The Daily Independent.

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA, [illegible]DAY EVENING, NOV. 23, 1951

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A TRIBUTE BY THE EMPLOYES

This Edition Is a 'Very Special' One in Many Ways

This is a very special edition of The News-Press. It bears the name of its predecessor, The Independent, but it is a little New[illegible] of New Rails to

PUBLIC JOURNALISM IN SANTA BARBARA: THE THOMAS STORKE STORY

Leah Etling
Senior Honors Thesis
1999-2000

all this we, the News-Press family—as an organization and as individuals—could do no more than mint this token payment. For long investment of work and wisdom, purpose and determination, friendship and acceptance of human as well as business responsibility, only token payment can be made.

The man whose newspaper feeling has made him want to share his 75th birthday celebration with everyone of his newspaper's family became a newspaperman more than 50 years ago. He then had less money and, in some ways, less newspaper experience than the least and youngest member of this large staff gathered here tonight. He worked and became competent in every part of "newspaper" as it was done at the beginning of his century. He has never forgotten what makes a newspaper—part by part and [illegible] place and home again. He has never forgotten that every part of a newspaper is important to and dependent upon every other part of a newspaper. He did not buy or inherit this newspaper. He built it. He knows better than anyone else what is in it and what should come out of it.

The "editor" of this special and limited edition asked for "a story on T. M. Storke." Editors are always asking for a story on "the creation" and reminding reporters how briefly that story is covered in the Bible.

A complete story about T. M. Storke would be a more complete history of the past 50 years in Santa Barbara than any that has been written in any size book. He bought a newspaper on a shoe string at the beginning of this century to make it an important part of the welfare of this community. He has succeeded so well that his story is the story of progress in that welfare.

Anyone who attempts to present this story with highlights should begin with friendships and after that highlight is understandingly written the rest does not matter much. From the beginning he made friends for Santa Barbara—the Santa Barbara as it was year by year and the Santa Barbara he hoped for. His sense and his judgment barred shams, bigots and egotists and sought friendships that were real and "sound at both ends."

T. M. Storke's political history goes back to his teens. Always

Special Recognition For Those on Paper For 25 Years

Big Growth Shown Since 1901

T. M. Storke's 75th birthday party is being attended by his immediate family; by all those who are his News-Press family, by relationship of a working part in The News-Press; and by their wives, husbands, girl friends or boy friends. Beyond those limits no exception has or could be made.

There is no end to the friends of T. M. Storke, even within the limits of this city where he was born 75 years ago. There is no [illegible] family." Once past the limits of the "relationships" set, there is no place of beginning or stopping.

It has been T. M. Storke's characteristic wish to have his birthday celebration include special recognition of the men and women who have been members of The News-Press family for 25 years or more. In that goodwill and courtesy, as in unnumbered others during his life, T. M. Storke's sentiments and acts reflect upon the doer. There is no better evidence of one fine measure of his life than the presence at his 75th birthday of 10 men and women who were with him and his organization at his 50th birthday. Ten among this crowd is not many. But 10 is many to carry over from what was the much smaller News-Press family 25 years and more ago.

These 10 represent every part of The News-Press family and contribute something good and [illegible] present. They represent roots in the community and strong ties, within this organization and outward toward the public this newspaper services.

That which is most significant about this party does not show on its surface, or in its size or in the graciousness of its arrangement. The significant thing is that the party idea and the party plans grew naturally out of organization feeling, from top to bottom. There was family feeling that the party was the proper thing, the inevitable

COAST LINE IS NEAR

Through Rail Service Will Start About March 20

M Fillmore because he did not w to set a date which possibly cld not be filled.

Besides the through trains, th will be a Los Angeles local se ce.

CHINATOWN IS GALA

Gaudy Colors Bedeck Joss House for New Year Celebrations

Joss House Center Of Attractions

Feb. 1901

Chinatown presented a gala appearance in gaudy colors. The joss house has its own hideous pictures of Chinese gods hung on the walls, in front of which are placed small tables covered with candy and sweetmeats.

Around the tables burn an intolerable lot of ill-smelling punk. On each door is posted scarlet slips upon which are Chinese characters, which translated mean, "Have a good time on Chinese New Year's."

The Chinamen are all dressed in the most gaudy colored clothes, every color of the rainbow in their raiment. They are all smiles and greet their country cousins with a long lingo of happy returns of the day.

The joss house is the center of attractions. It is decorated with red and yellow bunting and red paper.

TEDDY WASN'T TREED

Colonel Finishes Big Hunting Trip in Colorado

Governor Denies He Was Chased

MEEKER, Colo., Feb. 16, (1901)—Colonel Theodore Roosevelt's outing in Colorado has for this season come to an end.

The Colonel and John Goff, the guide, rode into Meeker from [illegible] operation. Coastal steamers did a big business in passenger and freight business in and out of Santa Barbara. Much of the architecture had a New England flavor. The final stretch of railroad on the San Francisco-Los Angeles Coastal route—that between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara—was completed and was due soon to be put in operation.

Some outstanding characteristics of Santa Barbara of 1901 still prevail today. One of these was the weather, which in 1901 was already attracting many tourists. The Old Mission, of course, was the same.

It was on this scene in 1901 that the Independent made its appearance. And soon after its appearance, rather inauspicious at the time, there began developing a news coverage and editorial policy which came to have [illegible] in which the latter situation might be improved—a continuing interest in improvement which the Independent and its successors climaxed with support of the Cachuma project. In an early issue, the Independent launched and succeeded in a campaign against gambling in the Chinese section of the town.

Similarly the Independent soon emphasized and reiterated the natural advantages of Santa Barbara, and encouraged the development of resort attractions.

The news columns developed a search for local news, reported on plans for a forthcoming visit by President McKinley, and the prospects of transforming the Hope Ranch wilderness into a residential sector. Already, the Montecito area was one of large estates where those of wealth began to find unparalleled opportunities for graceful living.

The Independent in its early issues also had the task of reporting significant national and international happenings. Those events seemed remote, however, and the emphasis was on reporting the local scene.

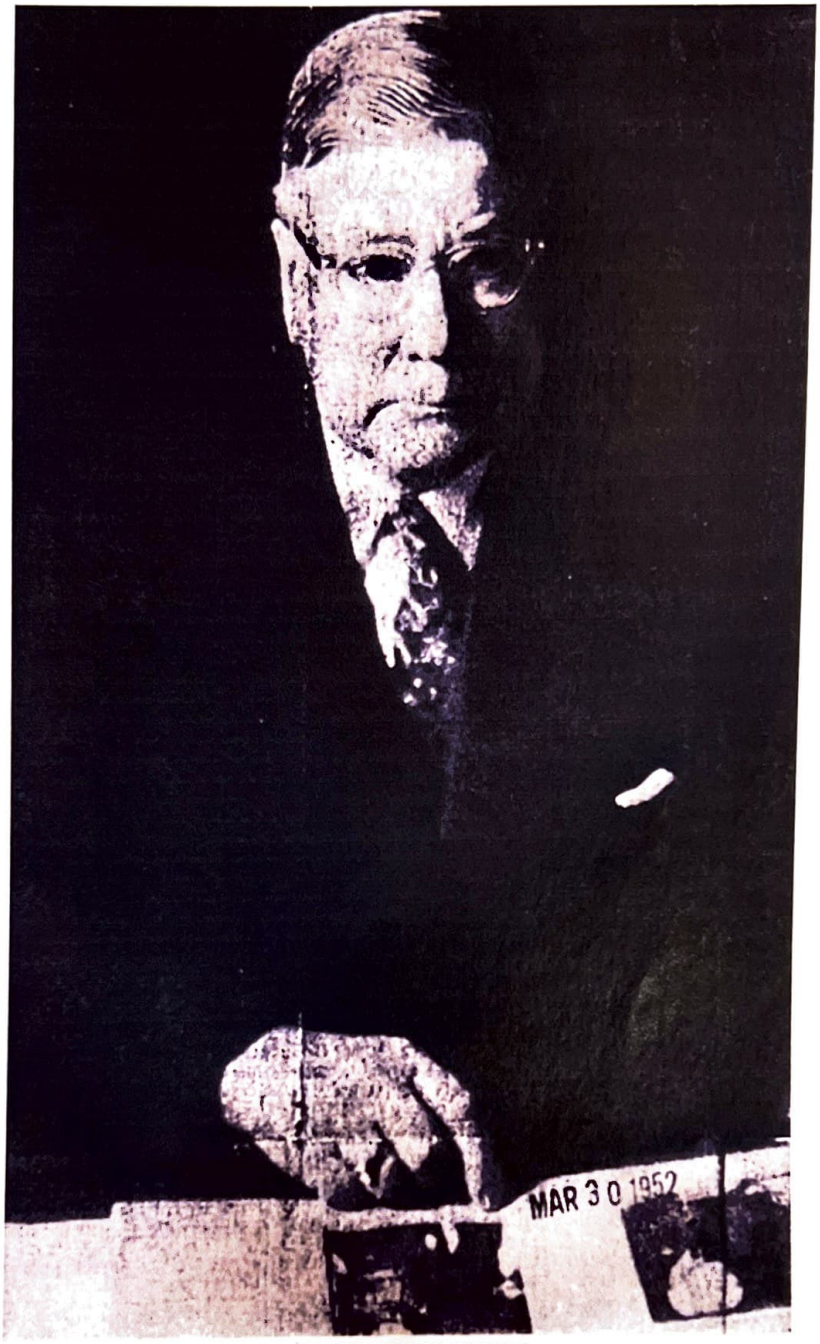
AMBULANCE IS USED

Man Who Has First Ride Is Taken to Station

Clancy Has Claim To Distinction

THE YEAR 1901

Start of 20th Century Ends Roaring 90's Period



THOMAS MORE STOKKE
—Editor and Publisher for More than 50 Years. —McAllister ph

Disclosure

Leah Etling has been employed as a sportswriter for the *Santa Barbara News-Press* for the past year. Prior to taking her current position, she worked as a news reporter, freelancer, columnist, and served as an intern. Etling also completed a project of historical research for the *News-Press* that documented anecdotes from 1899 for the paper's Celebrate2000 project. However, rather than compromising her objectivity, employment at the *News-Press* has enabled her to write the following thesis with a clearer view of the paper's inner workings. True journalistic objectivity, she argues, is only achieved if you are able to analyze yourself.

Author's Note

This paper was motivated by my desire to be a great journalist. Next year, I will attend UC Berkeley's prestigious Northgate School of Journalism, with the goal of establishing my own working definition of public journalism, one I can apply to my career as a reporter and editor.

But before I left Santa Barbara and the *News-Press*, where I have worked for four years, I wanted to understand more about the community I would be leaving behind. This project helped me to do that.

I would like to thank my family, friends and coworkers for all the help they gave me in editing the paper. Thank you, also, for helping me develop my sense of place.

Table of Contents

Storke's Santa Barbara

Picture your route to UCSB today. If you drove to the campus from the north, you probably took the Storke Road exit to drive past Isla Vista before entering the campus' west gate. If you came from the south, you most likely took Highway 217, otherwise known as Ward Memorial Boulevard, which crosses More Mesa before depositing travelers at UCSB. Perhaps you flew to Santa Barbara by airplane, and landed at the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport, a 1940s structure adjacent to the university. If you know a bit about Santa Barbara history, it may already be apparent to you what these routes have in common and why that commonality is significant. But if "Storke Road" is to you just the spelling of a long-legged bird with an "e" on the end, the point alluded to here is as obscure as the airport runways on a foggy Santa Barbara morning.

When Thomas Storke came to what is now the University of California at Santa Barbara for the first time, he did not travel by plane or car. Storke's first visit to the campus acreage took place long before it was designated as an institute of higher learning, and long before planes and cars were commonplace. As a child living in Santa Barbara at the close of the 19th century, he probably rode his favorite horse around the swampy Goleta marshland known as More Mesa. After all, the property belonged to his grandfather, T. Wallace More, an early California land owner who became the director of Santa Barbara College. More could hardly have known that his grandson, Thomas Storke, would become perhaps the single most influential individual behind the growth of present day Santa Barbara, publishing its newspaper, starting its airport, and lobbying for a University of California campus nearby.

That Storke pushed so many community improvements to completion is unusual considering his line of work. Storke believed that newspapers should not only dispense information, but should serve their readers in other ways, too. Storke used the influence of

his publication (which would merge three prior papers into today's *Santa Barbara News-Press*) to secure improvements for the city. This perspective of Storke, unusual for the time, is an example of public journalism before the term was conceived. Most scholars believe that public, civic, or community-minded journalism is a rather recent movement developed by scholar Jay Rosen and Davis "Buzz" Merritt, Jr. of Kansas' *Wichita Eagle.*[1] This thesis will demonstrate, however, that the roots of community-based journalism, a practice that is being revived in news publications around the United States today, began many years ago. Thomas Storke's experience in Santa Barbara is just one example of how editors once used their newspapers to change their homes. Storke is by no means the only editor of his time to have pursued improving his community, and it is not my intent to demonstrate such in the following paper. However, Storke is a useful example of how entwined newspapers and the readers they served once were.

Citizens around the country once depended on their publications and publishers for direction and advocacy to improve their communities. This was demonstrated in a 1926 book by Thomas Radder called Newspapers in Community Service. Radder, a journalism professor and former editor of the *The New York Times*, wrote that "The increasing interest of the editor in the possibility of making his newspaper a decisive factor in community improvement is easily one of the most significant developments in journalism within the last ten years."[2] Between that statement, made 75 years ago, and today's newspapers is a history of ill will and distrust. Current trends seem to indicate editors are returning to such community-based newspapering to improve their relationship with the reading public. Storke's editorial credo, a statement from the same era as Radder's book, stated: "I believe that the first obligation of a newspaper editor is to his own community and the area directly influenced by his newspaper. I believe that an editor and publisher,

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[1] Lambeth, Meyer, Thorson; Assessing Public Journalism, Univ. of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO., 1998.
[2] Radder, vii

better than any other single force, can form and develop character for his community. I believe that with few exceptions, this is a lifetime job; because the development of a community is the slow development of people."[3] At the *News-Press*, public journalism was a goal from the beginning.

Historically, it is rare to be able to examine the history of a daily publication from founding to present. The *News-Press* is the longest running daily in California, with a publication life dating back to 1855. This allows the historian an opportunity to analyze the relationship between a large community[4] and its source of printed news media. Specifically, in Santa Barbara newspapers have traditionally played a non-controversial role as community support organs. This work will explain the paradigms of public journalism and offer ways in which they applied to Storke's experience in the mid 1900s. Next, the Santa Barbara journalism experience will be examined with a brief history of the papers published here. Thirdly, I will discuss Storke's philosophies in the context of current journalism theory. Finally, an analysis of three documented events in Santa Barbara, the earthquake of 1925, the building of Cachuma Lake, and the press-led indictment of the John Birch Society, will demonstrate how public journalism was manifested early on in the *News-Press*. The thesis will conclude with interviews of current *News-Press* editors and reveal their thoughts on public journalism as the paper founded by Thomas Storke heads towards the next millennium. The reasons for such analysis are twofold. First, from a historical perspective, it is interesting to see how a single newspaper contributed to the growth of what is now a major California city. Secondly, from a journalistic perspective, analyzing Storke's experience serves to illustrate the changing nature of news media in the 20th century. Today's editors and publishers would never dream of taking some of the liberties Storke did, because objectivity is now prized above

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[3]Storke, Tom; preface to California Editor, Pacific Coast Publishing, Santa Barbara, CA., 1958.
[4]South Coast population today: approximately 200,000, including Santa Barbara, Goleta, Montecito, Carpinteria, and the inland North Country areas.

involvement. However, that was not the case in Santa Barbara in the first half of the 20th century.

