ while House Bill 844 authorized a pension of thirty dollars a month to retired teachers with twenty years of teaching in North Carolina.⁶⁰

Dan Tompkins never accomplished as much as he hoped to in his political career, but he was satisfied with what he was able to do. His failures he often attributed to his belief that Western North Carolina was neglected by the rest of the state.⁶¹ Yet, he was considered by the voters

⁵⁴House of Representatives, North Carolina, House Journal Session 1943. (Raleigh: Edward and Broughton Company, State Printers, 1943), p. 38.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 105.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 96.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 238.

⁵⁹General Assembly of North Carolina, 1943 Session Laws of North Carolina. (Charlotte: The Observer Printing House, Incorporation, 1943), p. 150.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 152.

⁶¹Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

of Jackson County to be a "statesman" who was skilled in government.⁶² Even people who never voted for Dan Tompkins said their reason was not Tompkins' qualifications but his party affiliations.⁶³

Dan Tompkins was a strong Democrat. He was a believer in state rights and the principles enunciated by Thomas Jefferson. In fact, he referred to himself as a Jeffersonian Democrat.⁶⁴ He was such a strong believer in what good, clean, honest Democratic government could do for Jackson County and Western North Carolina that he devoted too much time to politics. He soon discovered that the Journal did not prosper by neglect.

While he served in the House of Representatives, the Journal was managed by his Aunt Julia Cook, assisted by several men in the print shop.⁶⁵ The only change was the absence of an editorial editor. The second year he served was during World War II. The war, too, contributed to the failure of the Journal. It brought increased prices on the paper, and newspaper stock, and advertisements were few. In 1940, Tompkins for the first time admitted difficulty.

⁶²Statements by Mrs. Edith Hall and by Mr. Raymond Sutton, personal interviews.

⁶³Statement by Mrs. Wayne McGuire, personal interview.

⁶⁴Statement by Mr. Raymond Sutton, personal interview.

CHAPTER V

THE FOLDING OF THE JOURNAL

The first ten years that Dan Tompkins was editor of the Journal, it received his full attention for he believed that the Journal would promote Jackson County. After World War I Tompkins returned to Sylva with a determination to make Jackson better. For how can one keep a former soldier in poor rural conditions once he has seen ("gay Paree"!)?¹ Failing to accomplish as much as he had hoped through his paper, Tompkins threw his hat into the political arena. At first his political obligations were not as time consuming as they later became, particularly after he entered the North Carolina General Assembly.

While he served in the House of Representatives, the Journal was managed by his Aunt Sadie Luck, assisted by several men in the print shop.² The only change was the absence of an editorial column. The second term he served was during World War II. The war, too, contributed to the failure of the Journal; it brought increased prices on ink, paper, and newspaper metal, and advertisements were fewer.³ By 1942, Tompkins for the first time admitted difficult times; "We are face to face," he said, "with a real problem

¹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 18, 1919.

²Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

³Op. cit., February 19, 1942.

of survival for many papers."⁴ War not only affected operating costs but led to the drafting of every able-bodied man Tompkins could hire to run the presses.⁵ His last employee was drafted in April, and from April 8, 1943, until August 19, 1943, the Journal was not published. In the issue of August 19, Tompkins expressed hope that the Journal was again safe; he said, "Here comes the Journal as a certain man of this county once said about his daughter graduating from college, 'With her head up and her tail over the dashboard.'"⁶ But there were to be only three more issues of the Journal--two in September and one in October. After October 14, 1943, the Journal was never published again.

For fifteen years, or between 1928 and 1943, there had been two papers printed in Jackson County. The second paper, the Ruralite Sylva, was published by Mr. and Mrs. Everett Brown, former employees of the Journal. The Browns were personal friends of the Tompkins' family but could not survive financially as their employees since the Journal did not pay enough to support Dan Tompkins, much less his employees. In the early 1940's, Mrs. Brown combined her paper with a publisher in Waynesville and they published the Sylva Herald and Ruralite.⁷ The Journal never mentioned

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., April 8, 1943.

⁶Ibid., August 19, 1943.

⁷Statement by Mrs. Everett Brown, personal interview.

its competitor until the union of the two papers. This hurt Tompkins both personally and financially. The new paper inspired a Tompkins editorial in which he wrote of his families' fifty-nine years in journalism, saying that the Herald was the name of the first Tompkins' paper in the early 1880's.⁸ He wrote:

During these 50 years, we have tried to fight the good fight, we have certainly not finished our course and we have kept the faith with the people we served. We intend to stay here. We expect to stay here. We expect to continue to serve. We do not intend to be rooted of the roost.

