



by PHIL NELSON

Sarah and Mike Wenninger on their first day at the Journal, April 3, 1993.

From the April 7, 1993, Trinity Journal

Journal has new owners

The Trinity Journal has been sold to a couple from Fort Worth, Texas, by Mark Lantz, who has run the newspaper for the past six years.

The new owners are Mike and Sarah Wenninger, who took over the paper April 3.

Sarah Wenninger will be the publisher of the Journal and Mike will be the editor. Both are 54 years old.

Sarah said, "We are very happy to have acquired the Trinity Journal. It is a good paper produced by very good people and we will keep it that way."

She continued, "This is such a beautiful area and we are thrilled to be here. Mike and I are history buffs and we're eager to learn more about the long and unusual history of the area."

Mike Wenninger commented, "Mark Lantz has made the Journal a newspaper that's very informative about life in Trinity County and this region. We will continue to do that. Eventually some things may change because every editor inevitably puts his own mark on a paper, but we will strive to keep the Journal a vital part of the lives of its readers and advertisers."

"It's been a privilege and a pleasure to be the owner of the Trinity Journal," Lantz said. "While I won't miss what sometimes seemed like constant deadlines, I certainly will miss my association with such a historic enterprise, with all the fine people in the community and especially with all the wonderful people I've had the opportunity to work with at the Journal."

Sarah Wenninger grew up in Ashland and Lexington,

Ky., and Mike is a native of Bucyrus, Ohio. Both have bachelor's degrees from the University of Kentucky, where they met. They have two sons: Lee of Evanston, Ill., a purchasing manager for Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and Mark, a junior college student in Fort Worth.

Sarah's job experience has been in accounting and office management work, ranging from retail stores to regional food-products manufacturers to a national insurance company. She also has experience in retail sales, and for six years she helped manage a neighborhood grocery in Minneapolis.

Mike Wenninger's entire career has been in journalism and public relations. Last October he left Burlington Northern Railroad (headquartered in Fort Worth) after 15 years in its public relations and employee-communications department. His last title was director of public affairs.

Before joining the railroad in 1977, Mike was a newspaper reporter and editor for 18 years. He worked for daily newspapers in Louisville, Ky.; Billings and Great Falls, Mont.; Houston; Minneapolis, and Casper, Wyo. Mike also is an Army veteran.

The Wenningers always have been active in community affairs. They have done volunteer work for theaters, art museums, historic places, neighborhood associations and more. In Fort Worth, Sarah was a hostess and volunteer office worker for the Fort Worth Visitors and Convention Bureau and a docent at a historic "cattle baron's" mansion/museum.

150 years

(Continued from page S1)

During the Steppings' early years, the average size of the paper was eight pages, but by the time they sold it in 1960 to William F. and Janet Asbury, the paper averaged 12 pages weekly.

Asbury, 36, served as publisher, while his wife, 26, was associate publisher. Both the Asburys had journalism backgrounds, he as a graduate of the University of Washington School of Journalism who edited several farm journals and was a war correspondent in Korea. Janet Asbury had worked for the Joplin Globe in Joplin, Missouri, and she continued to write for the Journal.

After he had been here only three and a half months, Asbury ran into a buzz saw in the form of mass indignation of many oldtimers when he suggested in an editorial, "Let's change the name of Weaverville to Shanghi-La."

Rita Hanover, then secretary of the Trinity County Historical Society, collected 400 signatures of Weaver residents on a petition and was reported as saying that she found three reactions to those opposing the name change - "Some people were amazed. Some amused. But most were just plain furious."

Asbury wrote on Dec. 22, 1960, "I know when I'm licked. . . . I promise not to suggest any other name changes until 1961, except possibly something - anything - to replace 'Hayfork.'" With that remark he may have annoyed most of the people in the second largest town in Trinity County.

In November 1961, Asbury wrote the editorial, "Lie Down and Be Depressed, Damn You!"

The editorial protested President John F. Kennedy's action designating Trinity County a depressed area. Asbury cited a local chamber of commerce survey in the area that showed 25 new businesses in Weaverville, high bank deposits, new businesses in other parts of the county, and the fact that no one in Trinity County had even thought about applying for depressed status. The local chamber said "no thanks" to the offer of extra money for being depressed.

