ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: The Decline and Fall of the Baltimore News American

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This study examines the factors that led to the Baltimore News American's failure as a major metropolitan afternoon newspaper and the efforts taken to try to save the newspaper. Factors examined include the number of newspapers in the Baltimore newspaper market, the problems faced by major metropolitan afternoon newspapers in the United States and the shared inability of large newspapers in the Hearst newspaper chain to make money. The changing content of the newspaper under a series of newsroom administrations from 1973 to 1986 was examined and a series of interviews with managers and staffers were used to gain insight into the decline of the newspaper. This study concludes that the closure stemmed from underlying demographic and competitive factors and was exacerbated by the unwillingness of the newspaper's owner to invest in improvements.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BALTIMORE NEWS AMERICAN

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of The University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1989

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To my wife, Christine Girsdansky,
and
to the memory of Berenice Skidelsky

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Chapter 1
Purpose of Study

Robin Harriss's home telephone rang shortly after 11 a.m. on 27 May 1986. The voice at the other end of the telephone line asked Harriss, the Baltimore News American's patriarchial 84-year-old critic-at-large, if he was sitting down.

Yes, Harriss replied. He was sitting down.

"The paper is closing, and you've got to get everything out of here by 1 o'clock today. You'd better get down here fast."[1]

Minutes later, armed with shopping bags, Harriss and his wife, Margery, arrived at the News American building at Lombard and South streets, on the city's Inner Harbor. Uniformed guards were at the door, brightly lit by the lights of television cameras. When Harriss got to the newsroom upstairs, he joined the other editors and reporters, throwing notes, letters, books and clippings into the shopping bags.

After decades of dying, the News American was finally dead.

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This thesis uses historical methodology, including oral history interviews, to analyze the journalistic,

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[1] R.P. Harriss interview, p. 1.

commercial and demographic conditions that led to the closure of the Baltimore News American. The bulk of the study covers the last 10 years of the newspaper, from 1976, when the newspaper lost its circulation lead, until 27 May 1986, when it ceased publication.

The newspaper's demise ended a 213-year tradition of journalism and changed the face of Maryland media by giving the dead paper's rival, the Sunpapers, a daily general-interest print monopoly in the city and a major metropolitan print medium monopoly in the state. The News American's situation reflected three phenomena that had fully manifested themselves by 1986 -- the downfall of major metropolitan afternoon newspapers; the downfall of newspapers that were owned by the Hearst Corporation, the empire founded by press baron William Randolph Hearst in the late 19th Century; and the demographic changes in the Baltimore metropolitan area after the Second World War.

This study examines the newspaper's actions over its last 10 years in the light of these three phenomena -- or variables -- to determine the role that these factors played in the newspaper's demise.

The newspaper claimed -- with a link that is tenuous but arguable -- to be the oldest daily newspaper in the nation and a descendent of the Maryland Journal and

Baltimore Advertiser, founded in 1773 by William Goddard.[2] This newspaper was published during and after the American Revolution by Mary Katharine Goddard, one of America's first women publishers. In 1814, the shop of the paper, then called The Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser, produced the first copies of Francis Scott Key's "Defence of Fort McHenry," known today as the lyrics to the "The Star Spangled Banner."[3] It was the only newspaper based in Baltimore to have correspondents cover the Civil War, and its publishers in the early 1900s included Charles Grasty and Frank Munsey, two important figures in American newspaper publishing. Its newsroom included, at various times, H.L. Mencken, of Sunpaper sagehood fame; Henry Luce and Briton Hadden, who later founded Time magazine; Herbert O'Conor, a future governor of Maryland; and Ronald Martin and Richard Curtis, who later went on to revolutionize newspaper graphics and other forms of news presentation at USA Today.

The News American's ancestors were owned by at least 16 owners, some holding the paper for only a few months

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[2] Jacques Kelly, "The News American," special rotogravure section, Sunday News American, 19 August 1973, p. 4.

[3] Will Englund, "The News, Fiercely Unpretentious, leaves long, proud, spirited legacy," Baltimore Sun, 28 May 1986, p. 6A.

before selling it to another. But in 1923, Hearst bought the afternoon Baltimore News and morning Baltimore American, thrusting his journalism into Baltimore, closing the American in 1928 and vanquishing the Baltimore Post in 1934. The Hearst empire's ownership proved to be the most stable in the News American family's history, enduring for 63 years until the paper folded. From 1934 on, for more than half a century, the battle of Baltimore journalism was waged between two firms: Hearst's and the A.S. Abell Company, which continues to publish The Sun seven mornings a week and The Evening Sun on weekday afternoons. The dynamics of the competition were complex: While the Sunpapers journalistically competed as two separate entities, they competed commercially against the News American as a single force. The News-Post, and later the News American (it was renamed in 1964), sold more papers than either of the Sunpapers in the city from 1928 until 1976, although the combined Sunpapers had more total readers.

The newspapers were profoundly different. The Hearst paper was consistent with the other papers in the chain, stressing sensationalism, pumping police news and self-promotion and not always paying great heed to the precepts of objectivity. The Sunpapers, more conservative in appearance and composition if not in

ideology, played to a better educated audience, with the morning Sun similar in form and content to The New York Times. The Evening Sun's content occupied the middle ground between its morning counterpart and the News American.

The News American situation was steeped in ironies. When the newspaper was bad, at least according to conventional journalistic content standards, its circulation was good. When the product improved, circulation soured. While afternoon papers -- like Washington's Star and Cleveland's Press -- folded in larger or similarly sized two-newspaper metropolitan areas, or joined competitors in operating agreements under the Newspaper Preservation Act, the News American outlasted its contemporaries in similar situations for several years in a three-newspaper city. During the period when the morning Sun boasted some of the best foreign reporting in the United States and the Evening Sun boasted Mencken as its cultural critic, more Baltimoreans read the News American than any other newspaper. While Hearst newspapers in larger markets were folded or sold, the News-Post/ News American was not; its closure in 1986 occurred more than a quarter-century after the bulk of Hearst's empire collapsed. At the end, it was one of only six newspapers

left from the senior Hearst's era, and only one of four from his era not in a joint operating agreement.

The fall of the Hearst newspaper chain was great. In 1923, when the News American was purchased, the Hearst chain included 22 daily newspapers, all in major cities.[4] Despite a peak circulation of more than 3,000,000, the chain was notorious among critics for its lack of quality. It was a prime purveyor of sensationalistic "yellow journalism," a heritage that led Richard Berlin, the head of the corporation, to dismantle the chain's money-losing newspapers in the 1950s and 1960s instead of trying to continue them.[5] The newspapers were rued by critics for such vices as selling news wholesale to advertisers,[6] promoting Hearst as a political candidate,[7] trumpeting yellow journalism, most spectacularly before and during the 1898 Spanish-American War,[8] and engaging in a Chicago circulation war that left 27 news dealers

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[4] W.A. Swanberg, Citizen Hearst, (New York: Scribners, 1961). p.8.

[5] Lindsay Chaney and Michael Cieply, Hearsts: Family and Empire: The Later Years, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981). p. 222.

[6] Oswald Garrison Villard, The Disappearing Daily: Chapters in the American Newspaper Evolution, (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969 reprint of 1944 book), p. 201.

[7] Swanberg, op. cit., pp. 205-273.

[8] Chaney and Cieply, op. cit., p. 36.

dead between 1910 and 1912.[9] Despite all of the problems associated with the chain, and despite the fact that the chain's newspapers performed poorly economically in the mid-twentieth century, the News American survived for years, in large part due to the fact that it made money every year through the late 1970s.[10]

There was certainly nothing unique to Baltimore about the problems of the News American as an afternoon newspaper. Few American cities have been able to maintain more than one daily newspaper and even fewer have been able to maintain newspapers owned by competing business organizations. In 1923, 38.7 percent of the 1,297 cities with daily newspapers had newspapers published by competing firms. The proportion fell to 7.8 percent in 1948, 4.8 percent in 1958, 2.9 percent in 1968. In 1978, the number of cities with newspapers had increased to 1,536, but only 2.3 percent of the cities had newspapers owned by competing companies.[11] Of the 35 cities in 1978 with competing newspaper companies, several have become one-newspaper or one-company cities

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[9] Ibid., pp. 191-193.

[10] Phyllis Orrick, "Black and White...but Read?" Baltimore City Paper, 12 December 1980, p. 13.

