

# THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

25¢ LAST EDITION

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LAST EDITION

## STOPPING THE PRESSES



## The News bids farewell to its city



By JOHN VAUGHAN

STAFF WRITER  
The Charlotte News, once the largest afternoon daily in the Carolinas and for many decades one of the South's best newspapers, ceases publication with this edition.

A victim of social changes and economic forces beyond the control of its publishers and marketing strategists, The News passed into history shortly after 2 p.m. today, after almost 97 years, with a final press run of 67,003 copies.

It was the largest press run in a decade or more, but 18,000 of those copies will go to souvenir collectors and former employees, not to subscribers. At its death The News had a circulation of only 34,700 — half that of its peak period in 1972. The News was loved, but it wasn't loved by enough people to survive.

"It's a sad day, it really is," said Gene Williams, vice president for marketing and sales for The News and The Charlotte Observer. "A lot of people will tell you The News was the better of the two papers. But as good as it was, not enough people supported it. Circulation and advertising volume make a paper profitable. You can have the best paper in the world, but if it's not churning up circulation and advertising, it's a lost cause . . ."

The News, for much of its life, was known in this town as the underdog newspaper. And that was its psychology, the way it saw itself. It embraced the role with gusto, making the best of it.

Its staff spent many years in a newsroom at Church and 4th streets where office furniture was so scarce that some reporters worked three to a desk. Until 1959, when Knight Newspapers bought the paper and moved it to Stonewall and Tryon, The News lived with a windowless, unadorned pressroom and dilapidated presses.

"There was never enough money at The Charlotte News, from Day 1 one of its operation," recalls Emery Wister, who covered entertainment, federal court and the business beat for The News for 35 years until his retirement in 1979.

"Lack of money was the bane of our existence . . . In the Depression, the pay was terrible, working conditions were always less than perfect, and some of the equipment was worn out. When it was bought by the Knights, the press was ready to blow at any minute. We were in terrible shape then."

Even in later years, reporters were sometimes told to limit long-distance calls on stories because of budget considerations.

After 1974 The News staff was larger than that of many papers with similar circulation. But its commitment to beat The Observer in local coverage and to try to hold its own in other areas resulted in some grueling work schedules. Where Observer reporters might

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### Dear Charlotte News Readers:

In death there is a rebirth of the spirit, a reunification of family. The final edition of The Charlotte News is an occasion for mourning. In this observance today — within these pages, among our readers — we mark the passage of The News and the extension of life in the pages of The Charlotte Observer.

Beginning tomorrow, Nov. 2, a new and expanded Observer will be published, drawing on its own strengths and those of The News to attempt to do a better job for you, the reader.

Here are some of the most important parts of The Observer's improvements:

- The sports section will be expanded by almost seven full pages a week. News sports columnist Tom Sorensen will join another former News columnist, Ron Green, on The Observer's sports pages. National sports news will be improved extensively.
- The Viewpoint page will be new home to the best of The News's columnists. Tom Bradbury joins The Observer as associate editor, writing two columns a week along with editorials. Syndicated columnists moving over will include George Will, Ed Yoder, Ellen Goodman, Georgie Anne Geyer, Joseph Sobran and former News cartoonist Bob Gorrell.
- The daily TV page will be sharply expanded to provide more detailed pro-

gram logs, a greatly enlarged and more readable prime-time viewing chart, Best Bets and more room for Jeff Borden's TV/Radio column.

- Comics and features that appeared in The News will now move to The Observer's features pages. Comics include Family Circus, Bloom County, Hagar the Horrible, Dennis The Menace, Blondie, Mary Worth, Rex Morgan and Marvin. Features include Edie Low's food articles, Ross Rhoads, Dennis Sadomka's After Five column and the Chuckle.

- Allen Norwood, The News's people-oriented columnist, will begin writing for The Observer five days a week.

There's a lot of news — and a lot of The News — in The Charlotte Observer. We look forward to bringing you an improved and expanded Observer beginning tomorrow, Nov. 2.

Cordially,

*Rich Appel*  
Editor, The Charlotte News

### A sad column? No, let's toast good times

This is the final day for The Charlotte News. But this is not going to be a solemn, teary final column. If that's what you were expecting, well, sorry.

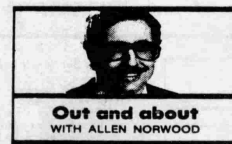
Let's call this a wake, and let's toast the good times . . .

Oh, the good times . . . SHARON SKAGSETH took a trip down east almost four years ago, when this column was spanking new. Nearly everything went wrong. She couldn't rent a car because her license had expired, then she got a license, then got a car — then got caught in a flood and wreck.

Sharon met BOB HEINZ on a cruise ship, fell in love during a whirlwind romance, moved to California and got married — and I still get calls that start out this way: "This isn't as bad as what happened to Sharon, but listen . . ."

About the same time I wrote about a little joke making the rounds of junior high schools: "Know how to keep a turkey in suspense? No? Well, I'll tell you tomorrow."

I knew I'd get a call when to-



morrow came and, sure enough, I did. The caller wanted to know the punchline — and I had to explain that she was the turkey since she had been in suspense.

Months later I noticed this woman giving me strange looks at a dinner meeting. "I'm SYLVIA JORDAN," she said. "I'm the turkey."

Thank goodness some turkeys can laugh at themselves.

Those two little tidbits sort of set the tone for the columns that followed. A reader would share some funny or unusual or touching story, and I'd pass it along. Readers laughed at themselves in the

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### Evening prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I am thankful for the Statue of Liberty.

— Christie Kinney, 9

### Today's chuckle

Small town: Place where, if you see a girl dining with a man old enough to be her father, he is.

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Because of a shortage, some copies of today's News may not have color comics.