

The  News

SALT LAKE CITY

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*Nostrums in
the Newsroom*

Raised Sights and Raised
Expectations at the
Deseret News

By Paul Swenson

Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Six was *not* a dull year for the 127-year-old *Deseret News*. Melvin Dummar, a Box Elder County service station operator, was named, along with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as a major beneficiary in a purported Howard Hughes will. Idaho's Teton Dam burst, leaving hundreds homeless in the path of the flood. Rep. Allan Howe was arrested and convicted of soliciting sex in Salt Lake City. Theodore Bundy, a University of Utah law student and former aide to the Governor of Washington, was found guilty of attempted kidnapping. In addition, the newspaper's "Pinpoint" investigative team capped its second year of existence with a Sigma Delta Chi award for the year's best piece of investigative print journalism in Utah, a documented indictment of misspent Salt Lake County funds.

And then there was Gary Gilmore.

Before his execution, Jan. 17, 1977, Gilmore and the press were locked in a painful embrace that neither party could—or would—quit. The manipulative Gilmore engineered the newsflow on front pages worldwide with a degree of control he had never been able to apply to his own life. It was an irresistible news story: a brutal killer who wanted to die, and in the process challenged the hypocrisy behind a death sentence that seemed tortuously slow to culminate. Never mind that Gilmore was the first person likely to be executed in the United States in nine years and that the future of capital punishment in America perhaps hung in the balance. Even without these elements, the fast-unfolding story was so bizarre and the human element so vividly reflected in the killer, his lover, his victims and their families, that the media found it almost impossible to establish a contemplative distance.

"An old-fashioned scoop" is how Associate City Editor Don Woodward described the *Deseret News'* clear superiority over the *Salt Lake Tribune* in Gilmore coverage. *Deseret News* reporter Dale Van Atta had early sensed the national significance of the case, and although denied opportunity to interview Gilmore, composed a Page One "think" piece that probed the killer's psyche and became the keystone of continuing *Deseret News* coverage.¹

Six days later in mid-November, the *News* published a story by Maxine Martz under the headline, "What about the victims of two brutal murders?" But it was

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virtually lost in the backwash of another front page story in the same edition: excerpts of Gilmore's love letters to fiancée Nicole Barrett and an interview with Barrett by reporter Tamara Smith. An ambitious reporter, recently graduated from Brigham Young University, Smith had established a friendship with Barrett while covering an early Gilmore hearing in Provo. In addition to the letters (which tended toward treacle if you read between the macho lines), Smith succeeded in eliciting from Barrett the disturbing line: "He (Gilmore) killed them so he wouldn't kill me."

Although the placement of the victims story on the same page as the Barrett interview and love letter revelations may have backfired, it was a stab at "fairness". *News* Editor and General Manager Bill Smart explains: "When we first got the material and it was proposed we write about the letters, I said, well, all right, providing the same day and same page we use a thorough story on the victims, and balance is the watchword."

Roy Gibson, a professor of journalism at the University of Utah who doubles as media critic for KUTV (Channel 2) *News*, took the paper to task on unusual grounds—that the stories were out of character for the *Deseret News*. He implied that although acceptable elsewhere, such news stories were a shock to readers of Salt Lake City's evening paper. "That just isn't so," says Woodward. "Anyone who has been following the paper for the past 4–5 years knows that we have been doing probing stories on hard news issues for quite a while."

Some readers apparently hadn't noticed, or had regarded the Gilmore case differently. The *News* received a large volume of letters and numerous phone calls² complaining that the case was blown out of proportion, a charge *News* editors are sensitive to. Woodward says that staff meetings stressed the need to avoid glamorizing Gilmore and Barrett: "We didn't want to make these people more than they really were."