Background: An Explanation of Public Journalism

Public journalism is an elusive term that confuses even seasoned journalists. The best way to understand it is by recognizing that it takes many forms and can be applied to many time periods.

Public journalism as a catch-phrase was first demonstrated in the 1990s, when journalists decided they needed a way to regain the public trust. With readers turning away from newspapers and to other outlets for their news, reporters and editors were worried. To try to regain public affection, they turned to community building as a trust-building measure. Many newspapers held community forums to see what issues were important to people in their area, and find out how they could improve their coverage of those issues. Many scholars are skeptical of the 90s version of public journalism, because they believe it is unethical for papers to report on town meetings they have organized themselves.

However, in this paper I am arguing that the roots of these public meetings and editors' "newfound" concern for community is something rooted in the American tradition of journalism. Esentially, public journalism is not new at all. It's old. Thomas Storke's editorship of the *News-Press* is an example of how editors have always tried to use the affection of their communities to build support for their newspapers. But Storke took things a step or two beyond ho-hum town meetings. He changed the town. By using the newspaper as an advocate for growth and change, Storke serves as a transition between muckraking and today's public journalism. He was an advocate, rather than a crusader. But he was also involved, rather than objective. The result is a public journalism that is distinctly Santa Barbara, and has helped to produce the town Santa Barbara is today.

Public journalism is also called civic journalism, community-based journalism and solutions journalism. In its broadest sense, it is advocacy journalism and even boosterism. Each of these terms will be used throughout this paper. The most common nomenclature is definitely public journalism, a relatively new term introduced only in the 1990s. It is possible, as this thesis will demonstrate, that the most recent identification of the public journalism movement is only a much-delayed aftershock of an old trend. One of the qualifying elements of today's public journalism is the existence of "a tangible concern for the quality of public life,"[5] something Thomas Storke certainly seemed to have in mind when he started his journalism career. At that time (in the early 1900s) "the idea of the newspaper as a community builder (was) relatively new,"[6] Radder wrote. Editors were just starting to realize ways in which they could benefit their readers via newspaper influence. Nineteenth century predecessors of advocacy journalism, such as New York's Horace Greeley, had paved the way for writing the news in a more community-friendly style. Greeley even advocated expanding employment opportunities for New York City working women during his tenure at the *New York Times*, a remarkable early position that showed other editors it was acceptable to embrace reforms for the sole sake of the general public's welfare.

Perhaps the reason Storke's philosophy will most convincingly fit into the public journalism paradigm is that public journalism means different things to different people. In 1926, Radder saw it as an obligation secondary to any paper's first concern: good reporting of important news.[7] Today, some scholars see it as a movement in which the general reading public should be able to access their newspaper more easily. The executive editor of today's *News-Press*, Allen Parsons, believes it is merely the repackaging of fundamentally strong journalistic principles. Other observers believe public

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[5]Lambeth, Meyer, Thorson, page 16.
[6]Radder, page vii.
[7]"The reporting of the day's news has been and will always continue to be the chief function of the newspaper," page 197.

journalism to be a very political trend. For example, there is an emphasis on providing a different sort of coverage at election time. Papers utilizing public journalism theory today publish decreasing numbers of stories on polls or "horse race" aspects of democracy, and generate answers to questions that the general public has for the candidates. Other stories focus on the pressing issues that the community faces and that will have ramifications during the campaign. Scholar Edmund Lambeth includes in his definition of public journalism: "the initiative to report on major public problems in a way that advances public knowledge of possible solutions and the values served by alternative courses of action."[8] Storke took this further, to the extreme point of assuming a personal responsibility for implementing solutions to problems facing the community. Radder would have agreed with Storke's intervening hand. "Along with his job of disseminating news, an editor .. has certain other responsibilities. (One is) that of taking a decisive part in the improvement of a community."[9]

One of the primary aims of public journalism, according to Lambeth, is to provide better public affairs coverage for the citizenry. To this end, it is useful to examine the papers Storke purchased before and after his influence, and to develop a sense of how many of the printed stories might be considered coverage of "public affairs." This would not include notices of upcoming meetings, but would consist of more investigative reporting-type pieces or detailed reports of what happened at the announced meeting. For example, a story about the tardiness of the closing of the Ellwood railroad gap, the missing link in train travel between Los Angeles and San Francisco and a long-awaited occurrence in Santa Barbara history, would be considered a subject of public affairs because the economic and personal concerns of the citizenry are at stake. In an examination of the public journalism found in the early *News-Press*, evidence showed up in

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[8]Ibid., page 17
[9]Radder, page 197

many forms. Editorials, news stories, citizen perspectives and even sports columns were all used to call for community change. The commonality between these pieces, and what made them public journalism, is this: each attempts to reinforce a certain mindset, one that the paper's editors believe is best for the community at large. Whom that community consisted of in Santa Barbara will be discussed shortly.

The reasons for instituting a policy of community-oriented journalism are different today than they were in Storke's time. He claimed that he implemented what we can recognize as a public journalism approach with his newspaper because of corruption he saw in other publications. Today's public journalism is motivated for one paper by the existence of "a moribund public process."[10] Davis Merritt of the *Wichita Eagle* believed that he could revive the political life of his paper's community via a different sort of election coverage, and post-election polls seem to indicate that Merritt has been successful at getting readers more involved with their hometown by concentrated issues coverage.[11] Was public process in Santa Barbara at a point in the early 1900s that it might be termed "moribund?" It seems highly unlikely. The West Coast was in a period of growth and prosperity during the time of Storke's career, and business and government alike were anxious to reap the economic benefits of Santa Barbara's status (which has not changed much in 100 years) as a hot property. Santa Barbara's appeal as a tourist destination and California residence has deterred economic stagnancy with relative success throughout the city's existence. Therefore, the issues facing editors and publishers like Merritt and Storke are not the same, and their subsequent motives for pursuing public journalism were very different. Whereas the *Wichita Eagle*'s reporters focused on crime, education and health in their public journalism practice, Storke's papers were filled with stories about business, transportation, and growth.[12] He used this news as a catalyst for more improvements to

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., page 20.
[12] Author research to *News-Press* archives; interview with Allen Parsons.

the community, such as the post office, university and airport, and he could point to his paper's own coverage to demonstrate why such expenditures would benefit Santa Barbara.

Another issue that recent public journalism has focused on that was not nearly so prominent 100 years ago is race relations. A Pulitzer was awarded to one paper practicing public journalism, the *Akron Beacon Journal*, specifically for coverage of race relations. Early Santa Barbara papers did not demonstrate public journalism in coverage of race. Rather, some coverage could be referred to as racist, such as an article about a city policy that forbade Chinese launderers from spitting on customer's clothes to moisten them for ironing. Putting public health considerations aside, the tone adopted by the paper towards the Chinese was notably condescending.[13] Today, City Editor Jesse Chavarria, a student of public journalism at the Poynter Institute of Journalism Theory, has instituted a Latino beat for the *News-Press*, which aims to widen the boundaries of Santa Barbara's often factionalized community by including coverage of Latino events and affairs along with the doings of well-to-do Hope Ranch residents. A discussion of Chavarria's reasons for including such a beat in the paper's coverage follows in a later section of this paper.

A Note About Sources

The evidence that I uncovered while doing this project made it difficult to write a cynical analysis of Thomas More Storke. That is because in the newspaper accounts of Storke's life and times, which are the primary source of information about him that historians have, he is overwhelmingly represented in a positive light. Microfilm and clip files, at the *News-Press* and the Historical Society, bulge with accounts of Storke's many awards, honors and services to the community. I was daunted by the overwhelming

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[13] *Santa Barbara Morning Press*; 1899.

amount of positive evidence. Given my own journalism experience, I know readers often delight in criticizing newspapers and their editors. Would not they have directed criticism similar to that the *News-Press* receives today at Storke? I am sure that there were many citizens of Santa Barbara during Storke's editorship who did not like the man. However, I must admit to my readers that their voices are few and far between.

In my frustration with the given evidence, I turned to *News-Press* columnist Barney Brantingham for help. Brantingham, one of a small handful of *News-Press* employees still at the paper who was there when Storke was in charge, is a seasoned newsman whose columns are closely followed by the Santa Barbara public. His writing is often very personal and community-oriented, not unlike the approach Storke applied to newspapering.

Brantingham told me that Storke was not an easy man to work for. Reporters were afraid of him. They knew he had certain "sacred cows," such as UCSB, Cachuma Lake, and a hatred of unions, that could ignite firestorms if presented a certain way in the paper. "People were afraid to tangle with him. He had political power," Brantingham said. "People hated the way he threw his weight around. Today, the paper doesn't use its power the way he did." But despite those attributes, Brantingham feels that Storke's motives were pure and he truly wanted to produce a newspaper that advocated what was best for Santa Barbara. "In the time of the 'old time' newspaper publishers of that era, all over the country, you had strong minded individuals and families," Brantingham said. "This was their hometown. They lived and were raised in that town. They used the power of the press for what they considered to be civic good. (Storke) probably abused the power of the press, but he would have considered it for the civic good."

For this paper I have relied not only upon the newspapers Storke published, but also his autobiography. Using someone's autobiography as a primary source has dangerous implications. Obviously, the author has had the chance to filter through his or her life, leaving out any incriminating or negative information. I accordingly tried to find sources

that might offer a more critical view. In this paper the work of prominent Santa Barbara historian Walter Tompkins will be cited. Tompkins' work remains the definitive account of most early Santa Barbara history. Like Brantingham, he noted Storke's tyrannical side but ultimately saw him in a positive light. I also talked to other employees of the *News-Press* from Storke's era, as well as to the editors of the paper today. They had mostly positive things to say. Editors Allen Parsons and Jesse Chavarria speculated that Storke may have overreached his bounds in controllling the information that his paper printed, but like Brantingham, they could not provide specific examples.

Interestlingly, the story Storke presents in his autobiography, and that which was recounted before and after his death in local papers, is almost identical. Some newspaper accounts include a few extra interesting details, but for the most part, the stories relate similar information. Some readers may believe that Storke convincingly suppressed mounds of damning evidence, others may believe that he or was actually a good person who cared about the community. Having done extensive research, I tend toward the latter view.

I do not think it would be possible for a man of Storke's stature to have been a closet villain and gotten away with it, especially in Santa Barbara. Though he is sometimes remembered as having been a controlling individual, other character flaws are unnoted. He certainly had enemies who opposed some of his projects, especially Cachuma Lake. But his love for the community here was genuine, I believe, as was his concern for fellow human beings. In an article printed in honor of his 75th birthday, an editor wrote of Storke's "acts of personal kindness for individual members of his newspaper family. Usually these kindnesses have been a secret between him and the person helped or encouraged or just 'understood' when and where understanding meant everything."[14] This tribute went on to bring up an important point. Storke "did not buy or inherit this

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[14] *Santa Barbara News-Press*, March 30, 1952.

newspaper. He built it."[15] The implications of Storke's wealth and success being self-made are great. Because he was in the process of building his paper into a respected news entity for most of his life, Storke needed the community. His need for the support of the citizenry encouraged him to help them. Thus any contributions he made to the development of Santa Barbara were not selfless. But he was not self-centered. "Always there was Santa Barbara in mind," wrote an editor in assessment of Storke's political connections. "He made friends for Santa Barbara - the Santa Barbara as it was year by year and the Santa Barbara he hoped for."[16]

I left the *News-Press* clip files on Storke unread until the final months of this project. I wanted to read the papers Storke produced first, so I could judge them on their objective merits, without associating his personality with their content. Having conducted my research in this way, I believe I was able to produce a well-rounded argument. Pages 20 to 40 of this paper, contain comprehensive analysis of three projects that the paper took on during Storke's editorship: coverage of the 1925 earthquake, the Cachuma project, and the John Birch Society. These are the most important pieces of evidence in reinforcing my argument. But a single editoral that I found in the clip files, written in 1936, is invaluable on the question of Storke's motives. The flowery piece, written by Storke, discusses Santa Barbara's progress from rural village to destination city. The key to making that transition, Storke argues, has been the dedication of the citizenry. It is a position that holds true locally today. Santa Barbara has always been a unique town of varied ethnic composition. Relationships between Spaniards, Indians, Mexicans and whites were sometimes fraught with tension in the early days. Today, those groups continue to live side by side. It's fair to argue that today's *News-Press* offers much more comprehensive coverage of the diverse groups in Santa Barbara than Storke's paper ever did. But that improvement comes from a similar underlying philosophy. The pages of any

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

good paper ought to be filled with the news of its community. Without people who are "developing the resources and the community wealth that is our heritage today, working together, hand in hand, for a common cause and a common purpose,"[17] such coverage is impossible. Storke knew this, and my research shows his honest intent was to pass that message on to those who would follow him.

Newspapers and Crusades

The well-versed journalism historian may approach this thesis with the attitude that its argument is null and void from the outset. After all, if today's public journalism has a historical precedent, didn't it come not from Storke's paper, but rather from 19th and early 20th century papers that were known for their pushy journalism and regularly pursued crusades? One scholar of journalism crusades wrote that: "As champions of reforms, as defenders of individuals, as protagonistsof their communities, (newspapers) have exercised influences, I venture to believe, quite as important as the transmission of information and the expression of opinion."[18] In his comprehensive history of American journalism from 1690 to 1960, Frank Luther Mott discusses the various causes early papers advocated in an unobjective matter.

> Many newspapers crusaded for the adoption of the commission form of city government or for the city manager plan. Ice and coal monopolies were attacked in various cities, and the people were often protected from improper franchise manipulation by the utilities. The newspapers, wrote the editor of a conservative journal in 1906, now make 'every headline an officer ... an advance section of the Day of Judgment.'[19]

Not all crusades, Mott notes, were political in nature. Disasters, like Santa Barbara's 1925 earthquake, prompted campaigns raising relief money. From 1902-1912, the muckrakers' reform crusades were at their height. Journalists like Ida Tarbell and Lincoln

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[17] *Santa Barbara News-Press*, March 29, 1936.

[18] Bent, page 3.

[19] Mott, page 574

Steffens inspired children to be journalists when they uncovered stories of corporate corner-cutting at Standard Oil (Tarbell) or exposed political corruption (Steffens, Shame of Cities). But muckraking was short-lived, and Mott fails to adequately explain why. One important reason, however, is that the public did not always like to hear news of scandal and corruption.