[11] James N. Rosse, "The Evolution of One-Newspaper Cities," (paper presented at the Federal Trade Commission Symposium on Media Concentration, Washington, D.C., 14-15 December 1978).

in the last decade.[12]

Across the nation, circulation figures have become stagnant and household penetration figures have declined. Figures for afternoon newspapers and Maryland newspapers are worse than those for the national averages in the last quarter-century. This helped create even more problems for the News American.[13] Between 1962 and 1977, the penetration rate -- the proportion of households to circulation -- of newspapers per 100 households in Maryland dropped from 114 to 78, a drop of 31 percent. In the 48 contiguous states, the overall penetration dropped from 102 per 100 to 76 per 100, a drop of 26 percent. The penetration decline of Maryland afternoon newspapers was more dramatic, from 74 per 100 households in 1962 to 47 per 100 households in 1977, a drop of 36 percent. In the 48 states, the afternoon penetration dropped from 60 per 100 to 43 per 100, a drop of 28 percent.[14] Curiously, research has found circulation remained generally stable, with newspapers holding on to

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12 Among the cities stricken from the competitive rolls since 1978 are St. Louis, Cleveland and Philadelphia, with newspaper companies in Detroit and York, Pa., seeking joint operating agreements at the time of this writing.

13 William A. Tillinghast, "Declining Newspaper Readership: Impact of Region and Urbanization," Journalism Quarterly, 58, (Winter 1981), pp. 14-21.

14 Ibid.

their readers, except in major metropolitan areas, which comprise a small number of markets in the United States, but a much larger proportion of the readership.[15] In the mid-1970s, when the circulation of the News American was passed by that of the Sun and the Evening Sun, this did not mean the Sunpapers were growing. The Sunpapers merely were maintaining their circulation or losing readers more slowly than the News American.[16]

From the advertising side of the revenue ledger, there was more disconcerting news for newspaper publishers in the last quarter-century. With the development of broadcasting and the explosion of direct mail, new advertising competitors emerged. Newspapers as a medium displayed poor growth, with advertising revenues going up only 58 percent in the decade ending in 1970 while the gross national product was up 94 percent.[17] For the News American, this presented another problem: As its proportion of the pie became smaller, the size of the entire pie also shrank.

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[15] Wallace B. Eberhard, "Some Demographic Correlates of Changing Newspaper Circulation," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Education in Journalism, Fort Collins, Colo., 19-22 August 1973).

[16] Orrick, "Black and White...but Read," p. 13.

[17] Gerald L. Grotta, "Prosperous Newspaper Industry May Be Heading for Decline," Journalism Quarterly, 51, (Autumn 1974), p. 499.

Between 1969 and 1978, newspapers across the country began to succumb. Casualties included Chicago Today, the Washington Daily News, the Newark Evening News, the Hartford Times, the Long Island Press and the Chicago Daily News.[18] Then, in the early 1980s, during a period of deep recession in the national economy, a new wave of newspapers collapsed. Cleveland lost the Cleveland Press in 1982.[19] In Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Bulletin folded in 1982 with a circulation of about 400,000, down from a peak of 751,240 in 1947, and losses of $13.4 million in 1980, $21.5 million in 1981 and $3 million in the first month of 1982.[20] St. Louis was left with the second and final closure of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat in 1982 and the opening and closing of the St. Louis News the same year.[21] Washington was left as a single newspaper city after the closure of the Washington Star in 1981,[22] although it

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[18] Richard T. Stout and Joseph Tinkleman, "Death in the Big City, the Quill, October 1981, p. 11.

[19] Alan L. Adler, "Cleveland's Press Prints Final Edition," Philadelphia Inquirer, 18 June 1982, p. D21.

[20] Lucinda Fleeson, Arthur Howe and Marc Schogol, "The Bulletin to Fold Tomorrow," Philadelphia Inquirer, 28 January 1982, p. A1.

[21] "New dailies, suspensions; tabloids," Editor and Publisher International Yearbook 1983, (New York: Editor and Publisher, 1983), p. 304.

[22] Ibid.

regained two newspaper status in 1982, when the Unification Church began publishing the Washington Times. The Minneapolis Star, which circulated 315,000 copies in 1951 but had dropped to 238,000 in 1978, tried a magazine-style approach in 1978 similar to the one tried by the News American that same year. The Minneapolis newspaper ceased publication in 1982, with a circulation of about 170,000.[23] (In some cities, the economy was so poor that neither the morning nor the afternoon paper could make money, leading to the closures of the morning Buffalo Courier-Express in 1982 and the St. Louis Globe Dispatch the same year. Both were morning newspapers in bluecollar cities under out-of-town chain ownership with owners less willing to accept losses than the locally based owners of the afternoon newspapers.)[24]

In several of the cities with two remaining newspapers today, the newspapers are either owned by the same firm (examples: Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Atlanta, Syracuse) or are in joint operating agreements (Seattle, San Francisco, Madison, Cincinnati) which merged business, production and circulation operations but left the editorial departments distinct. Even such joint

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[23] See Susan Kovach Shuman, The Minneapolis Star's Attempt to Survive as an Afternoon Newspaper, M.A. thesis, University of Maryland, 1982.

[24] Stout and Tinkleman, op. cit. p. 12.

agreements are not foolproof, as evidenced by the closure of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat in 1982 and the Miami News at the end of 1988. Even in markets where two newspapers are owned by the same company, there is a trend towards consolidation: The Minneapolis Star, the Boston Evening Globe, the Louisville Times and the Des Moines Tribune have all been merged into their morning sister newspapers. Many newspapers that were published in the afternoon either moved to a morning cycle (such as The Denver Post, the Detroit News and the Los Angeles Herald Examiner) or to dual-cycle publication (such as the New York Post and the Houston Chronicle).

By the early 1980s, it was painfully obvious that any major metropolitan afternoon daily with competitive morning competition would have long odds for its survival. In 1981, afternoon newspapers in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Houston, San Francisco, Dallas and Denver -- as well as Baltimore -- were found to be behind their competitors in a survey of competitive major metropolitan markets. Afternoon papers were ahead in only two cities -- Seattle and Buffalo -- and the losing Seattle morning newspaper was a Hearst property, which survives today under the grace of a joint operating agreement.[25]

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[25] Ibid.

Factors cited for the demise of afternoon newspapers include the decline of the blue-collar worker and housewife, the competition from local and network evening newscasts, and the difficulty of preparing a newspaper late enough in the day to provide a fresh product distinct from the morning newspaper but distributed early enough to be convenient to the customer. These special pressures on afternoon newspapers were in addition to problems confronting all major metropolitan newspapers in the post-Second World War period -- increased labor, delivery and newsprint costs, work stoppages, daytime traffic problems, disinclination of advertisers to patronize more than one newspaper, the increase in the suburban daily and weekly press, the declining use of the written word in a culture increasingly dominated by the telephone and broadcasting, and news and advertising competition from broadcasters, free-distribution shoppers and direct mail marketers. The situation deteriorated to the extent that predictions were made in 1982 that, someday, the last remaining major metropolitan afternoon newspapers would disappear, either by going out of business or converting to morning publication.[26] These predictions remain quite plausible today, especially

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[26] John H. Vivian, "Commentary: PMs Future in the Shakeout and Reconfiguration of American Newspapers," Newspaper Research Journal, 3, (April 1982), pp. 69-79.

considering the move of afternoon newspapers to all-day publication.

Why the trend towards morning newspapers? A virtually conspiratorial number of societal, cultural and technological factors have placed afternoon papers at a disadvantage.[27] Morning newspapers are at a competitive advantage because they provide access to an audience with stronger demographics, are easier to deliver and have a longer shelf life. Conversely, afternoon newspapers have been hurt by the decline of public transportation, the white-collarization of the workforce which generally has a schedule that allows time to read a morning newspaper, the increase in suburbanization, and the rise of television news to greet workers as they arrived home.