In justifying the sheer volume of Gilmore stories, *Deseret News* Editor and General Manager William B. Smart cites two factors and attempts to relate them: "It's obvious that the public interest was very, very great and it was a major factor (in the coverage). Then there is the whole question of capital punishment, the suicide pact³ and all of that. Capital punishment is a very important issue in our society, and it's the main thing that has caused so much interest in the case." Unfortunately, like the morning *Tribune*, the *Deseret News* hesitated on the one hand to treat the capital punishment issue in any depth, and on the other to concede the numbing complexities that the Gilmore case raised.

It was left to syndicated (national) columnists in both papers to examine the multiple paradoxes: a condemned killer being kept alive in order to be executed by the state;⁴ a criminal justice system increasingly incapable of screening out potential killers from inmates eligible for parole; and the atmosphere of marketable sensation around the Gilmore case which focused attention everywhere but where it belonged—on capital crimes and capital punishment. To their credit, both the *Deseret News* and *Salt Lake Tribune* did raise one crucial question early. In similar editorials, the papers supported automatic judicial review of capital punishment cases, a procedure that the Utah State Legislature enacted into law in its 1977 session.⁵

What the *News* did do with the Gilmore case (after publishing the love letters and a confessional piece by reporter Smith about how she obtained them from

Barrett), was to turn the materials over to psychologist Victor Cline for a "psychodiagnosis". Editor Smart says the move was intended to "put the whole matter into perspective and give a more complete picture of what kind of man Gary Gilmore was". The *News* had exclusive possession of Gilmore's writings, letters, "poetry" and drawings (over 800 pages worth), and refused to sell the rights to domestic and foreign news organizations that came calling. Smart notes that the portfolio contained highly sensational, exploitable material—including extensive pornographic passages—and that rather than see it mis-handled, the paper opened it only for Cline's eyes as a basis for his "psychological profile". While Cline probed Gilmore's past with critical perspicacity, his conclusions were often stated as facts. He took to chattily referring to Gilmore and Barrett as "Gary and Nicole," thereby contributing to the "folk hero" myth he himself deplored in his final article.

In microcosm, the Gilmore case represents both the expanded ambitions of the *Deseret News* as a serious metropolitan newspaper and the self-imposed limitations that continue to hamper the realization of those ambitions.

The fact that the paper is wholly owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not circumscribe inferior journalistic standards, Editor Smart believes. "The framework of interests of the owners are not fundamentally different from those of publishers of the best daily newspapers elsewhere," he maintains. Nor are there inherent conflicts between religious and journalistic ethics as practiced in the LDS Church and at the *Deseret News* respectively. "Philosophically, there is no problem. We're fallible, and therefore human beings get in the road."

But for Mormons who recognize the importance of truth and knowledge, and who believe that the Glory of God is intelligence, newspapering should be a particularly meaningful profession, Smart observes. "When William W. Phelps was given the mission of obtaining printing equipment for the Saints at Winter Quarters, he carried a letter of introduction from Brigham Young and Willard Richards. It was an admonition to obedience to the principle of intelligence, and I've never seen a better statement of the ideals of good newspapering."⁶ Smart says.

It is difficult to instill high journalistic ideals in young newsmen and women once they've had a taste of how things ought to be, and their expectations are raised, because their impatience with gradual change is also increased. The significant changes at the *Deseret News* in the past three years (and there have been several) have, by way of contrast, helped to identify the paper's weaknesses.

When columnist Rod Decker took a year's leave of absence from the *News* in September 1976 to accept a Nieman fellowship at Harvard University, the loss to the editorial page of the newspaper was immediately felt. Decker, a superconfident, breezily candid University of Utah graduate, came to the *News* without a solid journalistic background. Decker went so far as to tell journalism classes and interviewers that he got his job because he knew Editor William Smart. Yet it became readily apparent that he *held* his job solely on merit. But Decker could write, and while learning reporting techniques, revealed an analytical facility that prompted Smart to install him on the editorial page in October 1974, as a twice-weekly critic at large.