> The number of these magazine crusades, and the lack of restraint of some of them at length wearied and sicken the public, and they subsided. At the same time the newspaper crusades of the same character decreased. Many crusaders were disillusioned ... Louis Wiley, business manager of the New York *Times*, called crusading 'a commercial trade.' ... By 1910 the fury of newspaper crusading had passed its peak.[20]

Muckraking had been a time of potential for journalism, which had been tainted by Hearst's yellow journalism. "Seldom have journalists had such opportunity to be agents of social change," Mary Tomkins wrote of Ida Tarbell's generation. "(Tarbell's) work ... reveals a unified view of her hopes for this country and illuminates also the hopes for social betterment of the Progressive era."[21] The muckrakers could not truly be seen as carrying out public journalism, however, because they were crusading for national interest. "They accurately intuited and effectively voiced the public's alarm over the deterioration of the quality of life accompanying the new industrialism,"[22] Tomkins wrote. But it was a public without a specific definition. Unlike the localized community Storke's papers reached, the muckraking journalists had American as a hometown. Their national audience was important not just as a readership, but as a source of profits. Lincoln Steffens wrote in his autobiography that he and the editor of *McClure's*, which published many muckraking stories, schemed of ways to "increase the sensationalism of our articles if we were to hold and reap our (business) advantage."[23] Ellen Fitzpatrick, editor of a book that reprints muckraking pieces by Tarbell, Steffens, and Ray Stannard Baker from 1903,

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[20] Ibid., page 575.
[21] Tomkins; Ida M. Tarbell, introduction.
[22] Ibid, page 15.
[23] Steffens, Lincoln; Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens, page 392.

calls the articles investigative journalism that shaped history, not necessarily community. Though they may have enlightened the American public as a whole, they are examples of investigative journalism, not public journalism. The difference between the two is that public journalism enacts change on the smaller-scale, community level, while the muckrakers wanted widespread, social and economic change. Radder points out that the essence of service journalism was a sense of obligation to the community. "An editor is under special obligation to do more than anyone else because the newspaper offers an amazing opportunity to translate ideals into practice."[24] This was not the goal of the muckrakers. They were addressing a national audience, not a small community.

Journalism in Santa Barbara

In a community of 200,000, it is rare to have only one daily newspaper. The lack of competition has created an especially close and sometimes volatile relationship with the reading public. Here I will discuss the various ways in which the community has been promoted, rather than covered, during the last 145 years. This study will not be an exposure of corruption or problems in mainstream breaking-news coverage. Rather, it will be a discussion of whether the *News-Press* has in fact adopted public journalism, and an analysis of whether a philosophy of public journalism has positively or negatively influenced the paper's role in the community. An in-depth discussion of three flashpoints in Santa Barbara history will suggest how Storke's paper either held to or swayed from public journalism principles.

First, however, it might be useful to explain the parameters of "community" within which the *News-Press* has operated for much of its publication span. In an area of extreme racial diversity, battles of language and color are commonplace. Today, those

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[24]Radder, page 198.

issues make the front page in articles about bilingual education and other topics. In Storke's day, however, it should be noted that the paper was oriented towards a very white, middle and upper- middle class audience. Though citizens with last names like Juarez appear in the paper and are called "longtime, respected residents," there is rare mention of the racial dichotomy that has arisen between Santa Barbara's Caucasian and Latino communities. Steps are being made to change the often unbalanced coverage given to diverse community groups, and some of these methods will later be discussed in an interview that I conducted with city editor Jesse Chavarria.

A History of the *News-Press*

Early Santa Barbara, like many small towns, experienced a great deal of fluctuation in newspaper publication. "We had three daily newspapers in Santa Barbara," Storke wrotes at the turn of the 20th century, "two too many for a sleepy little town of 6,500."[25] In this statement Storke candidly admits the disadvantages of competition for news, even among small publications. Ultimately small start-up newspapers would last a few months, fail to find enough advertisers, and fold, only to start up again under a new name. Storke's first job after graduating from Stanford University was covering a City Council meeting for Frank Sands, the editor of the *Daily News* and a friend of the Storke family.[26] (Personal influence would play a role in Storke's career throughout his lifetime.) Surprisingly enough, Sands was not impressed with young Storke's work and did not ask him to pursue further assignments. Undaunted, Storke ended up working for another Santa Barbara paper, the *Morning Press*, after a brief stint as a sheep ranch manager for his father on Santa Rosa Island.[27]

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[25] Storke, page 84.
[26] Ibid., page 79.
[27] Ibid., page 80.

With the support of Colorado transplant and reporter A.S. Petterson, Storke decided to try to buy the *Morning Press* in 1900. The attempt failed. Instead, the duo ended up purchasing Santa Barbara's *Daily Independent* (no relationship to today's weekly *Independent*). They bought it for $2,000, financed by a loan from a druggist. The druggist, Henry Finger, loaned the money "in the hope of getting a newspaper that would be free of the influence of the utility companies, banks, and the water company. "[28] In his first editorial, Storke promptly called for community selflessness on the first day of the new century, stating: "Every citizen of Santa Barbara should do his utmost to bring out all that is desirable here, for the common benefit. In this effort they will receive the full support of this paper, as in all efforts to advance local interests."[29] Storke had made his first attempt to encourage the well-being of the community by way of editorial comment.

Despite Storke's good intentions, he found publishing life difficult in the early going. Readily admitting that he planned to use personal connections to secure advertisers, Storke was surprised to see such dollars were not so easy to come by. He wrote that the *Daily News* and *Morning Press* controlled 90 percent of the ad intake in Santa Barbara, formidable opposition no matter the strength of one's own publication.[30] But Storke managed to persevere. His name may have decisively helped him when he most needed aid. Money from family friend George Edwards of Commercial Bank saved the floundering paper and Storke began to turn a profit shortly thereafter.[31] He sold the *Independent* a few years later to try a stint in the oil business, but returned to Santa Barbara and purchased the *Daily News* for $1,500.[32] Storke found that his advertising dollars were much easier to come by with the reputation of the *Daily News*' success. His

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[28] Tompkins, Walter; page 409, Santa Barbara History Makers, McNally and Loftin, Santa Barbara, 1983.
[29] Storke, page 116.
[30] Ibid., page 120.
[31] Ibid., page 126.
[32] Ibid., page 218.

predecessor at the *Independent* sold the paper back to Storke, and he merged the two into the *Daily News and Independent*.[33]

Storke bought the *Morning Press* in 1932. The Depression had bankrupted the paper, and the purchase price was $100,000.[34] To Storke's credit, he questioned the monopoly this might create prior to purchase. The combined circulation of the merged papers was 16,000 readers. To keep profit margins high, the papers continued to be published independently for some time,[35] but in 1938 they were merged together. Seven policy principles for the newly formed paper included: "Keep news clean and fair. Play no favorites; never mix business and editorial policy. Do not let the news columns reflect editorial comment. Publish the news that is public property without fear or favor of friend or foe. Accept no charity and ask no favors. Give 'value received' for every dollar you take in. Make the paper pay a profit if you can but above profit keep it clean, fearless, and fair."[36] Today, the words "Without fear or favor of friend or foe," are inscribed on the *News-Press* editorial page.

Storke's Philosophy

A brief analysis of an excerpt from Storke's autobiography will illuminate the beliefs of Thomas Storke. In discussing his early newspaper experience, Storke expands on why he believes a paper should serve, as opposed to merely cover, the community. He believed that newspapers were susceptible to profit fever. Given the opportunity, publishers would reap profits without providing any useful information to their subscribers. Storke claims to have come to this theory shortly after graduating from

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Tompkins, page 411.
[35] Except on Sundays, when there was just one publication, the *News-Press*.
[36] Storke, page 341.

college, while working for the *Morning Press* in Santa Barbara. The bankers who owned the *Press* were allied with local interests, including utility companies:

> Not one was a professional newspaperman; not one appreciated, or even recognized, the basic responsibility which I believed a newspaper owed its readers and its community. Their only reason for ownership of a newspaper was for the protection and advancement it could give their own selfish interests. The public weal was of little if any concern to these men, especially if it happened to conflict with their personal interests. I hasten to add that these men were fine gentlemen, of high standing in Santa Barbara. I was proud to call any one of them my friend.
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> But I felt then, as I feel today, that the interests of the people must come before those of the publisher and his newspaper. To me it is a fact that if the public benefits, so does the newspaper.
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> It was at this early stage of my newspaper career that I was fast becoming conscious of the obligations of an editor and publisher to the people served by his newspaper. I felt the power of the press was being abused in Santa Barbara.
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> What could I do about it? The only answer, of course, was that I had either to own or control a newspaper of my own. But such a dream, in a small town already over-crowded with daily newspapers, was fantastic for a $12 a week cub reporter to even think about. Just the same, I did think about it. At age 22, I set myself a goal and started working toward it: a paper of my own, free of the control of the monopolistic interests which ruled Santa Barbara's destiny.[37]

Several questions are evident in this manifest. What does Storke mean by "the public weal" and "the people?" Why does he feel that he alone has the interests of the community at heart? Isn't he speaking selfishly as well, realizing the profits that might be inherent in a more community-friendly publication? Storke demonstrates his public relations wiles when he goes so far as to compliment the men he has just condemned, stating: "I hasten to add that these men were fine gentlemen ... I was proud to call any one of them my friend."[38] Storke's attempts not to make any enemies are revealed by the

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

phrase denoting the men "of high standing in Santa Barbara."[39] Even in a idealistic attempt to protect Santa Babara's best interests by way of newsprint, he must maintain loyalties to stay alive.

Further questions arise from Storke's statement that: "the interests of the people must come before those of the publisher and his newspaper."[40] What groups of people might be considered the community? Was Storke speaking of whites? Latinos? He mentions in his autobiography that during the time of his childhood, Santa Barbara had an extensive Chinese population.[41] Would they have been included in his visions of community coverage as well? Ultimately, a community without factions seems to be a historically impossible occurrence. This was evidenced in early Santa Barbara by the conflicts between the Spanish, the Mexicans, local indigenous Indian groups such as the Chumash, and the Caucasians. Putting racial differences aside, the Spanish military forces at the Presidio and the church sometimes clashed on questions of political leadership, and the timeless tensions between the poor and the rich were, of course, present. Today, the community continues to deal with issues arising from economic disparities, in addition to ethnicity and lifestyle conflicts. The rich, the poor, students, older residents, whites, Latinos, and many other groups, all struggle to find a niche of their own. Can one newspaper produce a product that they all relate to? Some are rarely covered in the newspapers of today and yesterday, while others make the front page on a regular basis. Storke felt that: " ... it is a fact that if the public benefits, so does the newspaper."[42] His vision of newspaper-generated public benefits included not just news, but the press' exercise of its power to inspire change in the community. Once his paper had developed a strong reputation in the area, Storke acquired a radio station to bring news to non-readers.

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid
[42] Ibid.

He placed the strength of his budding communications empire behind such Santa Barbara projects as the airport, the university, Bradbury Dam and Tecolote Tunnel. He visited politicians in Sacramento and even Washington, D.C., to press for funds. Storke was so strong an influence in the nation's capitol that he even served a short term in Washington himself, as an interim replacement for retired Senator William McAdoo in the U.S. Senate.[43] Sometimes the influence of *News-Press* editorial opinion would come behind these projects. By offering political endorsements, the paper could support projects like the Bradbury Dam. Further, Storke was not sneaky or underhanded about his efforts. Historian Walter Tompkins, who calls Storke "Mr. Santa Barbara,"[44] includes the following quote from Storke in his introduction to the publisher's autobiography: "I can look any critic in the eye and declare with complete conviction that while I have many times asked for, and received, political favors for my city and my state, at no time in my life have I ever sought favors for myself personally."[45]

Yet one thing Storke does not dwell on is the fact that a community pacified by new airports, a stable water supply and a place for their children to go to college included a plethora of merchants willing to spend their advertising dollars in the *News-Press*, which created profits for Storke. Essentially, a growing community translates to more readers, which in turn means that advertisers are impressed with the circulation figures and generous with their funds. This simple dynamic causes community-based journalism to become unobjective: the community oriented journalist is more sympathetic to certain parties in his community than others, because their money supports the paper. As a conjectural example, it might be argued that it was unfair for the *News-Press* to support the Cachuma Lake project because they were aligning their interests with the developers who would construct the site. Storke mentions that "advertising is the lifeblood of any

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[43] Ibid
[44] Ibid., introduction.
[45] Ibid., page 7.

newspaper,"[46] but ultimately he never mentions specific advertising profits in his autobiography. He does admit that: "as our circulation gained, we could charge higher advertising rates, and did."[47]

Storke tells readers that he was: "fast becoming conscious of the obligations of an editor and publisher to the people served by his newspaper"[48] in his early career, but he never spells out what those obligations are. We can assume that they include providing the public with reliable news and information, based on his statement: "I felt the power of the press was being abused in Santa Barbara."[49] He did not approve of papers offering their editorial space up for sale, often to purveyors of patent medicines, who would use the official looking space to declare their products amazing cure-alls. The papers Storke purchased did commonly sell space to the "wonder cure" companies,[50] usually in exchange for "newsprint paper, ink, and office supplies."[51] But Storke ultimately refused funds from the vendors of these medicines, even though it cost him needed capital.[52] In Storke's attempts to use the power of the press for good purposes, he neglects to answer the question: Does community journalism ever abuse the power of the press? If so, how? Who benefits from the abuse? Certain politicians? The newspaper itself? Or some other interests? The logical answer would be that public journalism abuses the power of the press in favor of the community; analysis of *News-Press* coverage will reveal evidence to support this.

It is also useful to note Storke's belief that the responsibility of addressing a perceived community problem lay with him and his paper alone. He asks: "What could I do about it?"[53] Such a remark suggests not only Storke's rather egotistical and unrealistic

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[46] Ibid., page 122.
[47] Ibid., page 129.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] *Morning Press*, 1899.
[51] Storke, page 124.
[52] Ibid., page 125.
[53] Ibid.

confidence in his own power to do good; it also reflects his reluctance to mention the other individuals who assisted him in various crusades or campaigns. If community-based journalism truly aims to involve the membership of the community, it seems that those same citizens should be active in the process as well. But Storke answers his own questions with the response that: "I had either to own or control a newspaper of my own."[54] Storke's diction is worth noting here. His choice of the word *control* reveals much. Storke admits that he does not need to own the newspaper to utilize it for his own means: he reasons that if he controls a publication, he can do the community good as well. Nevertheless, he seems to believe that his early dream is futile, stating that the town is "overcrowded with daily newspapers." What stopped him from introducing a new, alternative product of his own? The most likely obstacle was the difficulty of persuading advertisers to risk dollars on a fledging newsheet.