Easy delivery is simply a function of the time that the morning newspapers come off the presses. With little traffic on the road between midnight and 5 a.m., there are few traffic congestion problems for the circulation directors of morning newspapers. By contrast, afternoon newspapers, generally coming off the press between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., face the ever-worsening state of traffic, with later editions crippled by the delays of

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[27] Leo G. Bogart, Press and Public: Who Reads What, When, Where and Why in American Newspapers? (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981), p. 7.

homebound rush-hour traffic.[28]

The worsening traffic patterns for afternoon newspapers were exacerbated by the post-World War II trend of suburbanization. Circulation trucks had to cover more miles, widening the difference in run times for the trucks delivering morning and afternoon papers. Additionally, geographic, economic and social conditions led to the rise of the automobile at the expense of trolleys, buses and rail -- taking many afternoon commuters out of the pool of reading while commuting.[29]

The rise of television news also was significant. For the first time, consumers had a visual information alternative to newspapers. The chances of consumer exposure to television increased from nearly zero in 1945 to 100 percent by the mid1960s. Television, a flick of the switch away from consumers, provided an alternative to newspapers that involved no purchase past the initial outlay and was readily available in the home.[30]

As afternoon newspapers waned, advertisers became increasingly selective in their purchasing decisions.

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[28] Peter Benjaminson, Death in the Afternoon: America's Newspaper Giants Struggle for Survival, (Kansas City and New York: Andrew, McMell and Parker, 1984), p. ix.

[29] Benjaminson, op. cit., pp. viii-ix.

[30] William J. Thorn and Mary Pat Pfiel, Newspaper Circulation: Marketing the News, (New York and London: Longman Inc., 1987), p. 57.

They tended more and more to concentrate their advertising in the stronger newspaper in each city, citing concerns about duplicate circulation and efficient purchasing.[31] It did not take a very large majority of circulation by the stronger paper for it to disproportionately dominate the other newspaper in advertising linage -- newspapers with 60 percent of the market's circulation usually carried at least 80 percent of advertising linage.[32]

White-collarization is also important in the death of major-metropolitan afternoon newspapers, for it made more people available at the optimum time of readership for morning publications -- the early hours of the day. With more whitecollar workers, who are likely to start work at a relatively late hour, and fewer blue-collar workers, who are likely to come home at a relatively early hour, the morning newspapers were placed at a growing advantage. The comparatively late white-collarization of the Baltimore area[33] helped the News American survive longer than many of its contemporaries in other cities.

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[31] Jonathan Friendly, "What Future for P.M. Papers?" New York Times, 16 August 1981, sect. 3, p. 4.

[32] Carl Korn, "Mixed Media: Final Edition," Warfield's, April 1986, p. 41.

[33] Michael Kranish, "A Baltimore Institution Changes Hands; Some Wonder: What Would Mencken Say?," Boston Globe, 2 June 1986, p. 1.

Afternoon newspapers tended to hold out and in some cases, succeed, in cities (like Baltimore) that have dominant blue- collar industries -- cities such as Seattle, Buffalo and Detroit.[34] In fact, Seattle's evening newspaper, the Times, managed to survive as the dominant part of a joint operating agreement, while the morning competitor, the Hearst-owned Post-Intelligencer became the weak part of the agreement. In Detroit, the old afternoon newspaper, the News, converted to morning publication to wage battle against the Detroit Free Pres. It has succeeded to the point that the Free Press has decided to go out of business if the papers are unable to get court approval for a joint-operating agreement.

The Detroit News was one of several newspapers in the last 15 years to convert from afternoon circulation to morning or all-day circulation. Of the 20 largest newspapers in the country in 1986, none were evening major metropolitan newspapers in the classic sense, and the only evening newspaper on the list at all was Newsday, the 12th largest, which began as a suburban newspaper. The New York Post, eighth on the list, the Detroit News, ninth, the Chicago Sun-Times, 11th, the Boston Globe, 14th, and the Houston Chronicle, 19th, were all morning or all-day newspapers, derived from evening

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[34] Stout and Tinkelman, op. cit., pp 13-14.

papers in whole or in part.[35]

Even in non-monopoly markets, advertisers have clamored for conversion to morning publication. All told, 43 newspapers converted in 1976-81.[36] In 1983, of the afternoon newspapers reporting a circulation increase over the previous year to the Associated Press Managing Editors association, only five had over 125,000 circulation: The Philadelphia Daily News, which with morning-sister publication, the Inquirer, had vanquished the competition, the Bulletin, in the previous year, the Columbus Dispatch, the Bergen Record, the Grand Rapids Press and the San Diego Tribune.[37]

In Baltimore, suburbanization occurred later than in several "peer" cities. St. Louis and Cleveland, for example, lost 20 percent of their 1950 populations by 1970 and another 20 percent by 1980.[38] Baltimore had

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[35] Thorn and Pfiel, op. cit., pp. 74-75, using figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation FAS-FAX report of 31 March 1986.

[36] James V. Wyman, "AM Converts Still Satisfied," in pM Report, issued by the Associated Press Managing Editors association, pp. 3-4.

[37] Bill Southerland, "More Than 100 Newspapers are Growing -- Here's How They Do It," in Afternoon Delight, issued by the Associated Press Managing Editors P.M. Newspaper Committee, (Louisville, Ky., 1983), pp. 13-16.

[38] Allen C. Goodman, Recent Mobility Patterns in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area, (Baltimore: Center for Planning and Metropolitan Research, Johns Hopkins University, 1983), pp. 1-3.

less of a population loss over the same three decades, especially in the 1950-1970 period. In the 20 years ending in 1970, Baltimore's population decreased less than 5 percent, from 949,708 to 905,787.[39] The decrease accelerated, however, in the 1970s, the same decade in which the News American's dominance disappeared, with a 13.1 percent loss, bringing the city's population down to 786,775.[40] When the annual loss rate of 1.3 percent in the 1970s is compared to the annual loss rate of .2 percent for the 1950-1970 era, it can be seen that the annual magnitude of loss in the 1970s was six times greater.

With the population declines in the 1970s, there was a drop in the average income in the city, and in the number of bluecollar workers in the region -- neither of which were good signs for the News American. One measure of the affluence of the city is its median income compared to the State of Maryland as a whole. In 1950, the citywide median was $9 over the statewide median. In 1960, it was $650 lower. In 1970, it was $2,243 lower, and in 1980, it was $5,600 lower. As a proportion of the Baltimore metropolitan area's population, the city's

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[39] From: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "City and County Data Book," (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1952 and 1977 editions.

[40] Goodman, op. cit., p. 1.

share declined from 71 percent in 1950 to 52 percent in 1960 to 44 percent in 1970 to 36 percent in 1980.[41] In the decade ending in 1986, the blue-collar workforce in the metropolitan area dropped by 80,000.[42] This was not good news for the newspaper.

During this period, the News American's circulation suffered, dropping from 218,266 during the week and 317,680 on Sunday in 1966 to 178,707 during the week and 259,369 on Sundays in 1976 to 101,456 during the week and 140,224 on Sundays in 1985, according to the last audit made before the paper closed.[43] In large part, the News American's decay accompanied the decay of Baltimore City and the simultaneous stagnation of the inner, older suburbs of eastern Baltimore County and northern Anne Arundel County.

The cause of the paper's demise is generally believed to be its inability to make money, or at least to offer the prospect of being able to make money, stemming from its failure to attract advertising. Its inability to attract advertising was caused by its weak circulation,

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[41] George H. Callcott, Maryland & America: 1940-1980, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 82.

[42] Kranish, op. cit.

[43] From 1966 publisher's statement and 1976 and 1985 Audit Bureau of Circulation reports.

both numerically and demographically, at the end.

The question is: What destroyed the circulation base?

The thesis of this paper is that the circulation base was destroyed by the disintegration of the traditional blue-collar readership that fueled its success in earlier years. The number of Baltimore City blue-collar workers who got home in mid- afternoon (and wives who stayed home) to read the News American fell below the critical proportion needed to sustain the newspaper, and the newspaper failed to attract new readers in other demographic groups in sufficient numbers. Qualitatively, the readers of the News American were not the type that appealed to advertisers, who were becoming more selective with the placement of their advertising dollars, especially in the wake of the awesome appeal of the new medium of television. The newspaper's problems were enhanced by its afternoon publication schedule, its inability to adequately foresee and adjust to the changing city and proliferation of suburbia, its two--pronged opposition from the Sunpapers, the impossibility of attaining a joint-operating agreement, the relatively slow growth of the Baltimore metropolitan area and the historical inability of the Hearst Corporation to successfully manage major metropolitan newspapers after the beginning of the Great Depression.

This study makes use of a variety of materials, including dissertations, theses, journal articles and academic papers. They provided much information about readership patterns, challenges faced by afternoon newspapers in competitive markets and changes in American urban demography. Books and magazine articles aimed at both the journalistic and general populations have been reviewed and analyzed, providing information about the Hearst organization, afternoon major metropolitan newspapers and parallel newspaper competitions in other cities.