If there is really room for 2 papers in Jackson County. We welcome our neighbors. If there is not we do not intend to give up the fight.⁹

In the final issue of the Journal there was no hint that there would not be another publication. The first page carried the typical Journal front page news; there was the regular local community news, a death notice, a political report, a fire noted, along with war pictures.¹⁰ A new continued story was included and was ended with the customary "to be continued."¹¹ There after, however, the Jackson County Journal was no more; the editorial pen of Dan Tompkins was to write no more.

A political career, a war, and another paper had ended a long hard struggle. Moreover, there were other contributing

⁸Op. cit.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., October 14, 1943.

¹¹Ibid.

factors and those other causes were the financial difficulties which had been consistently present throughout the thirty-one years Tompkins was editor. Editor Tompkins was not a businessman; he was in fact a poor manager. He was not purposely careless,¹² but simply too generous and sympathetic to his debtors. In time he could not pay his less sympathetic creditors.¹³ If someone came into the Journal office and took a subscription to the paper for a year, it would be sent year after year without renewal.¹⁴ To promote subscriptions to the Journal, Editor Tompkins conducted expensive promotion contests and gave away many free gifts.

The first advertisement gimmick used by the Journal was a Salesmanship Campaign which Tompkins started only two months after he had purchased the paper. The purpose of the campaign was to have readers of the Journal sell subscriptions and printing jobs. To encourage participation, Editor Tompkins developed a point system whereby any white person who sold a years' subscription to the Journal for one dollar would receive two hundred votes. When someone was nominated as the best salesman by a subscriber to the Journal he would receive one thousand votes. A salesman who sold a five dollar job printing for the paper would get two hundred-fifty votes. Furthermore, each issue of

¹²Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

¹³Statements by Dr. Wayne McGuire, Mr. Reg Scott, Mr. and Mrs. David Brown, and Martin Cunningham, personal interviews.

¹⁴Statement by Mr. Reg Scott, personal interview.

the paper during the contest had coupons worth ten votes that salesmen could have friends send in with their names on them. Thus the salesman who received the highest number of votes would receive valuable prizes. In the contest of 1912 the prizes were: \$175 diamond ring, \$75 ring, \$50 broach, \$25 stick pin and a \$15 stick pin.¹⁵

A second salesmanship contest was held in 1923 with much more valuable prizes. First prize was a red sportsmodel 1923 Durant valued at \$1,280.¹⁶ Mrs. Ida Moss of Cullowhee won the car with 45,405,000 votes,¹⁷ Most of which were not earned by selling subscriptions but with the ten votes coupons and best salesman nominations.¹⁸ The Salesmanship Campaign of 1923 brought Tompkins some subscriptions paid in advance for twenty years.¹⁹ Mrs. Moss guessed that some subscriptions would still be good in 1966. Tompkins considered the contest so successful that he held another in 1925. In that particular contest he offered two automobiles and three trips to Atlantic City.²⁰ This contest also was a modest success.

¹⁵Advertisement in the Jackson County Journal, August 2, 1912.

¹⁶Ibid., July 27, 1923.

¹⁷Ibid., September 21, 1923.

¹⁸Statement by Mrs. Ida Moss, personal interview.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Advertisement in the Jackson County Journal, May 22, 1925.

The fourth contest, however, was a financial failure. Again a Chevrolet was offered as first prize but the other prizes were not as valuable. In the 1935 contest everyone was a winner as a ten percent commission was given.²¹

Tompkins acknowledged the first three campaigns as successful in bringing in money on old debts, new subscriptions, and more job printing. The last campaign was a failure in every way; few people participated and very little was collected. In fact, one of the salesmen made off with what little money had been collected.²²

In addition to the salesmanship contest Editor Tompkins used less expensive gimmicks to promote the sale of subscriptions. In 1913 the Journal gave free garden seed to any subscriber who asked for them.²³ Magazines were often offered with a year's subscription paid in advance.²⁴ At one time a new subscriber was given a choice of three magazines from a list of thirty-four such as McCall, Farm Life, and Boy's Magazine.²⁵ Another time ten pounds of sugar was given with subscriptions.²⁶ One of the best offers was Rogers'

²¹Ibid., July 4, 1935.

