

## *Valley Morning Star* and Harlingen Print Media Chronology

Compiled by Norman Rozeff, Harlingen Historical Preservation Society, 5/07

4/08 Marion M. Osborn commences publication of a weekly. In the 1910 census he noted to be a 35-year old Kansan living with his 32 year old wife Nellie and children Agnes 14, Robert 11, and Susan 4. In 1910 Nellie is a founding member of the First Methodist Church of Harlingen and Marion joins the congregation.

1909 According to a later *Harlingen Star* article by its owners in 1925, the newspaper had been started this year.

7/30/10 *Harlingen Star* printer is shot according to a brief *Brownsville Herald* article.

11/25/13 H. A. Gibbs is editor of the *Harlingen Star* newspaper. He and his wife may have taken over the weekly as early as 1909. He also serves on the City Commission 4/12 through 11/16.

1915 Gregorio Garcia, who came to Harlingen in 1910, publishes *El Precurso*, the first Spanish language newspaper in town.

10/29/18 S. A. Pipes is publishing the *Harlingen Star*.

1/7/20 V. P DuBose and T. C. Claypool purchase the *Harlingen Star* from T. G. Locke.

7/27/21 Dubose sells *Harlingen Star* to F. M. Allen of Austin. On 11/2/21 G. K. Shearer is named to be its editor. The paper soon upgrades to a linotype machine that provides fresh type for each issue and a uniform style.

Sometime after the above date, George Stout, a contractor who came with his wife to Harlingen in 1921, is to buy and own the Star until July 1925. Stout, a Presbyterian was to marry Anna M. born in Indianapolis on 4/12/61. They married 9/19/91 and she is to die on 11/20/25. The paper is published every Friday by the Harlingen Star Publishing Company. The annual subscription rate is \$2.00.

July 1925 In the third week of this month new owners begin publication of the paper. They are granted a state charter to incorporate. The name of the new firm is the Star Printing Company. The stock is held in the names of R. M. Gillmore, president, W. J. Baldwin, secretary-treasurer, and their wives. They announce that the purchase has been self-financed, that they are experienced in publishing, and that a larger investment is to be made to improve the equipment and increase volume.

12/25 A news item states that the Star is about to install new machinery and office equipment as the current setup is inadequate.

1926 W. J. Baldwin is manager of the *Harlingen Star*, which also takes in commercial printing. The paper, published on Tuesday and Friday, has E. O. Arnold as its editor and George Cowan as advertising manager. Around this same time Cowan and Sons become proprietors of the semi-weekly (Tues. & Fri.) *Harlingen Star*. George Cowan is the advertising manager and E. O. Arnold is editor. The latter is replaced by Otto A. Vinke in late August 1926. Vinke has had experience as editor of the *Fort Worth Record* and with the *San Antonio Express*. His parents live in Rio Hondo.

8/21/28 Howard Barrett and his wife arrive from Abilene. He is the new owner of the Star Publishing Company which he purchased several weeks ago. He has had publishing experience with the *Abilene Reporter* and the *Abilene Daily News*. One new change will be that subscribers of the paper will get home delivery of the paper by newsboys rather than by mail, this to commence 8/24. George W. McDaniel of Abilene comes down also on a temporary basis to iron out circulation problems. On 9/25 the paper's new 28,000 lb. Duplex Press is publicized in a front page picture. It is capable of printing and folding 6,000 copies an hour.

9/28/28 It is announced that the tri-weekly *Harlingen Star* is to become a five day weekly plus Sunday newspaper under its new ownership. This change takes place on 12/1. The very nature of the paper then changes with the insertion of considerable Associated Press (AP) newswire items. National and international news now dominate the lineage. The headlines take on the look of sensational/disaster grabbers. A Sunday supplement and comics are added. Obituaries are seldom run on local people unless they are of some prominence.

6/2/29 The paper commences a joint advertising venture with Harlingen radio station KRGV. In the November Valley Mid-Winter Fair Booklet it advertises The *Harlingen Star* "The Valley's Fastest Growing Newspaper."

1/14/30 The *Harlingen Daily Star* becomes the *Valley Morning Star*. It has a 3,500 paid circulation but in a 30 day campaign will guarantee advertisers an additional 3,500 distribution through give-a-ways.

1/22 Bishop "Bish" Clements is named VMS sports editor. Formerly with the *Brownsville Herald* this ex-baseball player has been in the Valley for 15 years.

2/14 The VMS carries an ad for *El Tiempo* (the Times), a new Spanish language weekly to be published by the Recio Brothers. Miguel A Peral is editor and A.L. Longoria, advertising manager.

6/27 In a CPL survey the *Harlingen Star* reports that it has 48 employees. This likely includes delivery people.

This year the paper is purchased by two entities. One is Marsh and Fentress which is publisher of papers in Austin, Waco, Port Arthur and elsewhere. Co-owner is Harte and Hanks which own papers in San Angelo, Abilene, and Corpus Christi. In 1931 the former entity will obtain 100% ownership.