Ultimately, Storke got what he wanted: "a paper of my own, free of the control of the monopolistic interests which ruled Santa Barbara's destiny."[55] It is safe to assume that those "monopolistic" groups probably included the Southern Pacific Railroad Company and various utility enterprises, which Storke chastises in his autobiography. But was his enterprise successful in gaining the community improvements he wished to implement in the Santa Barbara area? Historian Tompkins seems to think so.[56] Effusive in his praise of Storke, he includes nary a negative word in his summary of Storke's accomplishments and contributions to the community, going so far as to comment: "The story of the community is also the story of the man."[57] Given Storke's influence on so many of Santa Barbara's staple features, like the airport and UCSB, this is a true statement, but Tompkins may take things a bit far. It should be noted here that Tompkin's prominent position as an early community historian would probably not have been furthered had he noted Storke's

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[54] Ibid
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., page 4.

reputation for tyrannical behavior. Folklore circulates that during Fiestas past, the publisher would force his employees to wear Spanish-style attire, the illegality of this notwithstanding. Fiesta is a local cultural celebration that fetes the city's mixed racial heritage each August. Tompkins called him "a benevolent dictator" in a book on early Santa Barbara history makers, taking the title from *Time* magazine.[58] Stuart Taylor, who took the position of editor and publisher of the *News-Press* after Storke sold the paper to the Philadelphia ***Bulletin***, called Storke a "thunderer" at Storke's Memorial service at the Old Mission on Sunday, October 16, 1971.

> He was a crusading, hard-hitting editor who welcomed a fight, if he was convinced he was right, and always spoke through his newspaper in a voice that rang out loud and clear. Thunderers are more apt to grow and flourish in rather small, developing communities, like the Santa Barbara of T.M.'s younger days, than in established urban centers. Such developing communities are more volatile and changing, their leaders are more free-wheeling and their problems call for charting more new courses. From them came the old thunderers such as T.M. Storke and William Allen White, of Emporia, Kansas, and others. Because of their tremendous impact on their communities, and their states, their influence was way out of proportion to the small size of their towns and newspapers. They were national figures.[59]

If Storke was the personification of Santa Barbara on the national scene, was any shred of journalistic objectivity offered up in his paper's news coverage? Can the city named for a saintly woman be best symbolized by a portly, opinionated man, one who would not consider his own daughter, Jean Menzies, an adequate replacement for him? While Storke had an advanced view of the way newspapers should interact with community, he had an old-fashioned perception of a woman's role in the world of publishing. This was revealed by his position on editorial succession at the *News-Press*.

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58 Tompkins, page 411.
59 *Nieman Reports*, October, 1971.

An address given by Storke at the annual dinner meeting of the California Press Association in 1959, when Storke was 84 years old, clarifies his conceptions of public journalism and elaborates on his view that families helped produce the best newspapers. In the speech, Storke recounts the experiences of his newspapering peers, including the McClatchy family of Sacramento and the Chandlers of Los Angeles, and he explains how each publishing clan aimed to improve their communities through print. " .. all had their roots well imbedded in their communities before I became a part of the journalistic fraternity, and more particularly because they were OWNERS of newspapers which grew into family enterprises. They were not only editors and publishers, they were community builders."[60] Storke's assessment of community building is indicative of a high degree of involvement on the part of the owners/editors, a situation less common today than in the early half of this century. Papers are now more likely to be owned by media conglomerates rather than family units, but Storke believed that family ownership facilitated community aid and supported the practice. He wanted to pass control of the paper to his oldest son[61], Charles, but he went into advertising instead. Storke's second son, Thomas Jr., spent his adult life in a mental hospital. Though Storke's daughter Jean Menzies was a writer, Storke felt only a son would be capable of continuing the family line.[62] Unlike the Ochs family of the *New York Times*, whose regional newspaper group would later own the paper, Storke did not hand his business to a son-in-law. Nor did he engage in a fractious debate over selling the paper as did the Bingham family of Kentucky, selling of his own accord when he felt the time was right.

Not everyone agreed that family ties were best. "The hired managers of the corporate publishing enterprises that now dominate the nation's press have long since concluded that Storke's manner of doing things was a hell of a way to run a newspaper,"

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[60] Address by T.M. Storke to the California Press Association, Dec. 4, 1959; document from Santa Barbara Historical Society archive collection.

[61] Storke was married twice. One son was born to him and Elsie Smith, another to Storke and Marion Day.

[62] Tompkins, page 412.

Harry Ashmore said in 1966.[63] Ashmore is speaking of what was characterized as "tyrannical" and "dictatorial" behavior by Storke. His desire to keep a tight rein on the paper's activities was both good and bad. It was conducive to producing a newspaper that exemplified public journalism because Storke's own philosophies influenced the subordinate reporters and editors. But it must be recognized that Storke's view and mannerisms certainly had the potential to stifle creativity and originality by inidividual reporters. Nevertheless, evidence suggests Storke's intentions were good. He wrote that in the first half of the 1900s, "everyone had the same goal: to make his community a better place to live."[64] Later in the speech, he explains why he believes that families publish better papers.

> ... the moral or ethical standing of any newspaper is vastly improved if that newspaper is family owned or locally controlled. Every city, every community, deserves to have the newspaper controlled by those whose first concern and interest is the community in which it is published. I think I have pardonable pride that my roots are seven generations deep in the adobe soil of Santa Barbara. A family cannot live a century or more in one community without becoming a part and parcel of that community's destiny.[65]

Values, then, are of primary importance for Storke, and not just any values, but family values. As an oft-bandied phrase by today's politicians, "values" has taken on a distinctly conservative connotation, but public journalists also use the phrase to describe their objectives[66]. For example, in explaining to his readers how he would change election coverage at the *Wichita Eagle*, Davis Merritt wrote that stories would be based on: "values ... We think they are the right values: put emphasis on information that helps you make a judgment about real things, not the ephemeral, fabricated, manipulated things that constitute modern political campaigning."[67] In Merritt's version of public journalism,

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[63] *LA Times West*, November 20, 1966.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Storke, page 10.
[66] Providing an interesting contrast to the idea of purely "liberal" media.
[67] Lambeth, Meyer, Thorson, page 81.

notions of objectivity are discarded like yesterday's news. This also happened in Storke's Santa Barbara paper. " ... good traditional reporters seem to ignore their implicit values, taking for granted the rightness of their own outrage,"[68] writes Carol Reese Dykers. Both Storke and modern public journalists freely reveal their values and biases, rather than attempting to submerge them under a deceptive veneer of objectivity. Such revelations can be perceived as self-righteous, but at least they appear to be an attempt at honesty.

Harry Chandler and Gen. Harrison Gray Otis of the *Los Angeles Times* are cited by Storke as an example of family publishing engendering community aid. General Otis founded the *Times* after a brief interlude as a newspaper publisher in Santa Barbara. He would later pass the reins to his son-in-law, Chandler. Storke writes: "It was THEIR[69] 'community,' they felt it was THEIRS, as editors and publishers should. They worked to bring water for the need of their people, farther than water had ever been brought before. They worked to bring their community a harbor which nature had not provided. They brought wealth and energy to build one of the world's greatest cities."[70] Jay Rosen cites a sense of community attachment as a primary concern in determining public journalism's limits. "Traditional journalism worries about remaining properly detached. Public journalism worries about becoming properly attached. So: public journalism becomes the undeveloped art of attachment to the communities in which journalists do their work."[71]

Current practitioners of public journalism are still developing working guidelines for the proper limits of their attachment. Some stop at providing information on community resources and available services. Others go farther, at least philosophically. Merritt's goal at the *Wichita Eagle* is described as "rebuilding people's sense of community and getting them involved in that community."[72] The context in which he has

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[68] Ibid., page 79.
[69] Capital letters are verbatim reconstruction from Storke's original speech, and may have been provided for his intended inflection emphasis.
[70] Lambeth, Meyer, Thorson, page 79.
[71] Ibid., page 90.
[72] Ibid., pages 72-73.

adopted such a stance, though, is different from Storke's. California was just developing into a prominent political force on a national scale around the turn of the century. But today, news readers nationwide are experiencing jaded disillusionment. They might, accordingly, greet with skepticism the return to the practice of public journalism. They might ask: if the system Storke and his colleagues worked so hard to build has already decayed, why are news media attempting to rebuild it with public journalism? Is this perhaps a self-perpetuating cycle of rise and fall in the relationship between the press and the people? Are these theorists self-consciously invoking earlier precedents, like Storke? A distant memory of the background of public journalism may be submerged deep in the subconscious of today's reporters and editors.

It is important to note that less scrutiny and criticism of the press existed in Storke's time than does today. He writes of the community assistance efforts of Gray and Otis: "After the great projects were accomplished, of course, the opposition dissolved and the entire community applauded what 'we,' as they said, had done. I am sure there is not an editor or publisher here who has not experienced the same 180-degree shift in public attitude in his own community."[73] Today's media-saturated society has less patience with the press and is far more likely to question the motives behind attempts to assist with community problems. But Storke's views reflect a time when papers attempted to prevent community destruction, rather than merely recount it. In discussing the McClatchy family, who owned the *Sacramento Bee* during the late 1800s, Storke writes that preserving California's natural resources was a top item on the *Bee* agenda. "From the moment of their taking control, they charted a course of crusading for every cause which they believed right .. The preservation of the our natural resources and their application to the best public uses was the McClatchy special interest and without question they have been more responsible than any other editors for arousing the public conscience in this

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[73] Storke speech, page four.

direction."[74] The phrase "arousing the public conscience" is one of the better ways of describing the power of an editor in public journalism practice.

Storke exemplified such power. In 1962 he won a Pulitzer Prize for "arousing the public conscience" to the shady practices of the John Birch Society, an achievement that is often described as the epitome of his concern for his readers. Following two expose articles in the *News-Press* revealing intimidation tactics by the ultra-conservative Birchers, Storke wrote a forceful editorial calling for the Society to reveal its true motives. The Birchers were a radical grassroots organization that believed that communism had completely pervaded American democracy. An article in *Los Angeles Times West* magazine, published in 1966, noted the public response: "Within weeks more than 20,000 requests came in for reprints of the editorial. (Storke) was distressed that many letter-writers said their local editors were reluctant to enlighten and guide their readers on the matter of Birchism. Some letters were pleas for help, asking the *News-Press* to step in and publicize the activities of Birchers in their own communities, where editors were either afraid or unwilling to do the job themselves."[75] Storke's community principles were acknowledged by the *Times West* piece: "Storke has always felt that a community newspaper should lead. He believes the greatest threat to freedom lies in an editor's failure to be true to his convictions, his failure to speak out when he sees freedom jeopardized."[76] In other words, a faith in democracy is essential to the functioning of successful public journalism.

Davis Merritt counsels his reporters to move from a level of community detachment to one in which they are concerned if "this becomes a better place to live through democratic decision-making."[77] But Merritt's advocacy of democracy is different from Storke's: he does not own a majority of the *Wichita Eagle* stock. Storke's

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[74]Ibid., page 5.
[75]*Los Angeles Times West* magazine, November 20, 1966.
[76]Ibid., page 19.
[77]Lambeth, Meyer, Thorson, page 79.

contrasting personal stake in his paper was a factor that, as the *Times* article suggests, was crucial to Storke's ability to enforce public journalism style policy. " ... [Storke] would be the first to admit that it doesn't hurt to own 51 percent of your newspaper's stock, as he did throughout his crusades. Perhaps more importantly, he feels an editor must stamp his paper with his own personality."[78] Storke's nickname, "Mr. Santa Barbara,"[79] reflects this imprint of community values. To recognize a man who had effectively served his community as well, Storke accorded him a similar label: thus he called Mike De Young, editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* at the turn of the century, "Mr. San Francisco,"[80] and Allen Griffin, editor of the *Monterey Herald*, "Mr. Monterey."[81] Storke's reach extended so far over Santa Barbara that it was sarcastically rumored that mayors of the city would begin their mornings with a stop at Storke's office to see what course of action they ought to pursue.[82]

An assessment of Storke's relationship with Santa Barbara was offered by Harry Ashmore, a Pulitzer-winning editor at the *Arkansas Gazette* who later moved to Santa Barbara: "Storke included in his personal responsibility all the public, and a good many of the private, affairs of his town. His course was sometimes erratic, and among his victims the pure in heart have been counted along with an assortment of scoundrels and poltroons, but no one could ever doubt where he was, or what he was after."[83] He directed his efforts, according to the *Times*, to acting as "the shield between his community and the forces of 'progress' as represented by brassy and formless commercial development. As the owner of much of the key land and the newspaper that was the community's strongest voice, he helped create and enforce zoning regulations that preserved the city's natural beauty and grace."[84] Storke's concern for the aesthetics of Santa Barbara is a lasting

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[78] *Times* article, page 19.
[79] Tompkins
[80] Storke speech, page 6.
[81] *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, Feb. 18, 1970.
[82] *Times* article, page 22.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

legacy that has been clearly transmitted to the populace. The dynamic visual effect of Santa Barbara architecture can be contrasted with coastal neighbor Ventura, where a lack of comparable zoning ordinances and regulations has resulted in city sprawl and strip malls.

Assessments of Thomas Storke

A search of the surviving personal papers of Storke, on file at the Santa Barbara Historical Society, reveals numerous accolades bestowed on Storke. These congratulatory messages were issued by the California Legislature, the UC Regents, and an array of other entities, and they were awarded both post-humously and during Storke's lifetime. Such accolades reveal the sense of public journalism that must have existed in the public consciousness before the vocabulary of public journalism was created. When Storke sold the *News-Press*, Paul Veblen, the editor to whom Storke handed control, said: "The newspaper has been the personal expression of one man whose dedication has been to the city and therewith as well to his state and county. ... Santa Barbara is a community of loyalties. Insofar as he can, Storke has sought to make Stu Taylor and myself the beneficiaries of his friendships and the support which he has developed in a long career of some sixty years of devotion to his fellow citizens."[85] The interaction of public loyalties took a lifetime for Storke to create, and today's *News-Press* may be evidence that such ties are not easily sustained. Today, Santa Barbarans are most likely to complain that their paper, now owned by the *New York Times*' Regional Newspaper Group, is controlled by big city interests far away, rather than by locally based journalists whom they trusted in decades past. As the paper attempts to hold on to its readers, focus groups of average citizens have emerged to discuss election-season issues and community problems. Reporters are encouraged to interact with constituents on a daily basis, and the news

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[85]Paul Veblen speech; document in Storke papers at Glenhill Library Collections.

department regularly solicits the advice of readers, even printing e-mail addresses along with reporters' bylines.

There are many proclamations that view Storke as much more than an editor, such as one issued by the California Legislature in 1971 that stated "Mr. Storke was a guiding force in rebuilding Santa Barbara after the 1925 earthquake, and is largely responsible for the present beauty and style of that community ... He had an outstanding record of service to the community and was responsible for the establishment of many beach and civic areas."[86] In extending his involvement well beyond the editorial page each day, Storke was taking public journalism to its furthest limits. Scholars like Rosen would likely decry Storke's approach as too meddlesome or hands-on to be instituted in a modern paper. But today's readers, at least in Santa Barbara, in fact seem to cry out for such articulate attention. In a recent readership survey, the majority of the *News-Press* readers said they did not see their views and concerns reflected in the paper each day.[87] One way to make the paper more responsive and reflective, the papers' editors have reasoned, is to include more people. This means bringing the voices of everyday walkers and workers, rather than just pundits and politicians, into the news pages. Public journalism can look and sound like a giant block party. In practice, the challenge is to allow everyone's voice to be heard.