Ten employees of the News American were interviewed about their affiliation with the newspaper, and asked specifically to give their memories and beliefs regarding the News American's closure. The transcripts of most of these interviews will be deposited under separate cover in the Marylandia Room at the University of Maryland's Theodore R. McKeldin Library. One interviewee, however, agreed to speak only if he was not taped, and no transcript was possible. Interviewees were former employees of the news and advertising departments. In addition, less formal interviews, sometimes brief, were held with five other employees.

Newspaper articles were studied to gain information about particular events at the newspaper and to see how

the News American evolved during the final decade. In addition, advertising reports and circulation reports have been analyzed to gain insight into trends in Baltimore newspapering.

Seven chapters follow. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and the reasons that the sources used in this study were chosen. Chapter 4 is a survey of the News American and its predecessors' history to 1945, and a survey of the Hearst Corporation and its management of newspapers. Chapter 5 examines the crash of circulation, the demographics in the Baltimore metropolitan area and the actions of the News American in the 1945-1978 period, when the population trend that led to its extinction became evident. Chapter 6 studies the years of Ronald Martin and Jon Katz (from 1978 to 1981) and the radical transformations they made in the newspaper, by instituting a magazine style of journalism and removing many staff members. Chapter 7 examines the final efforts for survival, from 1981 to 1986. Chapter 8 provides critical analysis of the situations and conclusions.

It is hoped that this study will add to present knowledge about the closure of the News American and about the difficulties faced by newspapers published in major metropolitan markets, particularly those published in the

afternoon. It is believed that the oral-history interviews offer information not available elsewhere about the types of actions taken to preserve the News American, and that they show how important it was to the individuals involved that the enterprise continue.

It is expected that this study, including the transcripts soon to be made available, will be useful to other researchers who may be studying afternoon newspapers, Baltimore media, the implosion of newspapers in major metropolitan areas, demographic change in Baltimore, media history in Maryland and Baltimore, and changes in journalistic institutions. The researcher considers this study to be integrally a humanistic one. It is designed to shed light on the people, realities and dreams that made up the Baltimore News American.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

There is little academic literature about the News American, which this researcher believes to be caused in large part by the paper's low status both within Baltimore and within the Hearst chain. Even within journalistic trade publications and within the Baltimore media there was little written about the News American, at least until the Hearst Corporation announced in December 1985 that the newspaper was for sale.

For this reason, four types of literature -- much of it in the trade and popular press -- were reviewed. Most directly relevant was the small amount of literature specifically about the News American and the News-Post.[44] The other three types described the broad variables that undermined the News American's attempt to survive: The declining readership of major metropolitan afternoon dailies, the changing demographics of metropolitan Baltimore, and the leadership of the Hearst newspaper chain and its inability to maintain newspapers in competitive markets.

The News American and its ancestors suffered from a

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[44] The term News American will be used throughout this study for reasons of clarity, except when it is neccessary to refer to the News-Post specifically. Until 1964, the newspaper was known as the News-Post weekdays and Saturdays and as the Sunday American on Sundays. The dual name and split identity were abandoned in 1964.

lack of attention in large part because of the acclaim of the Baltimore Sunpapers and their dominant role among the city's economic and intellectual elite. The Sun, the oldest penny newspaper still publishing, has boasted some of the nation's best coverage of the United States government, and traditionally has produced some of the best foreign reporting in the country. The Evening Sun's roster has included social critic H.L. Mencken, who dominated the newspaper for more than 30 years in the first half of the 20th Century. The Sunpapers have won a total of 12 Pulitzer Prizes.[45] The News American and its ancestors won none. Among publications in the Hearst empire, the News American received little attention from researchers and writers. The studies of Hearst newspapers generally have focused upon William Randolph Hearst himself, the organization which has operated the chain since his death, the flagship publications (the San Francisco Examiner, the New York Journal/Journal-American and the New York Mirror) and the policies of the chain as a whole. Aside from material about the flagships, most of the literature about Hearst newspapers has dealt with the truly spectacular failures in the chain, such as the situation in Los Angeles, where Hearst maintains the

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[45] Larry Rosenthal, "Times Mirror Buying Sun Newspapers in Baltimore," Associated Press financial wire, 29 May 1986, PM cycle.

anemic Herald-Examiner, and the failure of the Chicago American, where Hearst's 40-year battle to be in the market never succeeded in what may have been the nation's most spectacular newspaper war.

In the case of the news coverage of the News American, the announcement of the search for a buyer (and the possibility that the paper could fold) began a flood of news coverage on 3 December 1985, but it generally was not analytical in nature. The coverage continued until 27 May 1986, when the newspaper's announcement of its closure led to a round of post-mortems in the media.

With little formal literature about the News American available, this researcher found that one of the best ways to learn about the News American was by reading the News American. The newspaper, however, provided precious little information about its own demise. On the day of its closure, for example, the newspaper contained only nine paragraphs about its ending.[46] Many of its readers missed that information because it was printed only in the final edition. Aside from boosterism and historical ariticles about itself, there was little critical writing about the News American within the newspaper's own columns.

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[46] Baltimore News American (no byline), "So Long, Baltimore," 27 May 1986, p. 1A.

The zenith of News American reporting about itself was the newspaper's bicentennial issue in 1973. The bicentennial issue was highlighted by a special rotogravure section written largely by Jacques Kelly that provided valuable insight into the newspaper's priorities and its distribution of resources. It also provided a wealth of information about the newspaper's pre-Hearst history, especially the period before the end of the Civil War. It was particularly valuable in describing the origins of the Baltimore News in 1879 and Felix Angus's ownership of the Baltimore American from 1873 until 1920.[47] Among other News American writings useful for a historical analyst were the columns written under the name of Hearst (and his son, William Randolph Hearst Jr., after the elder Hearst's death in 1951) and promotional literature, often disguised as news content, which gave information about the achievements of the newspaper. Two such examples were page-one articles written by Lou Azreal in the 1930s and set in oversized type, describing new gains in circulation and market penetration.[48] It must be noted that the News American

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[47] Jacques Kelly, "The News American," special rotogravure section, Sunday News American, 19 August 1973, 11.

[48] Louis Azreal, "Paper Enters 4 out of Every 5 Homes in Baltimore," Baltimore News-Post, 4 October 1934, p. 1; Louis Azreal, "Hearst Paper Read by 84.7% of

did not announce its advertising and circulation failures, which occurred in ever-increasing numbers in the last decade of its existence. Still, articles about personnel changes, awards received by the staff and new equipment and expansion at the News American were extremely useful in constructing an overview of the publication.

In addition, examination of story selections and layout provided insight into the newspaper's news philosophy and priorities. Examination of advertisements and advertising-news ratios gave clues concerning the newspaper's readers and its standing in the market.

One other piece of literature published by the newspaper offered particular insight into the newspaper's failure. This was a fifty-page marketing guide offered by the News-Post to advertisers in 1947.[49] The guide told advertisers to expect heavy growth inside the city limits, and predicted that small towns such as Lutherville, Timonium and Catonsville would remain small towns. It gave the newspaper's vision of the way that the Baltimore market would develop, a false vision that

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Baltimore Families," Baltimore News-Post, 8 October 1935, p. 1.

[49] Baltimore News-Post (no author credited). "The News-Post and American -- A Working Sales Contract. (Baltimore: The News-Post, 1947).

played a role in the newspaper's end.

Among other media in the city, the most useful sources of information about events near the end of the News American's existence came from the Baltimore City Paper, a bi-weekly alternative newspaper that covers areas outside of the mainstream, including the media. The City Paper analyzed the News American's content and circulation in three articles written between 1980 and 1986 by staff writer Phyllis Orrick. A 1980 article described the atmosphere in the newsroom at the beginning of the final decade and the social and professional conflicts that flared during the Martin-Katz years. It also defined and provided a vivid example of what Katz called "Maoist journalism,"[50] the heavy coverage of a small number of topics instead of comprehensive coverage of a wide number of topics. A 1984 article discussed the aftermath of the Katz-Martin years and described two innovative measures undertaken at the paper to improve revenue: the News American Advertiser, a free-circulation, total-market-coverage newspaper with a 420,000 distribution and SportsFirst, a newspaper comprised almost completely of sports coverage.[51] The 1986 article

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[50] Phyllis Orrick, "Black and White...but Read?" 12 December 1980, Baltimore City Paper, p. 1, 12-14.