1931 The *Valley Morning Star's* plant and office are located at 118 North A Street, a site later occupied by Luby's New England Cafeteria. A small photographer's studio stands

between the VMS and Junkin Furniture to the north. The VMS is owned by the March-Fentress Group but in 1933 is sold to McHenry Tichenor, who came to the Valley from Oklahoma. Tichenor, who came to the Valley in 1930, served as an administrator for the VBH and was a member of the Elks and Rotary. It was his purchase of a radio station here from Judge Hofheinz of Houston that sent him on the road to becoming a multi-millionaire. Several years later Hubert Hudson, father of the 1930s state senator from the area, purchases the VMS along with the *Brownsville Herald* and *McAllen Monitor*. Tichenor is said to have paid \$50,000 for the VMS and sold it five years later for \$125,000. Soon after Hudson builds a new newspaper plant at 213 South 2nd Street and installs an efficient rotary press to supersede the flatbed one.

3/1/36 The *Valley Morning Star's* circulation is touted at 3,677 home deliveries, 1,274 motor routes, 1,370 via Valley mail (142 out of the area), and 190 hotel sales for a total 6,653 paid circulation.

1937 Ownership of the *Valley Morning Star* shifts to H. R. Hudson who also obtains the (McAllen) *Evening Monitor* and the *Brownsville Herald*.

1942 (spring) Leo E. Owens who owns papers in Minnesota and California becomes proprietor of the three city papers.

1942/43 In addition to the *Valley Morning Star* with its 10,000 circulation, Harlingen is the publishing site of *Texas Farming and Citriculture Magazine*. This 10,000 circulation publication is devoted to the development of agriculture in South Texas and was established in 1924.

1944/45 The *Valley Morning Star* circulation is 10,000.

1946 As the year begins the *Valley Morning Star* has as its president and publisher Leo E. Owens. Robert L. Owens is assistant publisher and general manager, Harry W. Foehner, executive editor, W. H. Mayes, news editor, and Jack Cronenwett, national advertising manager. E. O. Miley is the oldest VMS employee in terms of service, having been on board since 1929. Issues sell for 25 cents per week or \$10 per year for local mail.

1948 The Valley Publishing company is still owned by Leo E. Owens who acts as its publisher with his son Robert L. Owens as associate publisher. Its plant is at 213 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

1951 This year is the first for the weekly *Harlingen Press*. With Sam W. Burns as its publisher it is still going strong in 1970. Burns operated the Quality Press at 114 N 4<sup>th</sup> Street. It advertised offset lithography printing.

10/1/51 Raymond Cyrus Hoiles and his Freedom Newspapers, Inc. purchase the *Valley Morning Star*, the *Brownsville Herald*, and the *McAllen Monitor* for \$2 million. The VMS has 70 employees, \$270,000 payroll, 140 carriers, and 18,000 square feet in its new plant. It was this year that Hoiles founded Freedom Communications long after his 1935 purchase of the Santa Ana Register in Orange County, CA. In 1999 the newspaper group

was to acquire the *Mid-Valley Town Crier* (Weslaco). By 2003 the Freedom group was the country's 11th largest newspaper company. It owned 28 dailies, 37 weeklies, and 8 television stations, all having an estimated value of \$1.3 to 2 billion. This is when Freedom Communications, Inc. solicited bids for the sale or merger of the family-owned company. CEO Alan Bell noted that the board of directors authorized investment banker Morgan Stanley to seek offers. This would establish a market value for the company. This was done and allowed some family members to be bought out without sacrificing the company.

8/26/55 Johnny Martin who came to the Valley in 1926 and worked for the *Valley Morning Star* for over 12 years is to die at age 51. Under 5' in stature, this colorful news photographer had a sixth sense for smelling out news stories. He leaves his wife Louise and a daughter here.

4/12/59 T. N. Gaines succeeds the ailing Frank Ragsdale as editor of the *Valley Morning Star*. Gaines has been with the Freedom Newspapers for 17 years and at the *McAllen Evening Monitor* the last eight.

5/10/59 General manager Ralph Julliard starts new plant and presses of the *Valley Morning Star* on South 77 Sunshine Strip near the bridge. The plant features a high capacity 9-unit Unitubular Press.

10/31/61 The *Valley Morning Star* commences its annual editions of *Saludos Amigos*.

10/30/70 Raymond Cyrus Hoiles, Newspaper publisher and founder of the Freedom Press dies. Born in Alliance, Ohio on 1/24, 1878, he began his newspaper career with his brother Frank who published the *Alliance Review*. At the time of his death the chain published twenty newspapers with a circulation of 500,000 in eight states.

5/13/74 A modern press system replaces the hot-lead type printing used by newspapers since the 1880s.

1/4/81 V. Lyle Debolt, publisher of the VMS, announces a change in the paper's front page format.

5/21/82 Nellie Wobschall of the paper is recognized by the Junior Service League of Harlingen for her many years of service to the community via her editing of the *Viewpoint* column.

8/22/82 The VMS initiates its satellite antenna to receive direct AP service communications via space.