In a communication theory study, Newspaper Use and Community Ties, Keith R. Stamm explains that as early as the 1920s, scholars were theorizing that newspapers were inextricably connected to fixed communities, where they served the role of "extending the interpersonal channels of gossip which flourished in small towns and villages."[88] As Santa Barbara has grown from a small town to a mid-sized city, the tone of the local newspaper has continued to influence the way that people see their surroundings and neighbors. The use of newspapers as a way to communicate community, as theorized by Stamm, is at the

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[86] Ibid.

[87] *Santa Barbara News Press* readership survey, conducted 1999.

[88] Stamm, Keith; page 3, Newspaper Use and Community Ties, Ablex Publishing, New Jersey, 1986.

heart of public journalism's principles and is best manifested in a community such as Santa Barbara.

One early sociologist, Robert Park, saw newspapers that were directed towards immigrants arriving in America as a crucial part of the assimilation process.[89] A similar trend can be pointed out with respect to the people who have come to live in Santa Barbara during the population boom of the last 100 years. The existence of the *News-Press* as the sole news source during that time has created a niche for the paper as a shaper of community goals and values. The "community integration" hypothesis of Morris Janowitz is a third theoretical underpinning of the existence of public journalism in Santa Barbara. Janowitz' belief that "greater family and social cohesion should be related to local community readership, is congruent with the Storke philosophy that good readers and community members should be involved in the activities of their town. Janowitz further theorizes that "indices of greater community integration should be related to more community newspaper readership."[90] But this is a more problematic hypothesis in view of the fact that on a given day only a third of Santa Barbara's population reads its sole daily paper. In Storke's day, however, readership was higher, particularly because the newspaper did not compete for readers with a half-dozen daily television news shows, the Internet, and talk radio.

The most interesting part of Stamm's discussion of the ties between a community and its newspapers is his effort to uncover which part of the community/newspaper equation comes first. Do people read newspapers because they want to be a part of the community, or are they already an actualized part of the community whole and unreliant upon the news of the day for a place in society? I would argue that the community of Santa Barbara has been created in a reflective likeness based on an image set forth in Storke's *News-Press*, particularly in the aftermath of the 1925 earthquake.

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[89] Ibid., page 4.
[90] Ibid., page 6.

The 1925 Earthquake

Storke called the 1925 earthquake the most inspiring event of his life.

Why? Because the quake proved a boon for Santa Barbara. "Turning catastrophe into opportunity, the city rose from the dust and rubble as beauty reborn and beyond compare. The chamber of commerce label for the new Santa Barbara was apt: 'the city of dreams.'"[91]

The earthquake took place at 6:45 a.m. on June 29, 1925. The death toll was 11 people. Serious damage was done to the Old Mission, St. Francis Hospital, the San Marcos building, Episcopal, Unitarian, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, the old Court House, the County Jail, and the Californian Hotel. The New Arlington Hotel would never be rebuilt; Arlington Theatre was erected in its place. The public library was damaged, and 40 million gallons of water spilled out of Sheffield Reservoir. Buildings that were not damaged much by the tremor were the *Daily News*, city hall, the federal building, the new high school, Roosevelt and Franklin elementary schools, Christian and Baptist churches, the Granada, California and Lobero theatres, the City Recreation Center, Cottage Hospital and most private homes.

Storke's newspaper produced three extra editions after the quake, totaling 10,000 copies. In the first editorial of the first extra edition, Storke wrote: "But in the end, Santa Barbara will come back bigger, better and stronger than ever before; for the things that made our city, and the men who built it, are still here."[92] The reasoning behind this initial thought was accurate, and explains why coverage of the earthquake is an apotheosis of early public journalism. Hardly a negative word towards the damage is contained in the *Morning Press* of July 30. "No pessimism in the midst of calamity,"[93] closed the editorial.

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[91] Storke, page 120.
[92] Ibid.
[93] *Morning Press*, July 30, 1925.

The statement might have been describing the editorial itself. News coverage, and Storke's autobiography, reveal that the rebuilding effort that took place after the quake involved unique cooperation by various city agencies. That cooperation was egged on by editorials advocating that the city work together to make quake recovery a success.

Though the newspaper appears to have embraced rebuilding for beauty at the outset, Storke did not initially agree with a proposed plan to use the earthquake as an impetus to make Santa Barbara a thematically constructed city. "Storke vigorously opposed Santa Barbara's renaissance as a city of Spanish Colonial architecture, as advocated by Bernhard Hoffman," wrote Walter Tompkins.[94] "Later, when the idea caught on, Storke switched sides, saying that his original objections to the 'Spanish look' were that the city had no constitutional right to dictate what kind of architecture a man used when he put up a new building on State Street."[95] This interesting anecdote demonstrates the power that Storke placed behind the wishes of the community. Though he originally opposed the idea of enforced architectural zoning, he changed his mind when he found a majority of the reading public to be in favor of it.

Coverage of the Earthquake

Earthquake coverage was under way immediately after the quake took place, with the help of a Ventura printing plant that did the work of the *Morning Press*' damaged facility. For the next ten days, front page stories were published on the aftermath of the quake and its impact on the community. It is important to note the standardized inch-high headline font used even for issues of local news. Placing the importance of community issues above even prominent national and international affairs, the font demonstrates the *Morning Press*' dedication to Santa Barbara's community news.

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[94] Tompkins, page 410.
[95] Ibid.

On the day following the quake, the *Press'* coverage turned immediately to rebuilding and improvement efforts. "TWENTY MILLIONS SOUGHT TO REBUILD SANTA BARBARA,"[96] read the banner head. The story below cited bankers and public officials as two of the primary forces pushing for speedy reconstruction. In the first paragraph of the story, however, a direct example of public journalism is present. "Any one who wishes to become associated with Santa Barbara's earthquake reconstruction fund of $20,000,000 and the relief fund of $2,000,000 may sign up at any Santa Barbara bank,"[97] the first sentence read. Immediately providing the mobilizing information needed for a reader to contribute to his community is uncommon by today's standards of public journalism. In most cases, stories about a situation with an objective vein are accompanied by a sidebar that might include the name, phone number or address of a contact party. The reader is lulled into a sense of informative security, rather than being immediately set up with the means to act. In this dramatic example of public journalism, the article goes on to essentially exhort reader contributions, stating: "Above the foundations of the present ruins will rise a greater and more beautiful Santa Barbara ... "[98]

On Thursday, July 2, articles included an estimate of $500,000 damage done to Santa Barbara's Old Mission and a story speculating that real estate values would rise because of the effort that would replace old buildings with modern, seismically safe structures.[99] This is the first of many pieces in the paper that would predict ways in which Santa Barbara residents could actually make money out of the destruction that the city had suffered. Ultimately, it seems the paper facilitated such a happening by its constant predictions. Just as constant exhortation of the spirit and morale with which Santa Barbarans approached the quake cheered the city, real estate speculators were encouraged by the constant promises that the paper made of a beautified, reinforced Santa Barbara. In

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[96] *Morning Press*, July 1, 1925.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] *Morning Press*, July 2, 1925.

an article on July 9, it was reported than real estate demand had skyrocketed since the recent quake.[100]

On July 3, front page news included the report that a group of Los Angeles bankers pledged loans of $20 million to repair damage from the earthquake. Water in Goleta wells was also rising because of the ground movement. Inside the paper on page three is a story of significant public journalism interest. Headlined "Noted Engineer Sees Benefits of Earthquake,"[101] the piece declared how M.M. O'Shaughnessy, chief engineer of San Francisco, praised Santa Barbara's post-quake mentality. O'Shaughnessy is quoted: "Santa Barbara showed a splendid spirit in clearing away the ruins of its city. They didn't stop to talk about it; they began to clear it away."[102] Such praise bolstered readers' attitudes for their ongoing efforts to clean up and get on with their lives.

The next day was the Fourth of July, but it did not seem that there was much to celebrate. An editorial published in the Saturday paper stated otherwise. The piece argued that Santa Barbara had different reasons from those of most Americans to celebrate, among them: "our deliverance from a horrible catastrophe."[103] With praise for the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution and the authors of the Declaration of Independence, Storke wrote that like those early Americans: "Today we have but to rebuild again. We have our families and our comrades .. We have offers of money for rebuilding on long time loans; we have proffers of help from all the nation, sympathy from all the world."[104] The editorial voice is an example of public journalism because it offers a reassuring tone to the reader. The public is being led by its publication's voice. Next to the editorial was an article that included sound bites of praise from around the nation, each one praising Santa Barbara's reaction in face of adversity.[105]

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[100] *Morning Press*, July 9, 1925.

[101] *Morning Press*, July 3, 1925.

[102] Ibid.

[103] *Morning Press*, July 4, 1925.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

Editorials following the quake repeatedly took the tone of reassurance. One, published on July 7, urged citizens that it was "time to stick with the ship."[106] The piece compared Santa Barbara's situation with that of St. Louis' devastation by a cyclone and San Francisco's disastrous quake of 1906. "Santa Barbarans have stood as bravely and as firmly as any of these in their loyalty to their city following our earth shocks," the editorial stated. "It remains now for us to rebuild as the others did, only on a grander scale, with an eye to a systematic, community beauty such as none of these embraced."[107] On July 5, in a show of public solidarity with the local government, the *Morning Press* published in entirety the official damage report by city engineers, which condemned 74 buildings.[108] In an editorial of the same day, the paper reprinted a paragraph from the opening pages of the engineers' report, which called for seismically sensible reconstruction of damaged buildings. Advocating the city officials' advice is an example of public journalism.

The best example of public journalism in the editorial pages immediately following the quake was on July 9. In this piece, the *Morning Press* formally endorsed the proposal allowing the city to recommend architectural standards. Support for conforming to an architectural norm that would establish an aesthetic theme for the city continues to this day. It is clear from the tone of the piece that Storke had wrestled with the issue. He began with the claim that "Santa Barbara is not attempting to 'impose' any type of architecture upon the property owners of the city."[109] The editorial goes on to express concern for beauty, historic surroundings, and the happiness of the populace. The paper ultimately declared its support for the Spanish architecture style movement on the grounds that property owners would be happy to help the community benefit by following it. "We can continue to build, as any other city builds and be 'an ordinary town' or we can embrace the opportunity that presents itself, and at no more cost, build a city here that will

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[106] *Morning Press*, July 7, 1925.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Morning Press, July 5, 1925.
[109] *Morning Press*, July 9, 1925.

make the world talk of us."[110] Any doubts of constitutional legality involved in establishing building controls had dissipated with the thought of community improvement. As a result, the *Morning Press* supported the project. As part of the campaign to rebuild Santa Barbara began, pieces praising and advocating the new building codes appeared in prominent locations in the paper. Often, they came from outsiders like William Templeton Johnson, a San Diego architect, who wrote that Santa Barbara could establish a tradition of cooperation in rebuilding.[111] Urging public involvement in community projects through fresh voices is a hallmark of public journalism. Today, such efforts take the form of editorial requests that readers submit their thoughts and opinions on an issue. These appear daily in today's *News-Press* editorial pages and in the Local section's "Young Voices" column.[112]

Creating Cachuma Lake

In the fall of 1949, an election was held which changed the face of Santa Barbara County forever.

The election entailed a vote on a ballot measure that would flood 6,000 acres of rolling ranchland between Santa Barbara and the Santa Ynez Valley, creating a lake of 206,000 acre-feet at overflow capacity.

The bid to build the dam and create the lake passed, but in the process of passage, T.M. Storke had already been run through the wash on issues of character and motive.

The property that was requisitioned by the government to create the lake was originally part of the Lazy RG Ranch off of San Marcos Pass, a 37,259 acre spread owned by Detroit transplant Lewis Welch. Welch knew upon purchase that army engineers had recommended part of the property as a useful reservoir to help solve potential water

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[110] Ibid.
[111] *Morning Press*, July 4, 1925.
[112] Established by Jesse Chavarria, Young Voices runs once a week on Mondays. Local schoolchildren write in with their opinions and experiences. John Lankford includes a "Voice from .." feature in the editorial page, in which readers express their opinions about issues in their community.

problems for the growing community. Welch launched an opposition campaign to the project that Storke called "vicious, unfair, and libelous."[113] Storke and the *News-Press* supported the lake, advocating it as a solution to Santa Barbara's water needs. Hired lawyers and lobbyists attacked Storke for his support of the project, running ads in the *News-Press* against him. Storke's San Marcos Pass retreat, the TMS Ranch, was at the heart of the controversy. Welch alleged that Storke supported the ranch because his property values would rise if the lake were created.

The incident demonstrates what happens in public journalism when the political gets personal. In his autobiography, Storke talks about the fight as though he were the only person in the county who wanted Cachuma Lake. He wrote that personal friends like William McAdoo and Earl Warren helped the project through the legislative stages because they knew Storke and trusted him. If exerting one's personal influence was the way the political game had to be played, then Storke was definitely a winner. But coverage by the *News-Press* demonstrates that the voters had a stake in the water project as well. The measure did not robustly pass in the polls by magic.

Coverage of Cachuma

Storke believed that, ultimately, Lake Cachuma would provide "benefits to generations yet unborn in the Santa Barbara area that far outbalance injuries suffered by a few individuals."[114] But before the groundbreaking for Bradbury Dam could take place in 1950, Santa Barbara County had to approve a project that would end up costing $44 million.[115] Storke used the *News-Press* as a voice to create public support for the project, and public journalism tactics are evident before and after the project's approval. A search of archived papers revealed that community-oriented newspaper articles were especially in

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[113] Storke, page 205.
[114] Ibid.
[115] The dam was completed in 1953, and the Tecolote Tunnel, which brings water from the lake to Santa Barbara, was finished in 1956.

evidence during the month prior to the passage of the ballot measure supporting the project in November 1949.

The public journalism coverage that the paper gave the Cachuma project took a variety of forms. Editorials, like those in abundance in the aftermath of the earthquake, were one method used by Storke to push the public conscience towards support of a new water source. But also on record is the paper's use of community members as public journalism figures. Thirdly, positive mobilizing information about the project by the *News-Press* seems to have been designed to reinforce community support.

Two editorials in particular illustrate the strategies of public journalism. Titled "Water, the Most Important Element," the first was printed on October 11, 1949. The first half of the piece reads like a biology textbook. It offers a scientific discussion of natural elements, the need for water in land development, and the dependence of humans on their water sources. Finally, the writer gets to the main point in a sarcastic manner: "For some reason that man does not seem to understand, however, nature did not see fit to provide water in as orderly a manner as she did the other two elements."[116] The underlying message to the public is that a stable water source is necessary for enhancement of the community. The *News-Press* then takes the position that Lake Cachuma was the best way to obtain water for growth and development. "The Cachuma project is by far the most practical plan for bringing about in southern Santa Barbara County the best possible relationship between air, land and water."[117] This is public journalism because the paper is using editorial space to propagate an opinion that its editors believe reflects the best interests of the community.