[51] Phyllis Orrick, "Bad News for the News," 1 June 1984, Baltimore City Paper, pp. 1, 12-13.

provided an overview of the newspaper's final years.[52]

Buncombe: A Review of Baltimore Journalism, published six issues from 1972 to 1973. Three articles from the review provided information about the News American. One measured coverage in the Sunpapers and the News American of the McGovern- Nixon presidential election, describing the amount of coverage of the candidates, the parties and two issues (the economy and the Vietnam War) in the three newspapers.[53] Another described labor conditions at Baltimore's newspapers, provided background about strikes at the News American and the Sunpapers and described the labor relations of the News American and its unions as being better than the relationships of the Sun and its employees.[54] The third described the tensions in the newsroom and a survey by the newspaper of workers' opinions about plant conditions -- a move that the author

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[52] Phyllis Orrick, "So Long, News American," Baltimore City Paper, 30 May 1986, pp. 6-7.

[53] Robert Flax, "The Campaign's Front Pages: How Much Coverage for McGovern and Nixon," in Buncombe: A Review of Baltimore Journalism, Vol. 1, No. 4, November-December 1972, p. 5.

[54] Paul Jablow, "Nobody Wants a Called Third Strike in the Baltimore Newspaper Game," Buncombe: A Review of Baltimore Journalism, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October 1972, pp. 10-11.

cautiously lauded.[55]

The News American's dominant daily competitors, the Sun and the Evening Sun reported news of general interest at the News American, such as layoffs, personnel changes and Hearst's bid for a buyer. Unlike the News American's reporters, the Sun's writers were able to write about unflattering aspects of the News American and use critical comments in their stories, often adding information and perspectives that were not found in the News American. The Sunpapers' best coverage was on the day after the News American's demise, in their issues of 28 May 1986. More than a dozen articles on the News American appeared in the two Sunpapers.[56] However, further coverage quickly evaporated, both in the Sun and other media, because the Sunpapers were sold to the Times Mirror Company that same day in the largest newspaper sale up to that time.

In its waning years, and in the days immediately after its closure, the News American's situation was written about in out-of-town media. Two articles in Advertising Age detailed the News American's inability to

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[55] Fred Barbash, "Newsroom reform at the News American -- Rekindling the Hearst Empire?" Buncombe: A Review of Baltimore Journalism, Vol. 1, No. 4, November-December 1972, p. 3.

[56] Baltimore Sun, 28 May 1986; Baltimore Evening Sun, 28 May 1986.

gain healthy advertising linage, mentioning the dual competition from the Sunpapers and the poor demographics of the News American's readership.[57] Associated Press coverage offered information on the period between December 1987 and the closure, when the Hearst Corporation was searching for a new owner for the newspaper. A Boston Globe article about the News American's closure and the next-day Sunpapers' sale provided material about changes in Baltimore economy and journalism.[58] Editor and Publisher and the Maryland-Delaware- District of Columbia Press News gave details about personnel changes and restructurings of the paper. Until 1983, Editor and Publisher also carried advertising linage records for the News American and other major-market newspapers, giving information about the newspaper's primary source of revenue.

R.P. Harriss, a protege of H.L. Mencken who was the News American's critic-at-large for 30 years, provided perspective and anecdotes in the Johns Hopkins Peabody

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[57] Merrill Cherlin, "Suns rain on News American's Parade," Advertising Age, 20 June 1985, pp. 34-35; Alan Radding, "Rivals Battle for Ad and Promotion Scoops," Advertising Age, 25 July 1985, pp. 68-69.

[58] Michael Kranish, "A Baltimore Institution Changes Hands; Some Wonder: What would Mencken Think?," Boston Globe, 1 June 1986, p. 1.

News after the News American's closure.[59] A Baltimore Catholic Review profile of News American publisher Mark Collins in 1971 provided a look into the challenges faced by the newspaper and the priorities of its publisher. Collins noted the difficulties of running a newspaper in the age of television, opening bureaus to cover growing suburbia and operating in one of the nation's few remaining three-newspaper cities. However, he was optimistic that the newspaper would survive.[60]

Other material consulted about the News American included various pieces of Hearst promotional literature that did not appear in the newspaper. Examples included a guide for tourists of the News American plant, rate cards and circulation information distributed to potential advertisers and a study of the Baltimore metropolitan area distributed to advertisers. Annual reports prepared by the Audit Bureau of Circulations gave the News American's circulation, including breakdowns by major subdivsion (Baltimore City, surrounding counties and exterior circulation areas) and saturation levels by the newspaper. The reports were especially valuable when

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[59] R.P. Harriss, "The Memoirs of a Newspaper Man," Johns Hopkins Peabody News, September-October 1986, pp. 20-23.

[60] A.E.P. Wall, "Collins Keeps Paper Growing: More Interpretation; Editorial Stand Decided as Each One Rises," Baltimore Catholic Review, 19 February 1971, p. B1.

used in conjunction with similar reports prepared about the Sunpapers, and provided material about factors that indirectly affected circulation, such as price structures and promotional games conducted by the newspaper. The reports also included the number of editions published, the times that editions went to press and the circulation sizes of different editions, which were analyzed to see what type of audiences were targeted by the newspaper.

In academic literature about the News American, Valentine's The Trend of Internationalism in Baltimore Newspapers, 1937-1941, a New York University doctoral dissertation, (1947) compared the Sun, Evening Sun, News American and New York Times in their coverage of international affairs in the 50 months leading up to the Second World War. The dissertation was helpful in understanding the practical journalistic applications of William Randoph Hearst's isolationism in the 1930s, and the journalistic distinctions between the Sunpapers and the Hearst newspaper.[61]

Moving back in time, Hoppenstein's History of Baltimore's Newspapers in the Eighteenth Century, explored the role of the Goddards and detailed the quick succession of owners after the sale of the paper to James

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[61] See Wilson Valentine, "The Trend of the Internationalism in Baltimore Newspapers, 1937-1941," Ph. D. dissertation, New York University, 1947.

Angell in 1793. It also described the first daily newspaper competition in Baltimore in 1795.[62]

Zimmer, in a University of Iowa doctoral thesis, examined the history and content of Baltimore's newspapers from 1797 to 1816. Among the four newspapers analyzed was the American, which she found to be the strongest at the time and to contain more local news than any of the other papers. She also discussed the composition of the Baltimore reading audience at the time and the figures who led the newspapers.[63]

Parmenter's 1979 University of Washington doctoral dissertation used the Baltimore News-Post as one of several newspapers studied to define the news-control philosophy of William Randolph Hearst from 1920-1940. A chapter on Hearst's Baltimore-Washington operations was especially useful in tracing the News-Post's rise to circulation supremacy, the content of the newspaper during these two decades and the audience that the news-

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[62] Reva Hoppenstein, "History of Baltimore's Newspapers in the Eighteenth Century," term paper for History of Printing Course at Columbia University, 1938. Enoch Pratt Free Library Central Branch files, Maryland Room.

[63] See Roxanne Marie Zimmer, "The Urban Daily Press: Baltimore, 1797-1816," Ph. D. thesis, University of Iowa, 1982.

paper was trying to interest.[64]

Two books about the Sunpapers provided information and analysis, in the context of implications for the Sunpapers, about the News American and its predecessors. Johnson et al's 1937 History of the Sunpapers[65] and Williams's The Baltimore Sun, 1837-1987,[66] described the American as being one of the standard types of newspapers in the 1830s, and detailed the journalistic revolution that Arunah S. Abell prompted when he started the Sun, a penny newspaper. The Williams book also provided background on the Baltimore American's coverage in the Civil War, the News's and American's efforts in the aftermath of the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904, the ownerships of Charles Grasty in the first decade of the twentieth century and Frank Munsey from 1910-1923 and the competition for Associated Press service in the 1920s -- all most important periods in the newspaper's life. The Johnson book gave insight into the two pre-Hearst

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[64] William Quayle Parmenter, The News Control Explanation of News Making: The Case of William Randolph Hearst: 1920-1940, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1979. Chapter V, pp. 135-155, deals most with Hearst's Baltimore operations.

[65] Gerald W. Johnson, Frank R. Kent, H.L. Mencken and Hamilton Owens, The Sunpapers of Baltimore, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1937).