²²Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

²³Advertisement in the Jackson County Journal, April 18, 1913.

²⁴Ibid., November 6, 1914, December 14, 1933, May 16, 1924, and July 4, 1935.

²⁵Ibid., November 6, 1914.

²⁶Ibid., January 8, 1932.

Silverware. The silverware was given according to the number of years for which subscriptions were bought. For a new one year subscriber a gift of three place setting, a \$6.50 value, was given. The hope was that a man would become addicted to reading the Journal since the cost of a year's subscription was only \$1.50. For a three year subscription a reader received a six place setting, a \$13.50 value for his \$4.50 subscription.²⁷ Other methods were used to introduce the people of Jackson County to the Journal. The Journal was sent free to newly married couples for six months.²⁸ To students away at school the Journal was available for fifty cents,²⁹ while it was sent to servicemen free.³⁰ To encourage subscribers who owed money to the Journal to pay their debts, Editor Tompkins offered a forty-two piece dinner set free to anyone who would pay as much as ten dollars.³¹

Other efforts suggest the plight of a newspaperman at the mercy of his public. Once during the depression, Tompkins resorted to the following strategy. He generously proposed:

In order to get our entire list of subscriptions paid in advance and also because we need the money the Journal is making a most remarkable offer to our old subscribers. Send us the price of one year's

²⁷Ibid., December 4, 1930.

²⁸Ibid., March 6, 1930.

²⁹Ibid., September 20, 1930.

³⁰Ibid., May 4, 1942.

³¹Ibid., January 15, 1915.

subscription before March 1, 1931, and your subscription will be paid upto February 1, 1932, no matter how much you owe now.³²

This policy of erasing old debts to acquire paid in advance subscriptions was tried several times, but it proved to be more of a sacrifice than a financial benefit.³³

Along with a multitude of unpaid subscriptions the Journal was also vexed with other problems. In 1927 there was a fire in the Journal office plant which caused over three hundred dollars damage.³⁴ In attempting to improve the print office Tompkins purchased new equipment which he boasted was the best in Western North Carolina.³⁵ It is doubtful that the Journal could afford the new presses and this expenditure undoubtedly placed a heavy financial burden on Tompkins.³⁶

All of the sales promotions were expensive and beyond the financial means of the Journal, indicating that Tompkins' failure to understand the business end of publishing a paper. This lack of financial skill was undoubtedly a cause of the paper's folding. Also, as was discussed earlier, Tompkins did not do any manual labor. It is probable that, had he assumed the role of printer's devil along with that of editor,

³²Ibid., February 1, 1931.

³³Ibid., February 14, 1932 and February 16, 1934.

³⁴Ibid., January 27, 1927.

³⁵Ibid., April 27, 1939.

³⁶Statement by Dr. Wayne McGuire, personal interview, and also by Mr. Reg Scott.

the paper could have survived both its competition and the war. It had survived, despite weak finances for thirty-one years prior to 1943.

Throughout his long career in the publishing field, Mr. [Name] has been a devoted servant of the public. He has been a member of the National Association of Publishers, the American Newspaper Guild, and the Newspaper Guild of [State]. His own experience in the industry has convinced him that the public has the right to know the truth about the activities of their government and the actions of their leaders. He has been a vocal proponent of the right of the public to know the truth about the activities of their government and the actions of their leaders.

To keep the public informed, it is necessary to have a free press. The press is the only source of information that is not controlled by the government. It is the only source of information that is not controlled by the government. It is the only source of information that is not controlled by the government.

It will be necessary to continue to support the press in order to keep the public informed. The press is the only source of information that is not controlled by the government. It is the only source of information that is not controlled by the government. It is the only source of information that is not controlled by the government.

Editorial to the [Newspaper Name], [Date]

[Signature]

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSION OF A NEWSPAPER

Throughout his thirty-one years of triumphs and failures in the publishing field Dan Tompkins had strong feelings concerning the mission of a newspaper and its editor. Never did he consider the newspaper business to be a money-making venture.¹ His own experience is indeed the most probable basis for that belief. For the most part Editor Tompkins fulfilled his belief in the mission of a newspaper which was:

To keep the people informed; provoke thinking; help educate children; dispense information in good English; fight for right; lead for progress; keep on a high level; inspiration to people; partake of their hopes; their aspirations; their triumphs, their sorrows and disappointment. It records their birth, rejoices in their happiness, tells of their marriages, chronicles their deaths, and drops a tear upon their grave.²

It will be necessary to analyze each phrase to determine the success of Editor Tompkins in accomplishing his mission. In keeping the people informed, he did succeed in local news coverage. Each week the paper carried a local news column which told who visited whom, who was sick, and in general what the local people were doing. Also, in many issues there were columns from Qualla, Cullowhee, Savannah, Beta, and other communities near Sylva which presented the same type of local

¹Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, August 23, 1943.