An editorial published on October 19 took the official endorsement of the ballot measure a step further. In a response to a letter by reader Gladyce O. Kriger, who had serious objections to the project, the paper vehemently denied Kriger's charges that the

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[116] *News-Press*, 10/11/49.
[117] Ibid.

project was too broad to be an emergency measure and that it would cost too much.[118] The editorial countered her objections point by point. According to the *News-Press*, "No responsible worker for a Bradbury Dam water supply for this area has emphasized the 'tomorrow emergency' water situation as a major reason for building the dam."[119] This statement reinforced the paper's credibility as an outlet of public journalism because it resisted the temptation to incite anxieties over a water-deficit among the citizenry. Instead, the editorial stated, the dam would "develop sources of water which for a few years could make the water supply of this area safe."[120]

Ironically, in the 1990s Santa Barbara's neighboring village of Solvang succumbed to water worries and tried to become part of a state water purchasing project. Instead of winning federal support like that which helped pay for Bradbury Dam, Solvang's agreement to front the money for its share of the state pipeline has left the city bankrupt and factioned. Support for the project by the local media and elected officials in the Santa Ynez Valley (with a subsequent retraction of that support by later members of the city council) left the citizenry disillusioned, confused, and bitter over higher water bills. In 1949 the *News-Press* made an attempt to give voters the facts before they went to the polls, an essential part of good public journalism. In response to Kriger's claim that the project would have to pay for government-owned water, the editorial of October 19 stated that "the $35 maximum per acre-foot which has been set as the maximum price Santa Barbara people must pay for Cachuma Dam water is the price needed to pay our share of the cost of Cachuma Dam in 50 years."[121] From the start, readers were informed of the project's expense. Voters in Solvang, by contrast, only realized that they had to pay for a share of the $80 million bill after they had approved the project. (Initial estimates had put the cost of the project at $18 million.[122])

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[118] *News-Press*, 10/19/99.
[119] Ibid
[120] Ibid.
[121] *News-Press*, 10/19/49.
[122] Etling, Bert; managing editor, *Santa Ynez Valley News*.

Another use of public journalism to support the Bradbury Dam project consisted of the habit developed by *News-Press*[123] of printing the names of persons who joined a group called the "Citizens Committee for Cachuma Water." The pieces did not have much substance. Headlines were usually a variation of "Cachuma group reaches 2179 in steady climb."[124] The pieces' uniqueness lies in the fact that the published lists of citizens who had joined the group appeared in the mainstream sections of the paper, as though the story was reporting news. The "stories" read much as do ads today that have a border reading "Paid Political Advertisement" and that include names of supporters of a politician or a cause. Ultimately, printing the lists was public journalism as peer pressure. By publishing them the paper was attempting to create more community support for the project. But what was then considered advocacy by the paper itself is now considered advertising by outside interests or causes.

Other examples of public journalism in support of Cachuma Lake that involved community members were articles published on October 16 and October 24. Two pieces are notable on the 16th, one in the local news pages and a second in the sports section. The local news story, titled "Gus Caras Tells Just What Cachuma Means to Area,"[125] puts a very public, human face on the lake project. Caras was a native of Greece, who operated a tailor shop in Santa Barbara for many years. In other words, he was just a "man on the street," a phrase used in newsrooms to describe the citizens chosen at random as the subjects of public interest stories. Caras supposedly came to the paper with a handwritten statement professing his views on the project, and the *News-Press* made his opinions into a news item. Caras wanted to tell the public that the dam was important because of local drought patterns, the needs of farmers, and the employment opportunities that the project would create. Though the story is on the news pages and written in the

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[123] *News-Press*, 10/13/49.
[124] *News-Press*, 10/19/49.
[125] *News-Press*, 10/16/49.

form of a news feature, it essentially presents Caras' opinions for the merely because he is a Santa Barbara resident. The act of taking a member of the public and making his opinions news is an example of public journalism because the community is ingrained in the reporting process. However, the objectivity and accuracy of Caras' statements are impossible to verify. His field of knowledge as a tailor did not qualify him to assert that the dam would create jobs. And the assumption that drought cycles in the area would continue as they had in his lifetime might have been countered by the views of a meteorologist.

The second article concerning the dam project that was published on October 16, 1949 is titled "A Vote for Dam Is a Vote for Better Fishing."[126] It was a column written by Henry Ewald. Ewald argued that sportsmen ought to vote for the dam to increase the water in the county, because fish could not swim where there was no water, and fisherman could not catch where fish could not swim. Assimilating the editorial position of the newspaper is an example of public journalism. Ewald may have argued his point from a sporting perspective, but his ultimate message: "Don't depend on the other fellow to cast the vote that should be your own,"[127] merely found a different way from that of the editorial page to reach an audience. Ultimately, Ewald was right. The lake was a good gamble for game sportsmen. Today, fishermen flock to Cachuma Lake for fishing, though steelhead salmon runs in the Santa Ynez River were wiped out.

A third example of using citizens in the community as public journalism vehicles appeared in the issue of October 24, in a front page article called "Long-Time Resident Calls Cachuma Key to Progress."[128] Similar to the Caras piece, the story included the viewpoints of Hannah Lyons Juarez, a housewife who had lived in Montecito since 1913. Juarez, like Caras, had written a letter to the paper proclaiming Cachuma to be a boon for

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[126]Ibid.
[127]Ibid.
[128]*News-Press*, 10/24/49.

the community. She argued that a group called the Citizens Civic Community was misleading the public by sending out letters telling the public that no federal aid would be contributed to the Cachuma project. Juarez, and the *News-Press*, wanted readers to know that that was not the case. The publication of Juarez' views took the level of citizen involvement in the project (via the newspaper) to a new level. Whereas Caras' piece had been relegated to an inside page and included some introductory comments by one of the paper's reporters, Juarez' letter is on the front page and begins without any comments about her.[129]

Other stories of a public journalism nature were published in the weeks leading to the election. "Santa Ynez Water Directors Advocating Cachuma OK"[130] assured Santa Barbarans that the closest neighbors to the project (residents of the Santa Ynez Valley) would support the lake, too. Ultimately, this proved not to be true. Voters in Santa Ynez and Lompoc precincts, downriver from the proposed lake, were the only ones to vote in the majority against Cachuma. Another article, "Town of 200 Faces Extinction as Water Supply Fails, Here Is Story of Casmalia, and Its Fight to Survive,"[131] is not just a story about Casmalia's plight, but one that urges voters to consider Casmalia's situation before deciding on Cachuma. The second paragraph of the article reads: "It (Casmalia's water dilemma) is similar to the question and the problem that confronts residents of most of the County today. The County will have its answer on Nov. 22 when it goes to the polls to vote for the Cachuma Water project."[132] The diction of the sentence is notable: voters are not going to the polls to vote "on" the project, but rather to vote "for" it. Public journalism is not always this suggestive in innuendo.

Other stories that supported the project included a piece on October 23 that compared the cost of providing the city with well water with the cost of building

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[129] Ibid.
[130] *News-Press*, 10/23/49.
[131] *News-Press*, 10/23/49.
[132] Ibid.

Cachuma; it concluded that the latter would cost seven dollars per acre-foot less than well water.[133] This information had a practical purpose: mobilize readers' support for the project. Another story, also published on October 23, stated that Ventura had tried another method of procuring water and regretted its decision. Ojai engineer Ed Welch told an audience at a public forum that dissent for the project on the grounds that it was "socialism" was ludicrous. He added that Ventura County residents were paying $60 per acre foot for well water because selfish property owners had lobbied against a Cachuma-like ballot measure.[134] The *News-Press* reported Welch's comments with gusto. Whenever community groups came out in favor of the project, such as the Central Labor Council, Sons of Italy, Business and Professional Women's Club, Government Services Club, Contractors Association of Santa Barbara, Disabled Veterans or Mesa Association,[135] the paper duly recognized such support. As with printing the names of members of the Citizens Committee, recognizing the local groups that endorsed the project exhibited the peer pressure of public journalism.

The day after the election on November 22, a story titled "Cachuma Water Project Wins," with a banner headline, appeared in the *News-Press*.[136] The coverage of the election for Cachuma's construction included a breakdown of when water would be available, how long the construction project would take, and other mobilizing information designed to make the construction project accessible to the citizenry.[137] This type of public journalism would continue throughout the project. At one point, a group of Santa Barbara journalists even took a trip through the nearly completed Tecolote Tunnel, on foot, so that they could report on the project's progress.[138]

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[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] *News-Press* October papers, 1949.
[136] *News-Press*, 11/23/49.
[137] *Pages of our Past*; published archive collection from 9/99, excerpt printed Nov. 23, 1949.
[138] Ibid.

Rather than providing a one-sided view of the victory for the lake's advocates the day after the election, Lewis Welch was given a chance by the *News-Press* to vent his anger at the "empty victory,"[139] as he called it, and to state that he would do his utmost to make money from the project.[140] Ultimately, this is exactly what happened, with the Reclamation Bureau giving Welch $1.6 million for his land, at considerable profit to him.[141] Ironically, Storke's property values suffered after the Tecolote Tunnel was dug, because spring water was diverted from his ranch and flowed to Santa Barbara instead.

When the lake did not fill right after the dam was completed because the county was in a drought year, Storke was publicly chastised for the paper's support of the project. In April of 1958 water crested the spillway for the first time. Storke said: "Of all the causes I have espoused during my career, Cachuma was by far the bitterest, insofar as personal abuse was concerned. Because time vindicated my stand, perhaps that is why Cachuma is the one success of which I am the most proud."[142] His pride was probably greatest on April 13, 1958, when the paper was able to run a headline declaring "CACHUMA SPILLS." The front page of the *News-Press* that day was completely filled by a big picture of the swollen lake.[143] Can public journalism be photojournalism? In this instance, the *News-Press* offers an argument in favor of the concept, with the photo sending a message to the citizenry that the lake's spill was a dominant concern in their lives, so dominant that a single photo legitimately monopolized a daily front page usually filled with up to a dozen articles on local and national news.

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[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Storke, page 210.
[142] Ibid.
[143] *News-Press*, April 23, 1958.

The John Birch Society

The coverage of the John Birch Society by the *News-Press* increased recognition of the paper's public journalism practices. An obituary written after Storke's death by United Press International read: "He believed that an editor's first duty was to his own community but Storke attracted, almost by accident, national attention when he wrote a series of editorials and articles in 1961 on the John Birch Society which he described as 'monolithic' and 'dictatorial.'"[144] In fact, Storke penned neither the two stories nor the Pulitzer-winning editorial himself, but he received credit for them because he was editor and publisher. Storke instigated the project, which included editorials by Paul Veblen and reporting by Hans Engh, to explain the dangers of the society to Santa Barbara citizens. Receiving international renown for the Birch editorial was an accident of public journalism. Storke had asked Engh to investigate the super-conservative group because leader Robert Welch had accused Earl Warren and President Eisenhower of being communists. Warren was a close personal friend of Storke, and T.M. took offense at Welch's efforts to have him impeached. A *Los Angeles Times* article that discussed the "Old Guard vs. the New People" situation in Santa Barbara stated: "Even this national issue had a local emphasis for T.M., who was alarmed by what was happening in his own community, as well as infuriated by Bircher attacks on his good friend, Earl Warren."[145]

The Birch Society was founded by Welch in December, 1958, and spread to Santa Barbara in early 1960, according to Engh's first article in a two part series. Welch, a 62-year-old resident of Massachusetts, quit his job as a candy maker to devote all his energy to fighting communism. He took McCarthyism further than McCarthy ever had, though, pursuing it after the fall of McCarthy and accusing presidents Truman, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy of serving as agents of the communist movement.[146] The

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[144]UPI article; date unknown, clip on file in Storke papers at Glenhill Library.
[145]*News-Press*, 12/29/69.
[146]*News-Press*, 1/22/61.

group was named after Christian missionary John Birch, who was shot by a Chinese soldier after World War II had officially ended. Welch referred to Birch as the "first casualty in the third world war, between the Communists and the ever-shrinking free world."[147]

Birch Coverage

Considering that these were articles were motivated by a publisher's distrust, Engh managed to write relatively calm, objective accounts of the Birch Society's history and activities. The first story, published on Sunday, January 22, 1961, relates the general themes of the group in answer to the headline question: "John Birch Society: What Is It, Why?" The subsequent article included in-depth comments from members of the Santa Barbara chapter, which supposedly had "hundreds" of members.[148] The stories demonstrate public journalism for three reasons: First, they display surprisingly objective coverage: readers were supplied with the mobilizing information to join or decry the Birch group in the two articles. Second, the stories prompted a public debate carried out in the pages of the *News-Press* about the merits of anti-communist organizations. Third, after the initial objective coverage, the paper's stance on the society fully engaged the *News-Press* in community life. By forcfully denouncing communism but also by decrying subversive anti-communist groups like the Birchers, the paper guided its readers in the direction in which Thomas Storke felt it was best for them to go. This example illustrates that unobjective coverage can easily be public journalism.

In addition to describing Welch's past, Engh notes some of the aims of the Birchers in his first piece. Those goals included joining and dominating school PTA discussions, writing massive number of letters, and coercing fellow "conservatives" to join up. Engh relates this rather shocking "to do" list in a very balanced tone, though, and

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147 Ibid.
148 *News-Press*, 1/23/61.

gives Welch's opinions significant play in the story. Presenting the Birch leader's views in a naked light would serve to discredit them. at least to certain readers. Others would continue to defend Welch's world view.

The second story of the series included a note from the editor that would open public debate on the Birchers' activities. "Comments from society members in this area are invited,"[149] the note read. "On today's editorial page is reprinted an editorial about the John Birch Society from the Racine (Wis.) *Journal-Times*." The Racine editorial is very anti-Birch, calling the society an "Amazing Case of Extremism" and driving the point home by quoting Birch's own words: "Democracy is merely a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery, and perennial fraud."[150] Therein lies the key reason Welch's opinions were so dangerous to papers everywhere. By condemning democracy and freedom of speech, he was exhorting Americans to suspend their belief in a free press. Editors like Storke knew that if these ideas were to catch on, America would be in trouble. The *News-Press* printed several articles like the Racine editorial to enforce the point that it was not just Santa Barbara where Birchism was rampant. An editorial from the *Los Angeles Times* was printed on January 30. The *Times'* editors denounced Birchers for sending hundreds of letters asking for the impeachment of Earl Warren. The piece pointed out the sheer ignorance on which their cause was based. "The fact is that these letter writers think that impeachment is simply a procedure for getting rid of an official with whom they disagree," the editorial read. "We suggest that they suspend letter writing for a while and apply themselves to the study of civics. And also to the tolerance of opinions that do not agree with theirs."[151] Comments on the Birch Society from Boston, Chicago and Milwaukee were printed with Engh's first story.