1/3/99 Minnie Carpenter Gilbert celebrates her 99th birthday. As a nine year old she came with her parents from Oklahoma to Runn, south of Donna. After the flooding of 1909 the family moved to San Benito in 1910. She attended UT in the 1920s. Minnie then began her newspaper career working for the *San Benito News*, *Brownsville Herald* and

the *Harlingen Star* which became the *Valley Morning Star*. During WWII she was city editor of the latter. She retired in 1971 but devoted herself to preserving Valley history. She authored/edited *Gift of the Rio*, *Roots by the River*, and *Rio Grande Round-up*. She was founder and first president of the Valley By-Liners.

1999 Douglas Hardie becomes publisher of the VMS. In August 2007, at age 60, he will retire after 28 years of newspaper work in the Valley. He had worked for the Freedom chain for nearly 50 years having started as a paperboy for his grandfather's media company. In 2003 he helped put together the package which would allow the family to retain 51% of the company, the 11<sup>th</sup> largest such chain in the U.S. Upon being graduated from the University of Denver he commenced employment in the Freedom chain and worked in numerous locations. Hardie worked as publisher of the *Brownsville Herald* from 1979 to 1998.

10/2/02 The *Valley Morning Star* has a paid circulation of 27,183.

5/11/04 Freedom Communications Inc., parent company of the *Valley Morning Star*, moved the corporation partly out of sole Hoiles family hands thereby resolving a twenty year feud. In a two billion dollar deal 58% of the stock was sold to the Blackwell Group of New York and Rhode Island-based Providence Equity Partners. Family members who wanted out sold the outstanding shares, however the buyout group can only own a maximum of 49.9% of the voting stock, so the family will remain in control. Tim Hoiles, grandson of the founder, Raymond C. Hoiles, sold his shares, estimated at more than \$100 million.

By May 2006 the Freedom Press chain includes the following publications and cities:

*Journal-Courier*, Jacksonville, IL  
*Appeal Democrat*, Maryville, CA  
*Gaston Gazette*, Gastonia, NC  
*Free Press*, Kinston, NC  
*Times-News*, Burlington, NC  
*Shelby Star*, Shelby, NC  
*The Daily News*, Fort Walton Beach, FL  
*Clovis News Journal*, Clovis, NM  
*Sedalia Democrat*, Sedalia, MO  
*Recorder*, Porterville, CA  
*Valley Morning Star*, Harlingen, TX

*The Lima News*, Lima, OH  
*Brownsville Herald*, Brownsville, TX  
*Daily Press*, Victorville, CA  
*The Sun*, Yuma, AZ  
*The Monitor*, McAllen, TX  
*Quay County Star*, Tucumari, NM  
*Panama City Herald*, Panama City, FL  
*Daily Press*, Victorville, CA  
*Portales News Tribune*, Portales, NM  
*Desert Dispatch*, Barstow, CA

6/9/06 The Freedom Communication Inc. acquires the free-distribution weekly *The Coastal Current*. The latter, conceived 14 years ago and owned by Jim and Melissa Goller, concentrates on entertainment and South Padre Island. It will be consolidated with *Island Breeze*, a Freedom publication.

8/15/06 Paul Binz, 51, veteran newspaperman, becomes managing editor of the *Valley Morning Star*. He has been managing editor at *The Monitor* in McAllen since 1993 and

worked there and at the *Brownsville Herald* since 1989. He replaces George Cox who is now general manager for the *Coastal Current* and *Island Breeze*, recently acquired by Freedom Communications. Binz is a Little Rock native who was raised in Houston.

4/12/07 The Texas Historical Foundation recognizes the VMS as tops among all Texas print media when it gives it "The Journalistic Achievement Award of Merit for Excellence in Print Media."

5/07 After 23 years of covering Valley sports, VMS Buddy Green retires. A native of Mount Vernon, NY he came to Texas in the early 1980s to attend Texas A&I University. He joined the VMS in 1984 and in 1999 was named its sports editor. His coverage was well received over the years.

9/1/07 Tyler Patton, 42, becomes the publisher of the VMS. This Midland native earned a degree in financial management from Hardin-Simmons University and in 1990 began employment with the *Abilene Reporter News*. He joined Freedom Communications, the parent of the VMS, when, in 1994, he took employment with the *Odessa American*. In 2004 he became general manager of the *Valley Morning Star*.

10/1/07 The circulation of the newspaper reaches 23, 919 average over the last 12 months.

9/24/08 The VMS average paid circulation for the last twelve months is 21,857.

1/3/09 The VMS prints its last newspaper on its Harlingen facility press. Future editions will be printed at the *McAllen Monitor's* plant. Quality will be improved and savings accrue to the Freedom Press by not having to replace the existing 35 year-old presses.

7/17/09 The *Valley Morning Star* offers its readers expanded coverage via electronic online access. Seven-day subscribers receive the service free of additional charges.

9/09 Freedom Communications, the parent company of the VMS, reaches an agreement with its lenders to restructure its debts. Publisher Tyler Patton reassures community of its commitment "to be an important and informative voice."