[66] Harold E. Williams, The Baltimore Sun: 1837-1987, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

challenges to the Sun -- those of Charles Carroll Fulton's American in the Civil War era and of Grasty's and Munsey's Baltimore News in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Most importantly, it provided perspective on how the Sun, one of the nation's most important penny newspapers in the mid-1800s, wound up becoming the "establishment" newspaper by the end of the nineteenth century, while the News eventually assumed the Sun's old role of being the newspaper for the masses.

Mencken's reminiscence of his years at the Baltimore Herald from 1899-1906, provided background on the state of newspapering in the city during the period and insight into the standing of the Herald, News, American and Sunpapers.[67] Britt's 1935 biography of Munsey, Forty Years -- Forty Million: The Career of Frank A. Munsey, provided additional information about the Munsey years in Baltimore. It called attention to the fiscal success of the newspaper during the period: Munsey said it was the best paying newspaper he had ever owned and he built a 19-story building and founded a bank in connection with the Baltimore News in the 1910s.[68]

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[67] H.L. Mencken, Newspaper Days: 1899-1906, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1936).

[68] George Britt, "Forty Years - Forty Million: The Career of Frank A. Munsey," (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935).

The literature on William Randolph Hearst and the newspaper chain that he founded is bounteous and many of Hearst's newspapers besides the properties in Baltimore are frequently mentioned. This is a reflection of the fact that William Randolph Hearst attracted great attention as he attempted to meld his two of his greatest interests: media and politics. Hearst was showered with attention in his publications and, as time wore on, with attention from critics. The literature about Hearst generally falls directly into a bipolar classification: positive and negative.

Bartness's 1968 University of Minnesota doctoral dissertation, Hearst in Milwaukee, explores the management of Hearst's Wisconsin News, which closed in 1939. The Wisconsin News was a very good parallel to the News-Post in Baltimore, with each newspaper among the lower tier of Hearst properties in terms of interest to the publisher. Bartness provided an excellent summary of the news agenda of Hearst newspapers, and his observations about the sensationalism of the Wisconsin News also described the content of the Baltimore newspaper in the 1930s.[69]

Older's William Randolph Hearst -- American,

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[69] See Garold L. Bartness, Hearst in Milwaukee, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1968.

written by the wife of Hearst's editor in San Francisco, was an authorized biography written in 1936, speaking in positive tones that found little wrong with either the man or his journalism.[70] Three other biographies before the Second World War were sharply negative. Winkler's W.R. Hearst, An American Phenomenon was a critical account of Hearst's role in promoting the SpanishAmerican War, his efforts to be elected as president, U.S. senator, U.S. congressman, New York governor and New York mayor, and the sometimes-fictional journalistic exploits of the Hearst papers up to 1928, when the book was published.[71] Lundberg's Imperial Hearst: A Social Biography, published in 1936 and dedicated to Heywood Broun and the American Newspaper Guild, elicited this comment from Charles A. Beard in the book's preface: "It is impossible to believe that any person literate enough to read Mr. Lundberg's pages can come to any other verdict than that of ostracism or oblivion for Hearst."[72] Winkler's topics were covered, as well as Hearst's

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[70] See Cora Miranda (Mrs. Fremont) Older, William Randolph Hearst, American, (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1936).

[71] See John Kennedy Winkler, W.R. Hearst, An American Phenomenon, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928).

[72] Ferdinand Lundberg, Imperial Hearst: A Social Biography, (New Yok: Equinox Cooperative Press, 1936), p. i.

dealings with the Newspaper Guild, Nazi Germany and the financial markets in the 1930s and the methods used in the newspaper war in Chicago. Carlson and Sutherland Bates in 1936 produced Hearst, Lord of San Simeon, coming to similar conclusions as Winkler and Lundberg, but without their shrill tone.[73]

Two biographies emerged shortly after Hearst's death in 1951. Edmond D. Coblenz, a Hearst deputy for more than 50 years, edited William Randolph Hearst: A Portrait In His Own Words,[74] a collection of Hearst's writings linked together with Coblenz's biographical transitions. The book covered many of the topics raised in the critical biographies and included chapters devoted to Hearstian thoughts about such topics as religion, child-raising and animals. The tone of the book was positive, reflecting the author's "affection and [the] deep appreciation in which I held him."[75] Coblenz generally was objective in his biographical transitions, although the Hearst selections he chose gave a positive portrayl of the man. Tebbel's The Life and Good Times of William

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[73] See Oliver Carlson and Ernest Sutherland Bates, Hearst, Lord of San Simeon, (New York: Viking, 1936).

[74] William Randolph Hearst, "William Randolph Hearst: A Portrait In His Own Words," Edmond D. Coblenz (Ed.), (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952).

[75] Ibid., p. x.

Randolph Hearst (1952), was a review of Hearst's life, and was the most neutral of any of the publications on Hearst surveyed -- critical of Hearst's actions but without the fierce attacks of other writers.[76]

In 1961, Swanberg's Citizen Hearst appeared.[77] It was a critical biography that synthesized the life of Hearst and the actions of his company into a volume that detailed their journalistic impact. It was the first of the Hearst biographies to take a detatched view of Hearst, perhaps helped in part by the passage of a decade since Hearst's death. It was also the first book to look at the Hearst chain as much as it looked at Hearst, offering an organizational study that provided direct causal connections between the actions of the company and the wave of Hearst closures in the 1950s. The book was useful in defining the type of audience sought by Hearst for his newspapers: blue-collar and "lowbrow." It provided what this researcher considers to be the best biography of Hearst and was one of the two most valuable works consulted for studying the implications of the behavior of Hearst and his company on the News American. The other work, which also investigated the Hearst--

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[76] See John William Tebbel, The Life and Good Times of William Randolph Hearst, (New York: Dutton, 1952).

[77] See W.A. Swanberg, Citizen Hearst, (New York: Scribners, 1981).

closure connection, was Hearsts: Family and Empire, the Later Years, written by Chaney and Cieply, published in 1981.[78] It explained the role of newspapers in the Hearst organization in the years after Hearst's death. One of the basic thrusts of the book was the de-emphasis of newspapers in the 1950s by the chain, then headed by Richard Berlin, in favor of magazines and broadcasting, which caused considerable neglect of the newspaper properties remaining. Paying almost no attention to the life of the senior Hearst, it provided an even-handed insight into the corporate strengths and weaknesses of the chain. Two books that focused on Hearst's political roles were Littlefield's William Randolph Hearst: His Role in American Progressivism,[79] a 1980 history of Hearst's activities in pre-First World War progressivism in which he generally is treated favorably, and Carlisle's 1979 revisionist Hearst and the New Deal: The Progressive as Reactionary,[80] in which Carlisle argued that the nation's values by the 1930s had changed

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[78] Lindsay Chaney and Michael Cieply, Hearsts: Family and Empire, the Later Years, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981).

[79] See Roy Everett Littlefield, William Randolph Hearst, His Role in American Progressivism, (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980).

[80] See Rodney P. Carlisle, Hearst and the New Deal: The Progressive as Reactionary, (New York: Garland Pub., 1979).

beneath Hearst, who retained his Progressive values of 20 years earlier. In a broader study of the New Deal-Second World War era in the United States, Schlesinger took an opposite view, writing that Hearst abandoned his progressivism that dated to the turn of the 20th Century and became a reactionary in the 1930s.[81]

Liebling's The Press (1961) provided a collection of press criticism drawn generally from articles published in The New Yorker. It examined Hearst as a publisher in two chapters, focusing on his actions during his company's financial disasters in 1930s, and the destruction of much of the Hearst empire during the 1950s and early 1960s.[82] Oswald Garrison Villard's The Disappearing Daily: Chapters in American Newspaper Evolution, used one chapter to discuss Hearst's financial situation and excesses.[83] In another chapter, he examined Munsey's newspaper empire of the first quarter of the 20th Century, which included the Baltimore News from 1905 to 1923 and the Baltimore American from 1920 to

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[81] See Arthur H. Schlesinger Jr., The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960).

[82] A.J. Liebling, The Press, (New York: Ballantine, 1961), pp. 487-509.

[83] Oswald Garrison Villard, The Disappearing Daily: Chapters in the American Newspaper Evolution, (Freeport, N.Y. Books for Libraries Press, 1944, reprinted 1969), pp 197-208.