²Ibid. February 14, 1935.

gossip. One reader said that the Journal carried local news that interested the people and not things about which the readers did not know or care to read.³ There was some national news coverage most of which came from daily papers, exchanges, and dispatches.⁴ The national news for the most part covered the two world wars that occurred during the Journal's publication. The war news was mostly condensed in paragraph form from large daily papers.⁵ After World War I and the armistice, the front page of the Journal carried stories of the reaction of the men under arms, of the rejoicing of the American people, and of Jackson County's celebration over the ending of the war.⁶ That was the way in which Tompkins handled most national news--from the point of view of its effect on Jackson County.

To provoke thinking was another mission of the Journal. "If a newspaper can stimulate its readers to think, it is a success. If it cannot it is a failure in service and that is the only justification a paper has for existence."⁷ To measure his success in this mission would be impossible, one can only make assumptions. It is known that the Journal

³Statement by Mrs. Edith Law, personal interview.

⁴Op. cit., February 28, 1913, April 4, 1913, April 11 1913, August 14, 1914, September 18, 1914, February 19, 1915, March 2, 1917, and August 17, 1917.

⁵Ibid., August 14, 1914 and August 28, 1914.

⁶Ibid., November 15, 1918.

⁷Ibid., February 14, 1930.

was the most widely read paper in Jackson County with the largest circulation of any paper published in Jackson or adjoining counties. In 1926 its circulation was approximately 10,000 readers.⁸

As a third mission Editor Tompkins listed the education of children. To accomplish this he urged longer school terms,⁹ legislative action to support bills for education of the children of poorer counties,¹⁰ a Farm Life School for Jackson County,¹¹ and parental enforcement of the compulsory school laws.¹² In almost every issue there were serial stories which would interest the inexperienced reader, these stories were light and easy to read, covering almost every topic from romance to the supernatural. Tompkins was an outspoken supporter of Western Carolina Teacher's College. Some feel that he is responsible for the school's remaining in Cullowhee rather than being moved to Asheville.¹³ Miss Addie Beam, Registrar of Western Carolina for years, feels that Tompkins helped to instigate the legislature's passing of revenue bills to provide money for the building of Hoey Auditorium, Madison Dormitory, the infirmary, and the Student

⁸Ibid., October 27, 1926.

⁹Ibid., October 25, 1918.

¹⁰Ibid., January 10, 1913.

¹¹Ibid., March 14, 1928.

¹²Ibid., July 18, 1913.

¹³Statements by Mrs. Wilma Jones and E. J. Nickleson, personal interviews.

Union on the Western Carolina campus. Miss Beam feels that the college administration should name a building on the campus in his honor, not only for his influence in the legislature, but because she also feels that he put the college on the map.¹⁴ Western Carolina Teacher's College considered the Journal as a "genuine educational institution."¹⁵

The dispensing of information in good English was another important mission of the newspaper. The Editor of the Journal was a self-educated man, one who was widely read and thoroughly well informed. His style of editorial writing would be unacceptable in the newspapers of 1966. During the period in which he wrote, however, Tompkins' style was accepted and indeed considered superior.¹⁶ The Franklin Press said, "Western North Carolina could hardly get along without the Journal, the most widely quoted paper in this section of the state."¹⁷ Other editors and papers often attempted to copy his style. Tompkins was quoted often. Once a Scotsman, John R. Robb of Glasgow, wrote asking permission to use excerpt from the Journal editorials;¹⁸ and, after the paper stopped publication, Dan Tompkins was

¹⁴Statement by Miss Addie Beam, personal interview.

¹⁵Letter in the Jackson County Journal, March 24, 1938.

¹⁶Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, April 12, 1928.

¹⁷Ibid., February 2, 1927.

¹⁸Ibid., January 9, 1930.

still in demand as a writer for other papers.¹⁹ In writing for the Journal Tompkins made mistakes in punctuation and spelling, many of which, this author feels, were errors made by the printer.