Asbury's last line in the editorial read, "Big Brother is watching us, all right, but he's myopic."

Picked up as a feature by the Associated Press, the editorial was published all over the United States. Asbury was awarded the "Editorial Citation" award from the California Newspaper Publishers Association for his commentary.

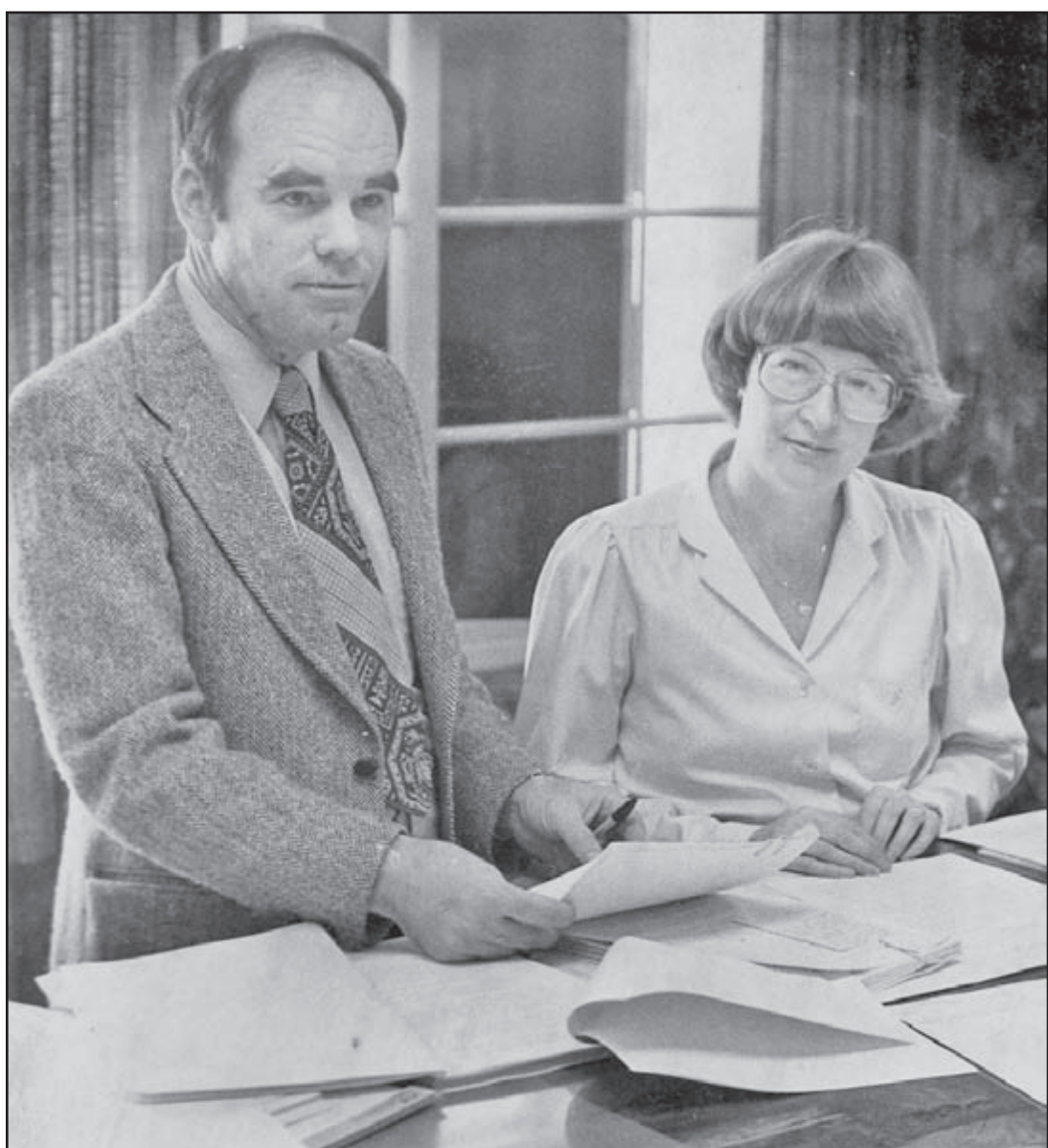
The Asburys sold the Journal in 1962, and Bill Asbury went on in 1978 to become editor of the Seattle-Post Intelligencer.