1923.[84]

Thorn and Pfeil's 1987 book, Newspaper Circulation: Marketing the News, geared towards newspaper circulation personnel and students of the subject, described problems encountered by large-newspaper circulation departments and detailed the mechanics of circulation, providing the researcher with a familiarity with the subject.[85]

Smith, in his book Goodbye Gutenberg, devoted a chapter to the "Newspaper in the Marketplace," detailing many of the problems faced by major metropolitan newspapers, such as suburban competition broadcasting and preprint advertising. Another chapter, called "Market Segmentation," focused in large part on zoned editions, an effort tried without success by the News American.[86]

Benjaminson's Death in the Afternoon: America's Newspaper Giants Struggle for Survival was useful because it examined, in part, the problems of the Herald Examiner from two of the aspects directly related to this work: The chronic problems of Hearst newspapers and the massive difficulties faced by afternoon publishers. Besides

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[84] Ibid., pp. 229-238.

[85] Wiliam J. Thorn and Mary Pat Pfiel, Newspaper Circulation: Marketing the News, (New York and London: The Longman Group, 1987).

[86] Anthony Smith, Goodbye Gutenberg, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

dissecting the magnitude of the blunders made by the Hearsts in Los Angeles, it also described the efforts to keep New York Tonight, the Philadelphia Bulletin and the Washington Star afloat.[87]

Several works were consulted on afternoon newspaper closures in major metropolitan areas. One was Susan Kovach Shuman's The Minneapolis Star's Effort to Survive as an Afternoon Newspaper, a 1982 master's thesis at the University of Maryland, which analyzed the newspaper's efforts to stay afloat using a magazine style of journalism and design similar to the efforts used at the News American from 1978 to 1981. She also analyzed the city's demographic situation and the afternoon newspaper's circulation woes, which were remarkably similar to those of the News American -- except for the fact that the Minneapolis Star's competition was owned by the same company.[88] Covering the same newspaper as Shuman's study, Bruce D. Itule's 1978 "Catch a Falling Star" in The Quill succinctly described the Minneapolis Star's efforts to resuscitate itself and traced some of the demographic difficulties encountered by the news-

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[87] Peter Benjaminson, Death in the Afternoon: America's Newspaper Giants Struggle for Survival, (Kansas City and New York: Andrew, McMeel and Parker, 1984).

[88] Shuman, op. cit.

paper.[89]

The Quill article was one of a number in professional publications which provided insight into parallel situations and the industry's effort to find soluntions to the afternoon major-metropolitan dilemma. A 1982 article in the Washington Journalism Review described the efforts of several major metropolitan afternoon newspapers to survive, including papers in Los Angeles, Washington, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Baltimore.[90] As a sign of how ignored the News American was by the journalistic community, the evening newspaper most visibly profiled in Baltimore was the Evening Sun and not the News American, even though the News American was in far worse straits. A 1981 Washington Post report examined the efforts of the New York Post and the Philadelphia Bulletin to stay in business in spite of the effects of suburban newspapers and the decline of

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[89] Bruce D. Itule, "Catch a Falling Star," The Quill, October 1978, pp.10-12.

[90] J.E. Vacha, Douglas A. Rossi, Robert Gottlieb, Dave O'Brian, Dan Rottenberg, Dennis Holder, Dave Mona, Charles L. Klotzer and Phyllis Orrick, "Dwindling P.M. Papers Reveal a Variety of Ills in Cleveland, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Baltimore," Washington Journalism Review, October 1981, pp. 41-45.

blue-collar preparations.[91]

A 1983 article in Advertising Age described the changes in the Hearst Corporation's newspaper philosophy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as it moved away from newspapers in large, competitive markets toward those in smaller markets where there was no competition.[92]

Bogart, in a 1981 Editor and Publisher article, noted that advertisers in multi-newspaper markets tended to cluster towards the stronger-circulation newspaper in a proportion far greater than the leading newspaper's circulation advantage, making it difficult to sustain a minority-circulation newspaper.[93] Rambo, writing in presstime, described the dilemma of moving up afternoon-newspaper deadlines and the difficulty of making such a decision.[94] Anderson, also writing in presstime, described the sharp decline of Saturday

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[91] Haynes Johnson, "Death in the Afternoon: Commentary on Changing Tastes," The Washington Post, 8 September 1981, p. A2.

[92] Stuart J. Emmrich, "Hearst Mines Small Markets for Newspapers," Advertising Age, 24 October 1983, pp. 4, 72.

[93] Leo G. Bogart, "Why More Dailies Will Stop Publishing," Editor and Publisher, 26 September 1981, p. 42.

[94] C. David Rambo, "Earlier Deadlines: Are They a Threat to P.M.s?" presstime, September 1983, p.30.

afternoon newspapers, even in non-competitive markets.[95]

Stout and Tinkleman, writing in The Quill in 1981, surveyed 13 large metropolitan cities across the country: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Houston, Dallas, Denver, Seattle, Cleveland, Buffalo, San Francisco and Baltimore. The article noted parallels between large afternoon newspapers -- namely, that most were in decline. The Hearst papers in San Francisco, Seattle and Los Angeles were all in bad shape, according to the article. Except for the Hearst rival in Seattle, the Times, and the Houston Chronicle, none of the tradionally afternoon papers were doing very well.[96]

Five reports, each about forty pages long, by the Associated Press Managing Editors' P.M. Newspaper Committee during the early 1980s showed the steps that afternoon newspapers were taking in their efforts to survive, including various content, design and production strategies. A 1981 report provided information about afternoon newspaper switching to morning publication, single-copy sales strategies and afternoon news judgement

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95 Mary A. Anderson, "Saturday P.M.: Newspaper Twilight Zone," presstime, December 1987, pp. 14-16.

96 Stout and Tinkleman, op. cit. pp. 10-12.

decisions.[97] A second 1981 report noted the decline of housewives, predicting that most afternoon newspapers, even those without morning competition, would move to mornings, and providing an informal typology of cities that would retain afternoon newspapers.[98] The 1983 report noted that some newspapers were growing, suggested concurrent broadcasts or videotex messages on cable television and recommended more use of literary journalism to draw readers.[99] The 1984 report described morale at afternoon newspapers, the changing trends of afternoon news content, and the changing deadlines in such papers.[100] The 1985 report provided several suggestions to editors about the mechanics of converting to morning publication, and discussed the utility of

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[97] Associated Press Managing Editors, "PM/Report," A report issued to the APME P.M. Newspaper Committee at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors, Toronto, Ont., 20-23 October 1981.

[98] Associated Press Managing Editors, "PM/Bonus Report," A report issued to the APME P.M. Newspaper Committee at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors, Toronto, Ont., 20-23 October 1981.

[99] Associated Press Managing Editors, "Afternoon Delight," A report issued to the APME P.M. Newspaper Committee at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors, Louisville, Ky., 1983.

[100] Associated Press Managing Editors, "PMs Newspapering: The Sinking Ship or Glorious Struggle?" A report issued to the APME P.M. Newspaper Committee at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors, Miami, Fla., 1984.

newspaper redesign and long-range planning for newspapers that planned to continue afternoon publication.[101]

A variety of academic studies were helpful in understanding the demographics of readership. Vivian's 1982 Newspaper Research Journal article comprehensively and qualitatively reviewed the factors working against afternoon newspapers.[102]

Tillinghast, in a Journalism Quarterly article, noted that the penetration rate of afternoon newspapers declined faster than morning circulation rates between 1962 and 1977. He made his observations using secondary analysis of circulation figures. He also documented the drop in the number of newspapers sold per 100 adults in Maryland. The drop in the state over the past two decades had been more precipitous than in most other states, he concluded.[103]

Rarick, in a 1973 Journalism Quarterly article, noted the demographic differences between newspaper subscribers

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[101] Associated Press Managing Editors, "Going AM," A report issued to the APME P.M. Newspaper Committee at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors, San Francisco, Calif, 1985.

[102] John H. Vivian, "Commentary: PMs Future in the Shakeout and Reconfiguration of American Newspapers," Newspaper Research Journal, 3, (April 1982), pp. 69-79.