Fighting for right was a major mission of the Journal. This Tompkins did with all the fervor of his heart and pen. The Journal always printed what Tompkins believed was right regardless of the consequences. Editor Tompkins felt little concern for those whom he had to oppose. When Tompkins was advocating a new hotel for Sylva, there was an old inadequate hotel there. When he had succeeded in convincing one reader that a hotel was needed, that reader came to Sylva to talk with the mayor who was at that time Dan Tompkins. By a strange coincidence the stranger stopped the owner of the old hotel and asked how he could find the mayor. The hotel owner said, "Sigh, Sigh, Sylva ain't got a damned mayor."²⁰ After that, whenever Tompkins was faced with a difficult problem he could not easily solve he said, "Sigh, Sigh, we ain't got a damned Mayor."²¹ There was not much that stood in Tompkins way. One of his best friends wrote, "He never possessed [sic] an abundance of worldly goods, still, he stood tall, while of small statue, he was not one to compromise what he himself believed was right, or any act which could not be recalled."²²

¹⁹Statement by Miss Sadie Luck, personal interview.

²⁰Statement by Leon Sutton, personal interview.

²¹Ibid.

²²Correspondence of Mr. Raymond Sutton.

Stimulating progress is a major mission of a paper that is of service to its readers.²³ The Journal stimulated and gloried in progress. In no other mission did the Journal accomplish as much as it did in the role of a voice for progress. Tompkins' successes in this area can best be illustrated by listing progressive changes in which he played an important role. His editorials, side-walk discussions, and actions on the city council led to the paving of four miles of Sylva's streets. Trips at his own expensive, editorials, speeches, and work in the state legislature eventually lead to the paving of county highway 106, later state highway 107 from Sylva through Cullowhee to the South Carolina line. Thus, in addition to fighting to keep the school at its present location, he had placed Western Carolina Teacher's College on a paved road. Today, Western North Carolina boasts of its National Park, tourist attractions, and many motor-hotel accommodations. Dan Tompkins was one of the first promoters of the park and urged the farmers to sell forested land to the government after the park was assured. Also, quite early in his journalistic career he agitated for a drive to build more and better tourist accommodations. Editor Tompkins did promote progress through the columns of the Journal.

Satisfying all the people, all the time, Dan Tompkins found to be impossible despite his attempt to keep the paper

²³Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, June 20, 1919.

on a high level. He often met with foes, but they never seemed to bother him. He would admit that, "It does one good for a friend to come in and put his hand on your shoulder in a friendly sort of way and say he likes you and your paper. It makes tears start in your eyes and gives you a queer feeling up the middle of your spine."²⁴ Despite opposition Dan Tompkins did strive always to print a paper that was good for Jackson County. His objective was to serve Jackson County people. Tompkins' paper was the tool of no faction. It was listed in the Directory of Newspapers as an Independent Democrat; however, although the paper claimed that it never came out in favor of a political party, it always supported the Democrats and spoke out against the Republicans. Professor Robert Lee Madison of Western Carolina Teacher's College called the Journal one of the best weekly newspapers in America.²⁵ He also said,

The Journal is worth more than a \$1.00 a year each; why, your editorials--many of them--are worth that amount each. I must have the Journal; it is one of the necessities of my life. I must have it if I have to pay for it by coming to Sylva and working out my subscription as assistant printer's devil.²⁶

The material in the paper, though it always revealed the biases of Editor Tompkins, was written on a high level that was readable for all ages.

²⁴Ibid., August 8, 1913

²⁵Ibid., January 20, 1941

²⁶Ibid.

Tompkins hoped to inspire the people of Jackson County. One of his efforts in this mission was to instill in the minds of the readers the importance of a county fair. Tompkins believed the fair to be akin to the school, press, and pulpit because of its educational value. "A fair was established in Jackson County," he said, "to stimulate endeavors to improve the stock raised, agriculture methods, and show the world what Jackson can do...."²⁷ This is only one example. The Journal was also successful in inspiring the people to move for progress in other areas.

To partake of the hopes, aspirations, triumphs, sorrows, and disappointments of his readers was another Tompkins mission that was fulfilled. In the last goal named his colorful, descriptive, characteristic style was most freely used. Often in eulogizing to the dead, Tompkins would write more than a column. The following obituary appeared in the Journal on June 27, 1924, in memory of Dr. Albert Brown, founder of Sylva Collegiate Institute:

Our worthy friend and brother Dr. A. E. Brown is gone; he has 'crossed the bar.' He has gone to that 'unknown and silent shore' from whence no wonderer ever returns....