Ralph and Dorothy Costello bought the Journal from the Asburys. He had almost 30 years' experience working for newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune and the Oakland Tribune, mostly as a printer.

In 1962 in a front-page editorial, he disagreed with Asbury's earlier prize-winning editorial, "Lie Down and Be Depressed." He said, "The notion that asking the government for assistance is in some way evil or a kind of begging is a fallacy." He said the county needed all the help it could muster to make the economy more stable.

The next week he received a letter signed by 56 people from Weaverville who took strong exception to his editorial. Costello wondered why the letter "was given to the newspaper beyond Buckhorn Summit before the Journal has a chance to publish it." This was the beginning shot in a long, bitter battle between Costello and the Redding Record Searchlight, which he called "That Paper" in his column.

He was highly critical of some members of the Board of Supervisors, and referred to their chamber as "The Gas Chamber."



Gary Mortenson and Linda Martin Hawk in 1983.

He sold the Journal to John S. "Stan" Martin and his wife Linda, who took over as editor, publisher and assistant publisher in 1967.

Stan Martin, 29, the son of small town newspaper owners, learned to set type and other printing skills at a fairly tender age in his folks' shop, and he wrote well.

He brought to the Journal the philosophy he outlined in his first editorial: "First of all our duty is to inform the public. Every effort will be made to report facts as they are - not as we wish or think them to be. We plan no crusades. We are here to serve you, not to stir you up."

In August 1970, the Journal moved to a location on Martin Road (now the H & R Block building), and Martin installed a new rotary press to print the newspaper.

Perhaps the biggest change Martin made was in March 1976 when he went from letterpress and hot-type production methods (the Linotype, for example) to modern offset-printing methods using photocomposition.

As the county's population grew, Martin saw the need to expand his staff. In 1978, after putting out papers as large as 32 pages, Martin hired his first full-time reporter-editor and looked forward to taking a little time off - a rare commodity for a weekly editor-publisher.

Martin and his family took a trip to Idaho and Montana, and while on a fishing expedition with his three sons, Martin fell and broke an ankle. He came home with a full leg cast and four weeks after the accident he was hospitalized again, this time with a blood clot in a lung, a complication of the injury. His unexpected death on the next day, August 24, 1978, at the age of 40 was a shock to the community.

The Journal had grown under Martin's leadership from a circulation of under 2,500 to about 3,800, and from an average of eight to ten pages to 16.

Linda Martin, assistant publisher and his widow, picked up the reins. She appointed the Journal's full-time reporter, Patricia Hamilton, assistant editor in 1978 and editor in 1979.

Hamilton, whose time at the paper spanned 1963 to 1990 and five owners (with some breaks) still resides in Weaverville with her husband, Chuck.

When she came on the scene in 1963, Trinity Lake was filling, a process that took several years. During her years with the paper, "I think probably the most important or the biggest story over a long period of time was the eventual formation

of the Trinity County PUD," Hamilton said.

It began with the purchase of CP National electric system, followed later by purchase of the rest of the electric system from Pacific Gas & Electric - an unwilling seller. "That was a real fight," Hamilton said.

Formation of the Public Utilities District allowed its customers to receive electric power from Trinity Dam at a much lower rate than before.

The spotted owl's listing under the Endangered Species Act and its impact on the timber industry and the county's economy - "That was another very major story," Hamilton said. "It took a long time for everybody to realize how major this was for the county."

Hamilton also cited the RARE II decision as having a big impact on the county. The Roadless Area Review and Evaluation began with studies in 1977 in the Forest Service system, and the county appointed an advisory committee of citizens ranging from environmentalists to forestry workers.

In Trinity County, 348,500 acres were in the review, and the committee recommended that 185,300 of that be released for multiple use with logging allowed, 179,500 acres be designated wilderness, and a small portion (a little over 6,000 acres) be designated for further planning. The supervisors adopted that recommendation, and it was included in the California Wilderness Act.

About 1,900 people attended a full-blown congressional hearing held at the high school gym in Weaverville. Environmentalists from all over the world attended, and the three operating local lumber mills were closed so their workers could attend.

There was disagreement locally, but "that's why we have so much wilderness," Hamilton said. "It was wilderness that the people of the county really

asked for."