Ranging far afield, from topics as diverse as cost overruns at the Bicentennial Arts Center, to the habit of Utah trucking firms in forcing their drivers to operate overweight and unsafe vehicles, to local television news criticism. Decker was advantageous to the paper in that he brought a critical bite to local issues conspicuously absent in either Salt Lake paper heretofore. His freedom to tread on important toes freshened up the musty (and somewhat undeserved) image of the *Deseret News* as a Church house organ that editorializes only along readily predictable, safely doctrinaire lines.

The *Deseret News* continues to routinely send all editorials to LDS Church headquarters at 50 E. North Temple before publication, where they are usually seen by Elder Gordon B. Hinkley, member of the Council of the Twelve, and president of the Deseret News Publishing Company, and by President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency. "Very seldom," according to *News* editorial writers, are changes suggested, in part or in whole.

Before Decker's column, the editorial department had been changed with ivory tower isolationism and with Afghanistanism (the writing of strong, confident editorial solutions to problems half a world away, while hewing a safely vague line on local issues). These charges had some basis in fact. Although the *News* runs a slightly higher percentage of editorials with a local focus than the morning *Tribune*, the language still has a loftiness that hurts readability—a loftiness that reflects a separation from the events writers are expected to comment on. The Gilmore case begged for in-depth reportorial-analytical treatment. *News'* coverage—ambitious as it was—was ultimately undercut by an inability to get beneath surface sentimentality and sensation. (Cline, the clean-up hitter in the "significance" batting order, struck out partially because he wasn't encouraged to examine the psychology of capital crimes and capital punishment, and partially because of his writing style, which appeared to be an attempt to translate sophisticated concepts into journalese.)

With Decker on leave, his column suspended, there is no one other than editorial cartoonist Calvin Grondahl in the editorial department to ask unpopular questions in print. Those *Deseret News* editorials that do take strong positions on events affecting Utahns' lives sometimes suffer from an overeagerness to embrace ill-considered proposals that fall within the paper's natural circle of interest. A longtime crusader against pornography, the *News* most recently rose to bad bait when two Utah State Senators sponsored a bill (SB 190) that would have established a review board to examine every film screened commercially in the state.

In a glowing lead editorial (Feb. 2, 1977), the *News* praised the measure as an enlightened step, and reported that the Maryland law it was patterned after was backed by a Maryland theater owners association. Next day, the *News* was forced to retract the Maryland theater owners report as untrue (the editorial writer had neglected to check a "friendly" attorney's word), and within a month the paper was ballyhooing an entirely new SB 190. The original bill had been thrown out as unworkable and potentially devastating to quality films and legitimate theaters with small profit margins.⁷

While Decker's absence was presumably only temporary, he had been missed precisely because of heightened expectations of how the editorial page could and should perform. Although there were 2–3 staffers whose talents would

likely have permitted the *News* to keep the critic-at-large format alive until Decker returned, manpower was regarded as too scarce to free someone for the job.

Some of the slack was being taken up on other fronts, however. Although Smart had allowed Decker unusual independence to establish a base for critical analysis, he had dragged his feet on a long-term commitment to establish a team of reporters to conduct the tedious research necessary for depth investigative work. It was City Editor Lou Bate who finally chose three investigative reporting staffers in the spring of 1975: Bob Mullins, a veteran with good sources and contacts who had won a Pulitzer Prize for the paper in the Dead Horse Point murder case in 1961; Brent Harker, a newly-hired Utah State University graduate, and Dale Van Atta, an ambitious young Brigham Young University alumnus, who at the time was digging into a story on "judge shopping" by deputy sheriffs in Salt Lake County.

Van Atta had proven that deputies were illegally favoring two justices of the peace in routing alleged traffic offenders and others to their courts, and the newly christened "Pinpoint" team was assigned to find out why. Concentrating on one JP, Van Atta and Harker spent three weeks in the county auditor's office, checking every case the justice handled in 1974. "At one point," says Van Atta, "it got so boring we had a Life Saver conservation contest to see who could keep one in his mouth the longest. Harker won with a record of five minutes before there was nothing left."