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[149] *News-Press*, 1/23/61.
[150] Ibid.
[151] *News-Press*, 1/30/61.

In Engh's second story, local Birchers held open forum. The piece began with the opinions of Dr. Granville Knight, a Santa Barbara member of the group's national council. Knight explained that the society was not a "secret," as the *News-Press* believed, but rather that members eschewed publicity because they did not want troublemakers harassing them. Engh then presented the opinions of other women and men who believed that the society was a "fine movement" and proposed an "excellent plan," though they shied away from agreeing with Welch's opinion that President Eisenhower was a communist. In a startling admission as to how far the group's reach might already extend, Engh's story revealed that a San Marcos High School teacher had tried to get other educators to join the group on the school's campus.[152] The second half of the story included Welch's view on journalism. The founder declared that "termites have crept into the solid-looking framework of their news gathering and news writing."[153] In other words, not just politics, but the paragon of American objectivity, journalism, had been infiltrated by communists. Despite those inflammatory statements, Engh's second article provided information that might encourage both a patriotic American to hate the society and a concerned anti-communist to join it. Readers were informed of the membership dues, and the process of selecting a chapter leader, though the name of Santa Barbara's chapter head was not disclosed.[154]

The initial reaction to the *News-Press*' coverage of the Birch society was very positive. An editor's note that ran with the first batch of letters on January 27, 1961 stated: "So far, 11 letters commending the *News-Press* for publishing the articles have been received, including those published today. One letter critical of publication of the articles was received and published yesterday. A second critical letter, apparently with a fictitious name, will not be published."[155] The first critical letter had cited the Birch

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[152]Ibid.
[153]*News-Press*, 1/23/61.
[154]Ibid.
[155]*News-Press*, 1/17/61.

Society as the sort of "heroic leadership" needed by the United States in a time when there was a "Communist-dominated U.N."[156] It was accompanied by three letters that cited the excellent service that the paper had done its readers by printing the articles. Interestingly, readers recognized the public journalism nature of the project. Constance de Santillana wrote that the reports were "objective," and that such analysis would serve the country better than the Birchers' "panic-mongering."[157] Grace Merriell recognized that the articles had been useful in "alerting the community to its dangerous activity." Esther Salzman believed that the stories represented "journalism at its highest level."[158] The next day, Mary Lou Main wrote that her "admiration for the *News-Press* has greatly increased!"[159] More probing were the comments of Lois S. Sidenberg, who wrote that "intelligent public opinion can only be formed through factual and objective information. The *News-Press* articles on the John Birch Society are examples of such necessary information and I am most grateful for them."[160] Sidenberg hit upon the ultimate objective of public journalism: to influence the community by factual reporting about the events in its very midst. Engh did not need to write his stories with an anti-Birch twist. The readers recognized that the facts he presented pointed to the conclusion that the Birch Society posed great dangers. One letter published in the aftermath of the controversy included a condemnation of the General Telephone Company, which allowed the Birchers to set up an inflammatory hotline.[161] Another letter made the suggestion that perhaps the Birchers were incited not by anti-communist motivations, but rather by hidden communist influence designed to drive citizens away from the society and into the arms of the "Red menace" itself.[162] One reader took matters into his own hands and went to the Birch library, which consisted of a bookshelf of anti-communist literature. From this reading

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156 Francis Ansbro letter to *News-Press*, 1/26/61.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
159 *News-Press*, 1/27/61.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
162 Katherine MacVengh letter to *News-Press*, 2/22/61.

material, he remarked, "one would get the impression that one's wife was a Communist."[163]

The *News-Press* waited over a month to publish its editorial regarding the Birch Society. It seems doubtful that the paper was waiting for reader comments to help it establish its stance, especially given the motivations for the original investigative report. Most likely, the national attention given to the stories were an impetus for a forceful editorial. Rather than relegating the editorial to the customary editorial pages (which were behind even the classified ads), the paper published an editorial on the front page on February 26, 1961. Because it epitomizes so many of the principles of public journalism and brought the *News-Press*' sole Pulitzer Prize, it seems worthwhile to reprint it in full.

AN EDITORIAL

> During recent weeks, the *News-Press* has sought to enlighten its readers about a semi-secret organization called the John Birch Society.
>
> We believe the *News-Press* has performed a public service by bringing the activities of the society to the attention of the community. Hundreds of our readers have agreed. But a newspaper would be derelict in its duty if it did not express its opinion of the way the society is organized and the tactics it employs.
>
> First, let there be no mistake about this: Communism must be opposed vigorously. Its gains throughout vast areas of the world are shocking. Every American must be alert for Red infiltration. But that does not lead logically to the conclusion that to fight Communism at home we must throw democratic principles and methods into the ashcan and adopt the techniques of the Communists themselves, as the John Birch leaders would have us do.
>
> The *News-Press* condemns the destructive campaign of hate and vilification that the John Birch Society is waging against national leaders who deserve our respect and confidence.
>
> How can anyone follow a leader absurd enough to call former President Eisenhower 'a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy?'" Those are the words of the national leader of the John Birch

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[163] Ronald Riley letter to *News-Press*, 2/9/61.

Society, Robert Welch, in a manuscript entitled 'The Politician,' of which photostatic copies are available.

The *News-Press* condemns the dictatorial, undemocratic structure of the society.

The *News-Press* condemns the tactics that have brought anonymous telephone calls of denunciation to Santa Barbarans in recent weeks from members of the John Birch Society or their sympathizers. Among victims of such cowardly diatribes have been educational leaders, including faculty members of the University of California at Santa Barbara, and even ministers of the Gospel.

The *News-Press* condemns the pressures on wealthy residents, who fear and abhor Communism, to contribute money to an organization whose leader has said that 'for reasons you will understand, there can be no accounting of funds.'"

In the Blue Book, the society's 'Bible,' leader Welch said that the organization needed one million members. He also said that the dues are 'whatever the member wants to make them, with a minimum of $24 per year for men and $12 for women.'

One million members divided equally between men and women would bring him 18 million dollars a year. Quite a sum to pay without accountability!

The *News-Press* challenges members of the society to come into the open and admit membership. A local enrollment 'in the hundreds' is claimed but so far only a few of those who have joined the organization have been unashamed enough to admit it.

The *News-Press* challenges the responsible local leaders of the society to make themselves known.

The *News-Press* challenges them to tell their fellow citizens exactly what they are up to and specifically what program they have in mind for Santa Barbara.

The John Birch Society already has done a grave disservice to Santa Barbara by arousing suspicions and mutual distrust among men of good will. The organization's adherents, sincere in their opposition to Communism, do not seem to understand the dangers of the totalitarian dynamite with which they are tampering.

The *News-Press* challenges them. Come up from underground.

And if they believe that in being challenged they have grounds for suit, let them sue. The *News-Press* would welcome a suit as a means of shedding more light on the John Birch Society.[164]

The *News-Press* demonstrated strains of public journalism daily, but this editorial is the ultimate example. The paper flagrantly wore its concern for the public on its sleeve. It

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[164]*News-Press*, 2/26/61.

urged citizens to question the activities of their neighbors. The newspaper took a leading role in protecting what it believed to be the community's best interests. And the reaction of the community? In a word, positive. A page full of letters commending the piece was published two days later. Readers raved, stating that their eyes had been opened, that the paper was a national-caliber U.S. daily, and that they were proud of the *News-Press*.[165] It was a high-water mark in the history of the paper, and the Pulitzer to come would only reinforce what many already believed: that Storke's *News-Press* aimed not just to present the news, but to protect the public.

Public Journalism's Past and Present: *News-Press* Interviews

Allen Parsons, Executive Editor

Allen Parsons' small executive editor office at the *News-Press* looks out onto De la Guerra Plaza. T.M. Storke used to enjoy the view of the city's civic center (City Hall is just 100 feet away) from the more spacious publisher's digs adjacent to Parsons' workspace. But the two men, who oversee the news content of the *News-Press* past and present, have different ideas about how the public space represented by the plaza should be portrayed in the paper. At least, that is how it appears when one asks Parsons his thoughts about issues of public journalism. Storke's presence looms in the ideology of his modern-day successor, but Parsons advocates objective detachment from the involvement clause present in some definitions of public journalism. He believes that much of what is called public journalism today dates back to old-fashioned coverage of people and issues.

Parsons does not define public journalism in specific terms, though he is familiar with the work of Merritt and Rosen and can cite a half dozen papers that have published

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[165] *News-Press*, 1/28/61.

successful projects in public journalism. He calls it " a very mushy, elastic concept,"[166] and says he is not comfortable with any one definition.

> I think you could probably say it has a cluster of qualities. There are a number of things that if you throw them in a pot, that's public journalism, but not any one of them constitutes public journalism. To my mind, public journalism is a lot what newspapers have always done, which is be concerned with their communities, paying attention to issues, trying to present issues in an informative, useful way to readers and I think that's part of public journalism.[167]

Parsons believes that public journalism surfaced as a definitive movement in the 1990s because "people are disconnecting from their communities. They're pulling out. They don't care. That's not good for long-term democracy, nor is it good for newspapers, because if you don't care much about the world you're living in, you probably don't have much of a need for a newspaper."[168] The *News-Press* is experiencing the challenges of disillusioned readership first-hand. A significant portion of the paper's subscribers, according to a recent readership survey, are "at risk," meaning that they often depend on a another media source for news and information and could drop their subscriptions without significant discomfort. But Parsons is not sure a full fledged foray into public journalism is the way to change that situation.

> The idea (of public journalism) was to reengage the community. One of the cluster of qualities, the part that I've always felt uncomfortable with, is some participatory role. Deciding, OK, these are issues now that we need to be involved with. The newspaper is going to ... hold hearings, meetings, it becomes part of, to some degree, that process rather than the detached observer, rather than laying out some problems and saying here are some potential solutions.
>
> I've always considered public and civic journalism to take that one more step, which is to grab the community by the lapels and say: 'Come to our meeting' and 'Here are ways to solve our problems.' I think there have been some really great public journalism projects. I don't think the communities have thought less of their newspapers for doing them. All

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166 Interview with *News-Press* executive editor Allen Parsons, conducted January 7, 2000.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.

> that said, I have a concern about the lack of detachment. Suddenly it becomes partly the newspaper's thing. They've gotten on board, they've decided how things ought to be covered or what ought to be done.[169]

In fact, Parsons expresses doubts about the legitimacy of public journalism as a movement. His belief that its formative principles should be hammered into the head of every young reporter has led him to see the movement as a grandiose mea culpa for media gone awry. "It's sort of like journalism plus," Parsons said. "It's sort of like all those things we said we did, we didn't do them very well. (Journalism) did get pulled aside by the flashier aspects (of news), we did follow the polls. You have to do that. That's not something you can ignore."[170] But the "solutions" aspect of yet another name for public journalism, solutions journalism, is a major red flag for Parsons' purist objectivity.

> People just basically got turned off, because newspapers had such a steady drumbeat of negative news and gave people a sense of despair and hopelessness. They only focused on the darker aspects. Never getting over Watergate thing was the accusation, I think. What public journalism was saying was 'Whoa, hold on, you can be part of the solution.' You can make people see things and allow them to reengage. But you can only do that by getting on board with them, or getting them on board, or taking some affirmative step. And I think that's what they believed was different about public or civic journalism, was that it crossed over. It was a way of perceiving what your duty was. And to that degree it they were right.
>
> I think of community journalism as just covering your community. I think that's one of the things people said about public journalism is that it isn't like we're against those ideas. That's like everyday newspapering. Of course you go out and ask people what they think, and of course you try to answer the issues that are important to them. That's what newspapering is.[171]

In layman's terms, Parsons likes the idea that civic journalism gets the writer or reporter thinking about the needs of their community. But he does not want a paper to identify and then solve the problems of a town such as Santa Barbara. Storke, whom Parsons calls a progressive press lord, felt much different. In a interesting analogy, Parsons defines Storke's role as "sort of like what kings were, and now civic journalism is sort of like

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[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

what presidents and prime ministers are. They both have a sense that they need to look after their communities and they've got some role of betterment in their communities."[172] In Parsons' description, Storke becomes not the benevolent dictator of Walter Tompkins, but an editor who had "father knows best" written on his sleeve. "From Storke's perspective it was: he knew best, he and others decided what was progress and saw to it that that happened, and they intended to silence voices that were opposed to that. Civic journalism, I don't think, has quite that component. I think it's a little more democratic in that it allows some dissident voices to rise as well in the process."[173]

Parsons does not advocate a public journalism on a level with that which Storke exemplified because he values detachment. He cites the example of the *Richmond Herald* of Virginia, which won an industry Knight Award for public journalism for advocating the revitalization of Richmond's downtown. "What occurs to me is this: 'What if some part of the population in the city didn't think that was the most pressing concern?'"[174] Parsons asked. For example, some citizens may have felt that social problems were a more imminent issue. "If the paper decides 'OK, that's the thing where all the energy has to go,' then it may not be as receptive to all those dissident voices, which would say 'OK, we don't need to concentrate on the downtown now.' That's what I worry about. Somehow the paper is invested in this one, particular thing."[175] The *News-Press* political coverage often fits into a public journalism mold, because the paper solicits voter panels to find out what issues people care about. But Parsons does not think this practice need be labeled anything other than good reporting. "How do you make people better understand what candidates feel on the issues? I don't think you need to be in public or civic journalism to do that."[176] He cites a public journalism effort in Charlotte, North Carolina, as an example. The *Charlotte Observer* collected reader issues and asked Senate seat candidates

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.

to respond. Senator Jesse Helms did not participate, and the *Observer* ran blank spaces where his responses would have gone. The public did not seem to notice, and Helms won the election anyway. "It didn't change how people had their perceptions,"[177] Parsons remarked ironically.

The legacy that Thomas Storke left behind at the *News-Press* ought to significantly affect the man responsible for everything that the paper publishes each day. Though Parsons gives Storke credit as a "giant of the 20th century,"[178] in his eyes Storke was more notable for the power he wielded in the community than he was for his journalistic virtues. Retired New York *Times* editor Scotty Reston has said that "There's not a paper in the country today where (officials) feel they have to pay attention to the editor of the editorial page because he can give you trouble."[179] That's not the way it was in Storke's time, Parsons explained:

> Those press lords (Storke, Pulitzer, Hearst) had a vision of what the world was supposed to be like. And they enforced that. They enforced that through the newspaper. It was one of the instruments, one of the organs for achieving that kind of goal. Tom Storke felt that Cachuma Lake was important. He would see to it that that got a massive amount of coverage. He would see to it that the voices rising against that were not heard. They were muzzled.[180]

Parsons recounts a conversation he had with the late Charles Storke about the *News-Press* coverage of state water. Parsons told Storke that even well after the election, letters to the editor advocating dumping local participation in the project came flooding in.

> Charles Storke said: 'Why are you running those letters?' He said, 'In our day, we didn't permit those voices to come in, once we decided what was the thing to do.' In fact they would decide what was good, they would get some civic leaders, put them in charge of a committee to accomplish whatever this thing was that they wanted to accomplish, and then they would cover that committee's activities and that's how things got done. They didn't tolerate a lot of dissent. They didn't let it into their

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177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Tifft and Jones, page 673.
180 Interview with Allen Parsons.