It is for you and me to give love, encouragement and help and that is the message that our departed brother is hurling back to you and me today....

Soft and Safe may be his sleep in his last earthly bed, bright and glorious may be his rising from it. May the first rays of each morning sun ever kiss his grave with the glory of the dawn and may its last rays fade softly upon his tomb to

²⁷Ibid., September 11, 1914.

bless his memory with its gentle benediction.

Though the cold hand of death has cut him down and destroyed the beauty of his existence and the joy of his companionship, yet we know on the resurrection morn, in the springtime of eternity, He who 'marks the sparrow's fall' shall kiss his being into life and loveliness again.

Until then, my friend, sleep until them, farewell.²⁸

With this brief analysis of each phrase of his editorial "The Mission of a Newspaper," one can see that Editor Tompkins largely accomplished his objectives. In addition to his own estimate that the Journal had served Jackson County, Tompkins' readers also believed the paper to be an asset to the county.

Surrounding area editors felt that Dan Tompkins achieved the Journal's mission. The editor of the Franklin Press said of his writing style, "Dan Tompkins, of the Jackson County Journal, Sylva, is conceded to be one of the best paragraphers on any weekly newspaper in the state."²⁹ The Asheville Enterprise believed Tompkins to be efficient. On Friday, November 5, 1926 the Enterprise reported, "A smart piece of work by one of the best tip-top weekly newspapers in North Carolina was the issuance of the Jackson County Journal at daylight Wednesday with complete returns from all precincts and a summary of national news. The Journal is a credit to Sylva and the county."³⁰ The Hendersonville Times also

²⁸Ibid., June 27, 1924.

²⁹Ibid., April 12, 1928.

³⁰Ibid., November 10, 1926.

conceded the Journal to be an asset to Jackson. Once when Tompkins was ill the Times noted, "We hope our brother soon recovers because Sylva and Jackson County suffer every day he is in bed."³¹ At about the same time the editor of the Franklin Press wrote that Western North Carolina could not do without the Journal.³² When Tompkins announced his candidacy for Lieutenant Governor the Western Carolina Tribune Hendersonville expressed sorrow that he would be neglecting writing, which the Tribune believed him to do so well, for politics. Nevertheless, the Tribune willingly supported him in his political aspirations. The Tribune printed,

Friend Dan is too good a writer to be neglecting his newspaper to grasp at things political in nature, but that is aside the question. He says he is going to be lieutenant [sic] governor of North Carolina, that he will roll down the mountains with such a balt that the other three candidates in the Piedmont will think a tornado has swept them off their feet. Tompkins has had enough experience as legislator and reading clerk in the legislative halls to enable him to preside over the senate with much grace and dignity.... Dan may your mountain vote be heard rolling in big thunderous tones down the sea on Raleigh.³³

In 1928 Dan Tompkins made the key note speech at Greensboro for the North Carolina Press Association. He spoke on North Carolina's indebtedness to newspapers which had furthered better education, brought new industry to North Carolina, and had kept demagogues out of office. The Greensboro Daily News

³¹Ibid., February 2, 1927.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., April 19, 1940.

commented glowing terms, "Editor Tompkins spoke in swift phrase and graceful metaphor the editor's copy flowed like a strong current into the consciousness of his listeners."³⁴ The Transylvania Times of Brevard said of the Journal, it was a "Neat, Clean, Newsy, Legible, Non-strain on the eyes, and a lot of other things--just nice."³⁵

Editors of near-by papers were not the only ones who recognized the significance of the Journal. On the Silver Anniversary of the Journal President Franklin Roosevelt wrote to a proud Dan Tompkins:

My dear Mr. Tompkins,

It gives me great pleasure to join your other friends in extending hearty congratulations to you upon the completion of twenty-five years as editor of the Jackson County Journal. I trust that you may long be spared in health and strength to maintain through your paper the highest traditions of American Journalism.

Very sincerely yours,
Franklin D. Roosevelt³⁶

At the same time Western Carolina Teacher's College congratulated Tompkins on his twenty-five years of service to Jackson County. The college characterized Editor Dan Tompkins' career as "a quarter century of versatile and courageous journalism,"³⁷ and also described him as a "brilliant editor."³⁸

³⁴Ibid., July 26, 1928.