The reporters learned that some JPs were being paid twice for the same case and were failing to report convictions to the State as required by law. They turned up violations of the civil rights of individuals appearing before JPs, including fines levied and collected by wives and secretaries, and a general lack of administrative control over JP courts.

Publication of the stories had both immediate and long-range impact. Illegal judge-shopping quickly dwindled; justices of the peace were placed on fixed salaries instead of being paid per case; two JPs were charged with malfeasance in office; administrative procedures were changed, and a plan was approved for consolidation of JP courts.

The *News* received a certificate of merit from the American Bar Association for the "judge shopping" stories. The series was also nominated for a Pulitzer Prize (it didn't win). The editors were confident, however, that the story would earn the General Excellence prize for print media in the first annual awards program of the Utah Society for Professional Journalists (Sigma Delta Chi). Instead, *Deseret News* and *Salt Lake Tribune* editors watched uncomfortably as the award went to David Briscoe and Bill Beecham of the Associated Press for a series of stories on the finances of the LDS Church. (Neither paper had published the winning stories).⁸ Later in 1975 and throughout 1976, the investigative team distinguished itself further. Among issues probed were zoning laws and their violation in three Utah counties; the ambiguities of insurance coverage;⁹ the loss of thousands of dollars of state funds at bankruptcy proceedings; low morale in the Salt Lake City Police Department; Utah's lag in freeway construction, and the history of County Auditor Gerald Hansen's financial woes.

While some other targets were "safe" investigative subjects for a Church-owned newspaper (violations of liquor laws by private clubs and the influence of the mafia in local pornography), the *News* also dealt with sensitive material

that some critics might have expected the paper to ignore. Van Atta researched and wrote a three-part series on Howard Hughes and his cadre of mostly Mormon aides. Without particular emphasis or development, Van Atta quoted Robert C. Taylor, former staff assistant for Hughes and now chairman of Brigham Young University's Travel Study Department, as saying that when he hired aides, Hughes was "looking for the type of person who could take orders."

The Pinpoint team's most frustrating investigation was a probe of the dealings of brothers Snellen M. and Lyle E. Johnson, who had become the last bright hope for home-pro-basketball by proposing to buy the Utah Stars. In a June 1976 story, Brent Harker reported that the brothers, who had made a \$650,000 down payment on the Stars and had declared themselves free of financial obligations, had been ordered to prove in court that they had paid debts involved in an illegal sale of securities. Next day, a Van Atta story disclosed that Snellen Johnson was also charged in US District Court with conspiracy and with violation of the Federal Securities Act. The investigative team, at this point, had uncovered a 10-year financial history of bad debts, suits and a thoroughly decimated credit rating for the Johnsons. The evidence seemed a clear indication that the Johnsons were not the community heroes they had been assumed to be. And the *Deseret News* was the only paper reporting it.

When the investigative team prepared to spill the beans, however, an LDS Church General Authority called the paper to vouch for the Johnsons, the Johnsons and their lawyers asked for and received a meeting with the investigative team and Editor Smart. A second meeting followed with Smart alone representing the newspaper in a two-hour session with the brothers and their attorneys. At this point, the *News* lost confidence in the series and backed off from further disclosures. Brent Harker asked for and received permission to talk to Elder Gordon B. Hinckley about the paper's sudden coolness on the story, but the option was never exercised. With admirable hindsight, the paper did try to summarize the affair in late November and early December. The Dec. 4 piece noted that the Johnsons had written \$160,000 in bad checks during their short, unhappy hold on the Stars (who had, in the meantime, folded).¹⁰

The aborted investigation cast a brief pall over the team. But in May, 1976, when Harker quit to accept another job in his hometown of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, the survivors regrouped with the addition of Joe Costanzo, who had turned out a number of probing stories on his city hall beat. It was then that the team went on to win the Sigma Delta Chi award for the 1976's best investigative journalism in the State's print media.