> paper. (The paper was) a much more powerful instrument in those days. That's how the town got its news. There was no TV station, no CNN. There were not a lot of other sources for news.[181]

But despite the strong control Storke was able to exercise, Parsons feels that if he had truly been interested in widespread power, he would have devoted his energy to enterprises other than those centered on the future of Santa Barbara.[182] Because Storke used the paper to further community aims, the area changed for the better. "He, I believe, was acting in what he felt were the best interests of his community," Parsons said of Storke. "His vision of what progress was .. he wasn't trying to put it through just for himself. He was trying to put it through because he felt it was better for everybody. Nevertheless, he made the decisions. He wasn't really interested in what everybody else had to say."[183]

Though Charles Storke was not interested in following his father as publisher and editor of the *News-Press*, he grasped the enormity of his father's influence on the community, Parsons said. "Another thing Charles Storke said to me was you take out Storke-supported projects Cachuma Lake and the University of California at Santa Barbara, you've got a very different place here. That's a person who's made a mark on the community. He didn't make a mark in that he built a big house on the hill for himself."[184] Storke lived comfortably, but his son also told Parsons that the paper was never a tremendous money maker for the family. "It was enough that you could make money, and live comfortably here," Parsons said. "You weren't going to be Ted Turner or something. (Storke) could have gone out, particularly with the political influence that he had, and started acquiring things; a string of papers. But that didn't interest him. What

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[181] Ibid.
[182] As an example, Parsons suggested that Storke might have founded his own media empire. However, he acquired just one other communications-industry business which was also locally oriented, the KTMS radio station, the last three call letters of which designate Storke's initials. KTMS continues to broadcast news radio under a different owner today.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.

interested him was focusing on Santa Barbara."[185] Parsons believes that although Storke may have exercised near dictatorial control of the news to achieve his aims, the majority of the community was usually behind him. "Even though there were not a lot of other voices, you can't make people do things they don't want to do. To whatever degree, whatever tune he was singing people wanted to dance to. He wasn't forcing it down their throats, that's for sure."[186] Specifically, the community was not so concerned about the potentially harmful impacts of development in the first half of the 20th century as it would become in the second half. Storke was an early voice against oil drilling, but he could not stop companies from exploring Santa Barbara's coast. "I think in his time people weren't aware of the downsides of growth," Parsons said. "You can see how strongly they felt. Their stories were about what a prosperous year we're going to have, what a great place this is. That's what this country was about, was developing and building up this country. It was inconceivable to them that they could reach some sort of limit."[187]

Today a limit has been reached, both in the development that Santa Barbarans tolerate in their community and the liberties that they allow their newspaper. Though Parsons feels that many of Storke's philosophies, especially his regard for the community and his desire to serve the public trust, will prevail throughout time, he feels that the *New York Times*-owned *News-Press* has higher standards while retaining editorial independence.

> I think the one thing as far as this company is concerned, our standards are higher now than they were before. The *Times* company doesn't take a hand in the running of the paper. They believe in autonomy. If you're in New York, you can't possibly run a paper in Santa Barbara, Florence, Alabama, or Sarasota, Florida. They aren't even set up to do the opposite if they wanted to. We have complete editorial autonomy. That said, I think we have a standard that we're expected to live up to. (Points to a flyer listing 'core values' that's hanging on the wall.) 'Newspaper of

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[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

> the highest quality, with the intention to enhance society, to serve the public trust.' I really believe this as it relates to our community: we're in the credibility business. When we do anything to mess around with that, that's going to hurt the audience that we have. In some way, they believe what they're reading. They don't think it's complete fiction. We make an effort to check out our facts. We make an effort as best we can to be responsible. It's not a company that says our business is getting advertisers. Well, yes it is, but the only way we do is by being in the credibility business, having an audience that the advertisers will come to, and not the reverse. Readers come first. The only way we can stay true to that public is to retain our editorial independence.[188]

Parsons believes that the premium that today's paper places on reader trust existed to a lesser extent in Storke's day. He points out that today advertisers can take their dollars elsewhere, often choosing TV commercials, direct mail or websites over newspaper ads. "It was pretty much his way or no way, in those days. If you wanted to advertise to people in town you went to Tom Storke."[189] But one crucial difference today is that the paper is not willing to bend the rules for its advertisers. That's why the recent partnership between the *Los Angeles Times* and the Staples Center was such a scandal. Information was presented with an intent to profit, rather than to serve the readers. Though the reporters were ignorant of the arrangement, the *Times* (a part owner of the Center) and the Staples Center shared profits on the ad revenue from the special section. That's not public journalism, but profit journalism. Similarly, Parsons believes that Storke's style of public journalism may have bent some crucial rules as well. "In Tom's time, I don't think it would be unusual if, say, the banker's wife got in a traffic accident, drinking and driving or something. It probably wouldn't have been that tough to get on the phone and say 'Tom, don't run that story.' And he wouldn't. Now, if it's my own mother, it's got to go in the paper,"[190] Parsons said.

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[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

Parsons does not believe that yesterday's editors and reporters would understand why today's *News-Press* cannot look out for its own. They'd say: 'You're just not looking out for people.' They'd view it differently. I don't think they'd think of themselves as less reputable, just more understanding."[191] Civic journalism presents itself as a more understanding and helpful brand of news. Even the publisher of the New York *Times* believes that changing times have "redoubled reporters' responsibility to 'add value' by explaining and interpreting the news.'"[192] That's a definition that Parsons is not willing to accept. The public journalism published by the *News-Press* today, including mobilizing information for voters on the issues that they care about, is not considered public journalism by the paper's top editor because he defines public journalism as taking sides and unacceptably excluding alternative viewpoints.. But City Editor Jesse Chavarria, that takes a different view.

Jesse Chavarria, City Editor

Chavarria is unable to pin down a specific definition of public journalism either. Perhaps the most interesting insight into his views on the subject lies in his use of the term "public service journalism." And in his mind, the projects that his department turns out with this label are attempting to serve the public's wish for more information about their daily lives.

Chavarria describes public journalism as an attitude that grew out of journalist's frustration with pro-Reagan attitudes in the 1980s, a public opinion phenomenon that Chavarria and his peers did not understand. "There seemed to be a lot of things going wrong, but the public seemed not to want to hear about it,"[193] Chavarria said. Wrapped

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[191] Ibid.
[192] Tifft and Jones, page 656
[193] Interview with News-Press City Editor Jesse Chavarria, 1/14/00

up in the economic prosperity of the mid 80s, America was not interested in another Watergate when Iran-Contra showed up. That was difficult for many journaliststo accept, Chavarria said. "People who go into journalism have a social conscience. They want to make the world better. The most important kind of information we can provide is when there's abuses of human beings."[194]

The second most important kind of journalism, he remarks, is that which gets people in touch with their community. "What public journalism forces us to do is go back to our roots of why we got into journalism in the first place. We should report on successes in the community, tell people what's right, and not what's going wrong."[195] Public reactions to current *News-Press* projects like Public Square, a page where people can submit event listings, scholarship winners, military service and other small-potatoes tidbits have been overwhelmingly favorable. They have been so good that Chavarria would like to expand the page from a half-sheet to a full in the near future. Another public journalism project is Young Voices, which lets young community readers write in and tell the reading public what issues are important to them. Chavarria is considering changing this column to one called "True Colors," which would focus on the experiences of different racial and ethnic groups. He thinks this would further enhance *News-Press* attempts to embrace diversity in the community. Steps have already been taken with the paper's "Latino beat," which was started in 1999.

Chavarria is not sure the Latino beat can be called public journalism, though. "I'm Latino, and we have never been represented in the news media," he said. "The Latino beat is new territory. It's not a return to our (journalistic) roots."[196] Perhaps public journalism is not best described as a mere return to good reporting, as both Parsons and Chavarria would define it. However, it is an attempt to embrace a section of the community that has

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[194]Ibid.
[195]Ibid.
[196]Ibid.

been misaligned and ignored by the news media for decades, especially in Santa Barbara. Some scholars would support the Latino beat as a public journalism project, because it takes the first step towards healing a fractured community.

The only difference between the opinions of Parsons and Chavarria is that Chavarria feels public journalism is practiced at the *News-Press*, while his boss calls those same projects just "good" journalism. Neither feels that Storke was a great role model for young journalists. Chavarria in particular thinks that he even set a dangerous precedent. "How did he know what was best for the community?," Chavarria asked. "From what I've heard of him he was somewhat of a bully."[197] Though they work in the same office as he did, Storke's modern predecessors do not follow his example in serving the public. Each has his own guiding light. For Parsons it is fundamental good reporting; for Chavarria, it's broadening the paper to include all of the community. Their rejection of Storke does not ruin the proposed thesis, however. Whether or not the founding father serves as a God for modern counterparts is less a reflection of his principles than are the stories that appear in the paper each day. Talk with any of the reporters in the *News-Press* newsroom today and you will hear rhetoric echoing the philosophy of Thomas Storke. The journalists who work for the paper want to serve their neighbors (the community) by writing stories that define the problems and solutions of Santa Barbara. To provide a concrete example, Dawn Hobbs' recent extensive crime series reported in detail the problems police encounter in each of Santa Barbara's neighborhoods.[198] In detail, Hobbs not only recounts the experiences of people who live in the neighborhoods, but discusses their problems with police officers who in turn provide solutions that might be implemented. The series fits neatly into the paradigm of public journalism because it offers solutions for a community problem.

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[197] Ibid.
[198] *Santa Barbara News-Press*, week of 12/12/99.

Public journalism coverage in 2000

The *News-Press* started the year with a new publisher, Ken Svanum, who brings a background of advertising management to his new position. As this paper was completed in May, 2000, Svanum left the paper after the New York Times Company announced it would be selling the *News-Press*, probably in summer 2000. Allen Parsons replaced Svanum as publisher. However, it is still worthwhile to look at one of the public journalism projects Svanum oversaw before he left.

One of Svanum's first executive decisions as publisher was the introduction of a program called "Celebrate Community." The public journalism program is an extension of the year-long community outreach effort the *News-Press* engaged in during 1999, called "Celebrate 2000," a millenium campaign originally instituted by the New York Times Company at many of its smaller papers. In a memo to *News-Press* employees, Svanum explained what "Celebrate Community" is all about:

> Celebrate Community is a sponsored communications program that in its simplest form offers a link between community needs and solutions. It involves not our news or editorial operations, or even our advertising programs. Rather, it commits the *News-Press* as an institution to focus on community welfare. The format is to use promotional space, events and an assortment of other media vehicles to deliver messages for mostly non-profit organizations.[199]

Svanum's explanation suggests that neither news articles nor editorial space will be used to create the improved community that "Celebrate Community" is designed to achieve. Public journalism without the journalism? Not quite. An editorial published in the *News-Press* on January 16 states otherwise. The editorial explains that the program is "designed to heighten public awareness of community needs and programs.[200] Further, those efforts will be immediately initiated in the paper's news coverage; they will begin the same day in the Life section, where a two-page spread on local volunteers and their

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[199] Svanum, Ken, 1/13/00.

[200] 1/16/00.

organizations is packaged.[201] The program "will be an opportunity for all of us to learn more about ourselves, and how each person plays a role in the community,"[202] wrote editorial page editor John Lankford.

The disparity between Svanum's assertion that "Celebrate Community" will involve "not our news or editorial operations" and the editorial published three days later demonstrates that public journalism takes a different form on the printed page than it might in in-house administrative discussion. Svanum believes that:

> Newspapers have a long, successful history of bringing readers and information together. Likewise, newspapers have successfully brought buyer and seller together through the pages of classified as well as display advertising. Accepting community partners in newspapers and other media is not necessarily a new concept, however, Celebrate Community offers a positive twist by encouraging and supporting community improvement and helping programs through promotional opportunities made possible by the *News-Press*.[203]

As executive director, Svanum has asked those who work under him to support the activities of the Santa Barbara community through their efforts at the newspaper. How that support will manifest itself in the news, sports, life and editorial sections of the paper will continue to unfold throughout 2000. However, Lankford's initial editorial suggests that there will be more than a semblance of Thomas Storke's belief that an editor or publisher "can form and develop character for his community."[204]

Conclusion

Throughout the year-long process of researching, writing, editing and rewriting this thesis, I have received the guidance of many intelligent individuals with knowledge of the field of journalism. Some have been members of the academic sector, while others are

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[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Svanum, 1/13/00
[204] Storke, California editor preface

working journalists. One interesting dicotomy emerged between these two groups in the editing process. Those who worked within the field of journalism were more likely to accept my assertions that Thomas Storke manifested a sort of public journalism, while the academically-inclined individuals were most likely to question the points that I hoped to prove.

Rather than abandoning the thesis as a result of this difference in opinion, I decided to try to discover why these groups of intellects felt the way they did. The conclusion I came to was this: for working journalists, public journalism is a constantly evolving term. That's why editors Storke, Parsons, Chavarria and Merritt each seem to have their own concept of what it was or what it was not, and why this thesis topic is probable in the first place. I have not attempted to argue that Thomas Storke invented public journalism. I have merely tried to suggest that he manifested an early vein of it here in Santa Barbara. The fact that there are many versions of public journalim makes that argument all the more probable.

I'm going to ask you to go to Storke Tower if you are ever on the campus of UCSB. Take a moment to look up at the imposing structure, among the tallest in Santa Barbara County, and then look around you. For a few moments, take yourself back in time. If you had been on campus during a brisk mid-October weekend in 1969, you would have heard former University of California President Clark Kerr address a crowd of students and community leaders gathered for the tower's groundbreaking ceremony. Here's part of what Kerr said:

> I should like to recall the briefest of conversations on the Davis campus of the University of California in October of 1957. I had just been elected the next president of the University by the Board of Regents. After the meeting Tom Storke came up to me. He didn't congratulate me, he didn't shake my hand. He just, in that way he has, took his forefinger and

> tapped me on the chest and said, 'Don't forget Santa Barbara!' And I said, 'Tom, I won't.'[205]

That brief anecdote summarizes the attitude that T.M. Storke directed towards the relationship between his community and his own brand of public journalism. His style of printed word was direct and to the point, just like the brief but memorable lecture he gave Kerr at Davis that day. Storke believed that the community of Santa Barbara could be something special, and he brought that belief to his personal relationships with influential men like Kerr, as well as to his newspaper articles and the credo he instilled in his employees. As the editors of today's *News-Press* have said, they look to Storke's editorial credo to guide them in their daily work with the public, because they too want what is best for their community. Though they may not believe that Storke was always the most ethical editor, his passion for his hometown made a mark. It is part of the reason why public journalism projects like "Celebrate Community" are still going on at the *News-Press.* Santa Barbara residents can give some of the credit for infrastructure development to public journalism, a philosophy carried out here surprisingly early on.

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[205]Speech reprinted in the *Goleta Valley Sun*, October 15, 1969.

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