³⁵Ibid., March 28, 1940.

³⁶Ibid., March 24, 1938.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

In addition to these significant tributes, the readers of the Journal were delighted and appreciative to have the Journal in their homes and to know Dan Tompkins. "Everybody liked to read the Journal,"³⁹ for in the paper Tompkins wrote about the local people and attempted "to make them feel good."⁴⁰ The Journal always gave abundant coverage to local gossip which the mountain people loved to read. One devoted reader commented: "We thought it was funny, we liked to guess who it was when he didn't tell."⁴¹ "For the area that it served the Journal had a very good subscription list."⁴² The paper was widely trusted because the readers believed that what appeared on its pages was correct.⁴³ Tompkins' paper was read with confidence and proved to be influential.⁴⁴ Faith in the local paper brought many advertisements for the merchants knew the paper was read and would sell their products. Many merchants used the Journal's advertisement pages successfully.⁴⁵ On one occasion the paper printed the story about a farmer killing a bear. A reader in Atlanta, Georgia, read the story and wrote the Journal offering to

³⁹Statement by Glenn Hughes, personal interview.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Statement by Mrs. Edith Law, personal interview.

⁴²Statement by Miss Sadie Lock, personal interview.

⁴³Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall, personal interview.

⁴⁴Statements by David Brown, Mrs. Carlula Bryson, Mrs. Edith Hall, Leon Sutton, Mrs. Everett Brown, and Mrs. Mary Louise Buchanan, personal interviews.

⁴⁵Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall, personal interview.

buy the bear. Tompkins wrote, "Buyer and seller were brought together [sic]. A service done for which the Journal received nothing, wanted nothing, and expected nothing."⁴⁶

It is evident that the readers considered the Journal an important institution in Jackson County; however, the readers of the paper esteemed Dan Tompkins far above the paper. He was deemed "a valuable asset to Jackson County and even Western North Carolina."⁴⁷ One reader of the Journal said, "He was everything a man needs to be for the good of his county."⁴⁸ Dan Tompkins never possessed many material goods. His friends attribute his financial problems to his concern for Jackson County. It was this genuine desire to promote Jackson County that was his most valuable asset at election time. Many voted for Tompkins when they felt someone else was better qualified; however, the voters knew that Tompkins would walk for Jackson County and not for his own personal gain.⁴⁹

Because of his accomplishments in journalism and politics and his own financial difficulties one old gentleman who knew him personally said of Dan Tompkins and others like him, "People worth more haven't had too much financial success."⁵⁰

⁴⁶Editorial in the Jackson County Journal, June 22, 1927.

⁴⁷Statement by Wayne McGuire, personal interview.

⁴⁸Statement by John Morris, personal interview.

⁴⁹Statements by Mrs. Carlula Bryson, Wayne McGuire, and John Morris.

⁵⁰Statement by Wayne McGuire, personal interview.

Dan Tompkins was popular not only in Sylva but in all of North Carolina. When "the cold hand of death" struck him, "important people from far and wide attended his funeral."⁵¹

As long as readers of the Journal or acquaintances of Tompkins remain, there will be lingering memories of the "influential little devil" who promoted progressive changes for Western North Carolina. Unfortunately, there will soon be few to remember Dan Tompkins, Mountain Editor and Politician; however, not one native or one tourist in Southwestern North Carolina would see Jackson County and the mountain country as it is today, if Dan Tompkins had not passed through.

Statement by Mrs. Matt L. Davidson

Statement by Mrs. Cora Ann Boyd

Statement by Mrs. Sammie Boyd

Statement by Jim Burger

Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall

Statement by Fred L. Hopper

Statement by Glenn Hopper

Statement by Mrs. Willie Jones

Statement by Mrs. Eddie Lutz

Statement by Mrs. Edith Lutz

Statement by Wagon McCalister

Statement by John McCall

Statement by E. J. McCallister

Statement by Chester Cook

Statement by Lord Sutton

Statement by Leonard Sutton

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Statement by Mrs. Carlula Bryson
Statement by Martin Cunningham
Statement by Jim Gudger
Statement by Mrs. Edith Hall
Statement by Fred L. Hooper
Statement by Glenn Hughes
Statement by Mrs. Wilma Jones
Statement by Mrs. Sadie Luck
Statement by Mrs. Edith Laws
Statement by Wayne McGuire
Statement by John Morris
Statement by E. J. Nicholson
Statement by Chester Scott
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