The commitment to investigative reporting, should it remain constant, is potentially the most exciting editorial development at the *Deseret News* in the past several decades. Beyond the value of the stories themselves, the pride generated by a serious attempt to get beneath the crush of press releases and public meetings that are often the preoccupation of daily journalism, can't help but affect other staff members. Especially responsive to tough reporting are young, idealistic staffers, whose involvement with newspapering grows at least as much out of dedication to the unique values of the profession as to financial and security considerations. While the *News* staff has had problems with continuing turnover of some of its best people, the staff is not deficient in talent.

The way the paper fulfills raised expectations may determine whether or not its best recruits and old hands can be retained, and, in some cases, channeled to management positions.¹¹

The Johnson Brothers story and the *News* handling of it raises obvious questions about how seriously the paper intends to pursue the depth reporting staffers are capable of. *Deseret News* editors can correctly point out that the Church-owned paper likely has fewer "sacred cows" (issues considered too close to the interests of advertisers or of the paper's owners) than many dailies in comparable markets. The *News* almost certainly handles more sensitive Utah issues more courageously than the morning *Tribune*, which maddeningly retains the image of "independence," and with a larger audience. But if the *News* wishes to be a really top-flight daily with a reputation extending to Mormons and non-Mormons inside and outside the state—a goal that seems within reach—the paper's owners must choose between journalistic ethics and an unruffled public relations image. As the *News* struggles to establish credibility for solid newspapering, memories of two of the bleakest incidents in the paper's recent editorial history remain vivid in the news room. The paper's obvious waffling on Richard Nixon's final days came after a relatively tough Watergate editorial was withdrawn after perusal by Church authorities. In "Probing the Power Structure (The Powers That Be)," by Elaine Jarvik and George Buck, *Utah Holiday Magazine*, May 24, 1976, p. 15, appeared this report: "During the next-to-last days of Watergate, the *News* drank the bitter dregs of the Nixon Administration's culpability and corruption with scarcely a complaint. Friends say Smart (William B.) festered under advice of LDS Church President Harold B. Lee to give Nixon the ultimate benefit of a doubt before writing off his administration. As a result, the *Deseret News* was one of the last major dailies in the nation to take a strong editorial stand on Watergate." Veteran staffers won't forget the black day (March 3, 1971) that the Coalville Tabernacle's destruction was withheld from *Deseret News* readers. On Tuesday, March 2, 1971, the *Deseret News* reported a "cooling off" period for the controversy over the impending destruction of the Coalville Tabernacle, quoting stake officials that they would "not move immediately to tear down the tabernacle." Before daylight next day, bulldozers began the demolition. The day's *Deseret News* editions carried no story on the destruction, only a statement from the First Presidency of the LDS Church. In the statement's 100th typeset line the first hint of what had gone on appeared: "Authority was given the Church Building Committee to proceed with the (demolition) work." On March 4, the *News* ran a short story under a one-column headline, "Tabernacle Demolition is Explained." The move was later considered by General Authorities to be a huge public relations error and a "learning experience," according to sources.

Down a long corridor from the *Deseret News* city room in the stone-silent office of new *Church News* Editor Del Van Orden, those concerns seem part of another world. "The main purpose of the *Church News* is to build testimonies and uplift its readers," Van Orden states without equivocation. "The section should be easy to read, motivational, instructional and inspiring. We've got our layout pretty much the way we want it now—we don't have to labor with it. A good page with lots of pictures is worth its weight in impact."

Although Van Orden is new to the top job, he spent eight years understudy-

ing Editor J. M. Heslop, who was elevated to Managing Editor of the daily. Under Heslop, the weekly *Church News*, a Saturday Section of the daily, was transformed from a grey, featureless compendium of spiritual statistics to a handsome showcase for Heslop's striking photography (he was previously chief *Deseret News* photographer) with short, personal conversion stories and Church progress reports from all over the world.