In 1983, the paper was sold to Gary Mortenson. Mortenson also owned the Pioneer Press in Fort Jones, a paper he started in 1972.

Retired now and living in Oroville, Mortenson recalled, "I got into trouble right off the bat public relations-wise. . . . Without thinking too much, I changed the type of the headline font from kind of a Western look to more of an avant-garde look - similar to the font used now." Mortenson said he understands the disappointment of some at that, because "the paper is very old and has tradition."

He admits he had a way of riling folks, but said, "I really enjoyed the people and the county because of its feistiness."

In 1986 the Journal went back under the ownership of Linda Martin, who had remarried and was Linda Martin Hawk. Mortenson continued working at newspapers around the North State, with his last job being editor of the Press Tribune in Roseville.

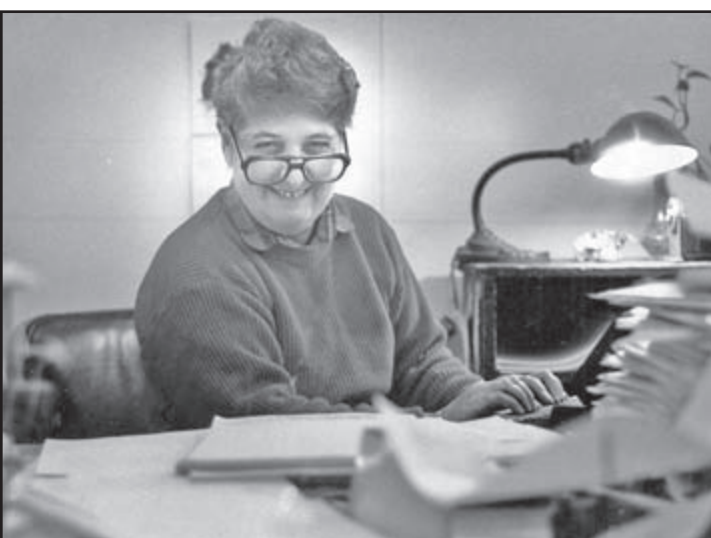
In 1987 Martin Hawk sold the newspaper to Mark Lantz, who previously owned a weekly newspaper in Illinois.

"At that time, there were a lot of environmental issues having to do with logging and the Trinity River," said Lantz, who now owns the Georgetown Gazette near Sacramento.

In 1991 Lantz wrote that you need a time machine to see the effects of forestry experiments. "The practical thing to do (as well as the most scientific) is to hedge your bets and try several different approaches," he stated.

Lantz made some changes in the newspaper's production methods, going from the old Compugraphic equipment to "desktop publishing" using computers.

In April 1993, he sold the Journal to the current owners, Mike and Sarah Wenninger.



Pat Hamilton's Journal career stretched from 1963 to 1990.

How the Journal got its name

The Trinity Journal is named after the old Louisville Journal, according to David E. Gordon, the founding publisher.

In a letter written to the Journal in 1895, Gordon told of how his founding partner, Harry Seaman, wanted to change the name of the paper when the two bought out the old Weaverville Democrat on Jan. 11, 1856.

Seaman asked his friend Ed Neblett, a pioneer resident of the county, for a name. Neblett was a great admirer of the Louisville Journal and its editor, George D. Prentice. He said, "Why not call it the Trinity Journal?"

So the Journal it was. Neblett was honored by being the first new name enrolled on the Journal subscription books.

The Louisville Journal opposed slavery, while the Louisville Morning Courier eventually supported the Confederacy. After the Civil War, the papers merged to become The Courier-Journal in 1868.

In 1918 the Bingham family of Louisville took control of The Courier-Journal. Over the next 70 years, the Bingham family made The Courier-Journal a model newspaper, earning countless honors, including eight Pulitzer Prizes.

In a twist of fate, the current editor of The Trinity Journal, Mike Wenninger, upon receiving his bachelor's degree in 1961, was hired as a reporter by The Courier-Journal.



Congratulations to The Trinity Journal 150th year of reporting Trinity County's History
from the
Trinity County Historical Society
Come by the Jake Jackson Museum to see our display of old Journal issues.

Congratulations to a real old timer, The Trinity Journal

Thanks for the continued service throughout your 150 years!

Congratulations again from everyone at. . .