What the *Church News* did best under Heslop was to build circulation—pushing the worldwide figures over 200,000 (more than 133,000 higher than the daily's volume of readers, which hovers above the 70,000 mark). The huge advantage that the weekly maintains over the daily is entirely composed of by-mail circulation, and Van Orden has the relaxed air of a beneficiary who knows he has inherited a winner. "If you look at the perpendicular climb on our circulation chart over the past few years, you know how the *Church News* is perceived and you know we must be doing something right," he says.

In working closely with LDS General Authorities, Heslop was always courteous but straight-forwardly firm in stressing his own ideas of how the *Church News* should be run. He briefly experimented with a couple of fascinating "hard news" cover stories in the early 1970's, including a valuable piece on how LDS families and Church leaders were dealing with drug abuse among young Mormons. The experiment was short-lived and he quickly returned to the formula he had developed and found effective.

Van Orden is not likely to change anything in the next several years. Asked to enumerate what improvements he would like to see he said none occurred to him. He said the same standards and techniques used in business to determine profit and loss can be applied to measuring the spiritual profit of members of the Church in the *Church News*. In addition to his editorial duties, Van Orden is pushing an anti-smoking campaign in the weekly, distributing thousands of free bumper stickers that proclaim "Non-Smokers Like Clean Air" and "Let's Don't Smoke," an ungrammatical acronym for LDS.

What few critical letters the *Church News* receives are not published, but are answered personally by Van Orden if the criticism is "constructive." Complaints are scarce, the editor said, about the paper's editorial page, where most editorials continue to be written by Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve. A series of historical sketches written for the page by members of the LDS Church Historical Department has been dropped for staff-written "Vignettes of Faith." Van Orden was unwilling to discuss the narrowly selective nature of the infrequent "New Books for LDS Readers" feature, which has recently rejected for review major LDS historical works.¹²

Heslop's promotion to Managing Editor is one of two recent management changes at the *News*, which signals a shift to younger, more vigorous leadership. There is little doubt that one reason for Heslop's appointment is the anticipation that the energy he brought to increasing *Church News* circulation can somehow be applied to the daily's circulation slide.¹³ As an evening newspaper, the *Deseret News* can't hope to overtake the morning *Tribune*, whose circulation advantages are built in. But a fairly constant circulation dropoff cannot be satisfied, although Smart is not confident that immediate headway can be made under the present system in which the Newspaper Agency Corporation handles circulation for both the *Deseret News* and the *Tribune*.

Heslop also is expected to be valuable as a hard-headed negotiator for the editorial side in the traditional adversary relationship with the NAC-run "backshop" where the paper is pasted up and printed, and as a sensitive link with Church authorities. Neither of Heslop's immediate predecessors in the glassed-in Managing Editor's office were active Mormons,¹⁴ and the result was cautious lack of leadership. The nostrum in the newsroom during a period that extended over two decades was never to rock the boat. Instead, attempts were made to read the minds of General Authorities and somehow guess how to avoid offending any of them. The need for that kind of second guessing decreased markedly with the appointment of Elder Gordon B. Hinckley as president of the Deseret News Publishing Company. Smart, however, kept the paper's staff at tiptoe stance during a long period in 1972. With the late publisher E. Earl Hawkes seemingly ill and incapacitated, Smart was appointed "Acting Editor" but spent the time until Hawke's death in limbo wary of exerting the strong leadership that was needed. Morale was low enough at the paper to move Elder Gordon B. Hinckley to employ an unusual tactic when he announced Smart's appointment as Editor and General Manager in December, 1972. In a meeting held at the Utah Power and Light Co. auditorium, Hinckley asked Mormon and non-Mormon staffers alike for a "sustaining vote" for Smart by a "show of hands". In the stunned silence, almost every hand went up.

The conventional wisdom in the newsroom for months before the Managing Editor's chair was filled was that Associate City Editor Don Woodward would get the job. Woodward, a quiet, unassuming pragmatist, is one of the few *News* staffers elevated to editor rank in recent years who was also an accomplished writer. As the paper's Business Editor in the early seventies, his sprightly business pieces encroached on traditional *Tribune* turf. And when he moved to City Desk four years ago, Woodward brought a concern for style and readability that was communicated to reporters he helped train.

After Heslop was appointed Managing Editor, Woodward was named as editor of a newly-conceived section of the newspaper called "Today" and was charted third in the chain of command behind Smart and Heslop. The section, which appeared shortly before Christmas, 1976, was to be a consolidation of feature, women's and entertainment material with an expanded emphasis on creative writing and critical reviewing. The paper's Saturday "Weekend" section would extend the weekday format. "We would like to use essays and how-to pieces by a core of freelance writers," Woodward said before the section was launched. "Good freelancers can raise the quality of writing generally, and our major emphasis will be to promote a high standard of writing."

The plans sounded exciting but the product was less so in its opening weeks. While a full page was cleared of ads to provide a showcase cover for the section, the writing for the cover features appeared to meet Woodward's pre-announced standards less than 50 percent of the time, and he found it necessary to plug in syndicated material on occasion. "My View," a column patterned loosely after *Newsweek* Magazine's "My Turn," was opened to staff members and the public as well, with the intention of offering a forum for provocative personal comment. Early on, the column attracted dull polemics seemingly designed to air personal biases. Inside, the section defied focus, and came close to becoming a mere catch-all.

Critical reviews were not immediately forthcoming. Harold Lundstrom,

longtime music editor and critic at the *News*, is expected to retire soon and the *News* has an exciting successor in the wings: Dorothy Stowe, an accomplished writer with an extensive musical background. Hired part-time, Mrs. Stowe has been kept busy with secretarial work. Although Woodward had announced he would recruit other talented critics for the section, that priority has been postponed.

Postponed priorities have, until recently, been a way of life at the *Deseret News*. The most imposing evidence of the *News*' commitment to the "Today" concept in the early going has been architectural rather than journalistic. "Today" staffers (which in addition to Woodward and Assistant Editor Carma Wadley, include the "Living" staff Woodward inherited from the women's section) are ensconced in new quarters carved out of the paper's third-floor office space overlooking Regent Street. To make way, the paper's sports staff was uprooted and transplanted to the periphery of the paper's crowded newsroom. Sports Editor Hack Miller retains more independence than any staffer at the *Deseret News*. Miller, who considers the world his beat (he was the paper's man in Moscow during trips to Russia), is master of the alliterative mixed metaphor and his copy is never edited. (Other sports staffers refuse to change even spelling errors). Recently Miller dropped this non-sequitur into a column boosting football and blasting TV ("the tripe they tape for the tube.") "Pigskin beats porno. I'll take Roger Stauback against Fran Tarkenton anytime over the shoot-'em-ups we get on most channels. Off-tackle smashes are far more sporting than murders."

Other physical changes are underway, with the newspaper's First South entrance set to receive a new facade. Since Smart hired a consulting firm (Frank Magid Associates) to remake the paper's layout in 1973, identifiable change has often been concerned with cosmetics. Will this emphasis continue to overshadow attention to content? Smart is particularly intense in refuting this contention. "The changes have been a great deal more than cosmetic. We get much more news in the paper than we used to. Our concentration now is on professional performance. I've had a lot of quality people dropped in my lap that I don't take credit for, but we are emphasizing the substantial upgrading of salaries so that we can be competitive in our hiring. We are being much tougher in hiring people on their ability to write than we used to. We're committed to investigative reporting and to solid basic reporting—that's part of our responsibility in this community. The *Deseret News* has growth potential, and those who read the paper in the next few years are going to see greatly intensified coverage handled in a responsible way.

As Smart tells it, the paper has raised its sights, as well as staff and reader expectations. How well those expectations are fulfilled could be the key to progress in the paper's second century.

NOTES

¹Page A-1, *Deseret News*, Nov. 10, 1976. The story's weakness, a tendency to quote mawkish material without comment (Gilmore and lover Nicole Barrett wanted to buy an island off the coast of Washington and live "happily ever after") was repeated in many of the paper's Gilmore stories.

²The *News* received "a couple of dozen letters and/or phone calls" referring to Gilmore coverage through December, 1976, with responses running 3 or 4 to 1 against the volume of stories published, according to Editor Smart.

³*Deseret News* editorial cartoonist Calvin Grondahl captured the grotesque ironies of the case in a single unforgettable image: a firing squad at the foot of Gilmore's hospital bed, and a nurse at the head, saying, "Wake up, Mr. Gilmore, it's time for your shot." The cartoon was rejected by the *Deseret News*, but a rough Grondahl sketch was published in *Utah Holiday Magazine*, Dec. 31, 1976.

⁴*New West Magazine* printed a fascinating examination of the phenomenon in an article entitled, "The Merchandising of Gary Gilmore," by Barry Farrell, Dec. 20, 1976.

⁵But not without enormous confusion. Although automatic judicial review was endorsed by both Salt Lake newspapers, by the conservative Utah Attorney General and the Utah State Bar Association, the Utah House of Representatives first voted almost 2-1 to defeat the enabling bill. Two days later, indicating they hadn't understood the proposal, they reversed themselves by a wide margin.

⁶"This people cannot live without intelligence, for it is through obedience to that principle they are to receive their exaltation; and if the intelligence cannot be had, justice has no claim on obedience, and their exaltation must be decreased. This principle is sufficient to show you that importance of using all diligence in helping Elder Phelps to bring us the materials whereby we can furnish our children with books and the Saints with new things to feast the soul." Quoted in *Voice in the West*, by Wendell J. Ashton, pg. 6.

⁷The original bill would have required every film shown commercially in the State to first be reviewed and licensed at a cost of \$35-\$40 per picture. Classic films, foreign films, children's films, art films and film festivals sponsored by such groups as the Utah Cinema Council, would have been inadvertently wiped out because of the economic factor. The *News* neglected to examine the local consequences; nor did it raise or examine the larger civil liberties issue of the effects of a review board patterned on the Maryland Board of Censors.

⁸An updated, revised version of the series was later published in *Utah Holiday Magazine*. ("Mormon Money And How It's Made," *UH*, March 22, 1976).

⁹The *News* insurance series, which rated coverage of Utah companies, won second place in the University of Missouri-Columbia 12th annual Business Journalism competition for newspapers under 100,000 circulation.

¹⁰Having billed themselves as professional salesmen, the Johnsons had announced plans to sell 9,000 season tickets by Sept. 30, 1975, using a task force of 100 returned Mormon missionaries. By Aug. 22 the sales staff had dwindled to three, and the "hard sell" had reduced season ticket holders from 4,000 to less than 2,000, the Pinpoint team reported.

¹¹Among a host of important acquisitions and retainees of the past decade are columnist Rod Decker; editorial cartoonist Calvin Grondahl; Associate City Editor De Ann Evans; environmental writer Joe Bauman; energy and business writer Nick Snow; social problems writer Douglas Palmer; sports writer Lee Benson; reporters Dale Van Atta, Joe Costanzo, Suzanne Dean, Hal Spencer, Karen Gilmour, Carma Wadley and Perrin Love; photographer David Conley and others.

¹²Since the beginning of 1976, the *Church News* has been printed on a new \$750,000 offset press now installed at Newspaper Agency Corporation's Regency Street press room where the *Deseret News* and *Tribune* are both published. The resulting sharper color and black and white photographs may be a preview of production changes for the entire daily in the near future. "We will likely publish entirely by offset before long," predicts Editor Smart. "We are looking at a conversion process that would allow us to use offset plates on our old letter presses."

¹³*Deseret News* circulation has diminished more than 16,000 in the past 12 years from its 1960s high of 89,808 in 1964.

¹⁴The approximately 50-50 split of Mormons and inactive or non-Mormons on the *Deseret News* staff work together amicably. "We don't worry much about percentages," says Editor Bill Smart. "I would be concerned if we had an all-LDS staff. Our top-level people know the philosophy of our owners."