[103] William A. Tillinghast, "Declining Newspaper Readership: Impact of Region and Urbanization," Journalism Quarterly, 58, (Spring 1981), pp. 14-23.

and non-subscribers. The descriptions matched somewhat the differences between morning-newspaper and afternoon-newspaper readers described by Benjaminson and Stout and Tinkleman, with the more educated and affluent readers choosing a morning newspaper and others choosing an afternoon newspaper or none at all.[104]

Blankenberg, in a 1981 Journalism Quarterly article, found that the quality of the newspaper and the history of past circulation levels were the best predictors for success of newspaper circulation.[105]

Burgoon and Burgoon, profiling the "average" newspaper reader in Journalism Quarterly, said that a person was more likely to read a newspaper if affluent, between 30 and 50, well-educated, white, married, living in his own home and moderately interested in politics.[106] Burgoon, Burgoon and Garrision, in a 1981 Journalism Quarterly article, discussed the advantages of morning newspapers in competitive markets, which included a longer shelf life because they were on the newsstand all

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104 Galen R. Rarick, "Differences between Daily Newspaper Subscribers and Nonsubscribers," Journalism Quarterly, 50, (Summer 1973), pp. 265-270.

105 William B. Blankenberg, "Structural Determination of Circulation," Journalism Quarterly, 58, (Winter 1981), pp. 543-551.

106 Judee K. Burgoon and Michael Burgoon, "Predictors of Newspaper Readership," Journalism Quarterly, 59, (Winter 1982), pp. 589-596.

day.[107]

Rosse, in the Journal of Communication in 1980, demonstrated the dramatic decline in the number of United States newspaper markets with multiple daily newspapers related to the growth of television as an advertising medium.[108] He also found that suburbanization after World War Two caused a rise in the suburban press and a negative effect on the center-city press because new suburban residents tended to take an interest in their new neighborhoods and lose interest in their old city neighborhoods. He found that the strength of the suburban press increased with the introduction of new technologies, reducing fixed costs amortized over circulation. In a paper delivered at a 1978 Federal Trade Commission symposium, he traced the differences between "highbrow," "midbrow," and "lowbrow" newspapers, saying that only the largest markets can sustain newspapers which differentiate among such audiences.[109]

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[107] Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Burgoon and S. Scott Garrison, "Market Potential for Morning Papers," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 58, No. 4, Winter 1981, pp. 607-612.

[108] James N. Rosse, "The Decline on Direct Newspaper Competition," Journal of Communication, 30, pp. 65-71.

[109] James N. Rosse, "The Evolution of One-Newspaper Cities," (paper presented at Federal Trade Commission Symposium on Media Concentration, Washington, D.C., 14-15 December 1978).

Halverson's doctoral dissertation, "Trends in Daily Newspaper Circulation", at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign describes circulation activity and trends from 1920-1970, finding that per-household readership dropped while disposible income increased.[110]

Several books and articles on Maryland history and demographics were consulted. Callcott's 1985 book Maryland & America: 1940 to 1980 provided insight into the Baltimore metropolitan area's growth after the Second World War. One chapter, called "The Population Swirl" was especially useful, chronicling the metamorphesis of blue-collar Baltimore into white-collar Baltimore and the dynamic growth of the Towsons, Glen Burnies and Catonsvilles that now ring the city. For this study, the most important factors that Callcott covered were migration, changes in suburban spending power and the decline in the city.[111]

The development of Baltimore County is covered well in Brooks and Rockel's A History of Baltimore County, which also points out the diversity of the county's communities, which range from deprived areas to the

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[110] Roy Kenneth Halverson, "Trends in Daily Newspaper Circulation," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1970.

[111] George H. Callcott, Maryland & America: 1940 to 1980, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

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affluent regions that come to mind when the word "suburbia" is used.[112] Walsh and Fox's 1983 Maryland: A History provided a broad overview of the state's history, and was particularly useful when examining Baltimore in the 18th and 19th centuries.[113]

Four sets of U.S. Census data from the County and City Data Books (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1953, 1967, 1977 and 1983) provided additional figures that confirmed the changes in Baltimore demography over a three-decade span.[114] For example, the 1983 edition provided data, generally from the 1980 U.S. Census, in these classifications relevant to this study: population and population change since 1970; percentage of residents over 25 by subdivision with 12 or more years of school and 16 or more years of school; per capita personal income; retail trade and retail trade per capita.

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112 Neal A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, A History of Baltimore County, (Towson, Md: Friends of the Towson Library, 1979).

113 Richard Walsh and William Lloyd Fox, Maryland: A History, (Annapolis, Md.: Hall of Records Commission, Department of General Services, 1983).

114 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1952, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953); U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1966, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967); U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1977 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977); U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1982 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983).

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Several studies by the Center for Metropolitan Planning and Research at the Johns Hopkins University were examined. Goodman's Ten Years of Population Change in the Baltimore Urbanized Area studied population trends in Baltimore City and its innermost suburbs.[115] Goodman's Recent Mobility Patterns in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area studied the decline in Baltimore's population and compared it to drops in St. Louis and Cleveland.[116]

A Maryland Department of State Planning report analyzes raw populations and growth rates in Baltimore City and five surrounding counties, with each of the subdivisions broken up into wards or election districts.[117] Larkin, in a 1984 analysis of employment trends in Maryland prepared for the state government, found a decline of manufacturing jobs in Maryland, and predicted that the loss would continue, with a

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115 See Allen C. Goodman, Ten Years of Population Change in the Baltimore Urbanized Area, (Baltimore: Center for Metropolitan Planning and Research, Johns Hopkins University, 1981).

116 See Allen C. Goodman, Recent Mobility Patterns in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area, (Baltimore: Center for Metropolitan Planning and Research, Johns Hopkins University, 1983).

117 See Maryland Department of State Planning, Maryland Population Data: State, County, Minor Civil Division and Municipal Trends" (Annapolis Md.: Maryland Department of State Planning, 1981).

corresponding increase of "higher-knowledge" jobs, suchs as communications, computing, marketing and repair services.[118]

A task force assigned by then-Mayor William Donald Schaefer to study the causes of Baltimore's population decline and recommend policies to reverse the decline provided an excellent analysis of the demographic shifts in the city after the Second World War. The 1977 study examined reasons for the departure of residents, profiled the type of person likely to move out of the city and provided a wealth of information about the ramifications for the city.[119] This proved useful in understanding factors affecting the News American.

In conclusion, examination of the literature pertaining to the closure of the Baltimore News American revealed there was no comprehensive study of the factors that caused the newspaper to close. This thesis is intended to fill that gap in the literature.

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118 Paul G. Larkin, "Employment Megatrends: 21st Century Implications of a Shift Toward an Information and Services-Producing Workforce," in "Maryland's Future: The Next Fifty Years," by the Futures Conference (Baltimore: Maryland Department of State Planning, 1984), pp. 39-46.

119 Task Force, Report on Population Loss in Baltimore City to Mayor William Donald Schaefer, (Baltimore: City of Baltimore, 1978).

Chapter 3
Methods and oral sources

This study uses historical analysis and a derivative, oral history, as its method. In many aspects, it is almost essential for oral history to be used in this study. Two factors are overriding.

The researcher in search of primary materials will have little luck when analyzing the later years of the Hearst empire. All portions of the corporation have been privately owned since 1964, when Hearst Consolidated Inc., a public-stock company founded to alleviate the family's debt in 1937, was re-purchased by the Hearst Corporation and privatized.[120] This leads to a paucity of available documentation on the company, with no public reports issued. Additionally, there is no access to company memoranda, and the Hearst Corporation has an attitude toward outsiders -- and employees -- that approaches paranoia. Requests by this researcher for interviews with Hearst officials and employees were denied by the Hearst Corporation. Requests to be able to review marketing studies or other useful information in the possession of the corporation were denied. Requests for names and addresses of former employees were denied. The problems faced by the researcher reflected corporate

120 Chaney and Cieply, op. cit., p. 235.

attitudes that manifested themselves in other directions. News American editorial managers were told to monitor page flats in the composing room at all times in the final days of the newspaper to prevent vandalism that the corporation feared from compositors [121]. The newspaper was closed with only 30 minutes warning before the last press run, in part because of vandalism fears.[122] Employees were given two hours to remove their belongings from the building.[123] Any employee who was on vacation or away from the office that day could recover his or her belongings later only if accompanied by a security guard.[124]

The second reason that an oral historical approach is appropriate is became of the time that is under study, most particularly the 1970s and 1980s. These years are part of the electronic information age, when telephone communication supplanted the letter, and electronic mail supplanted memoranda.[125] Even if Hearst was willing to

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121 Interview with Liz Bowie.

122 Interview with Joseph Nawrozki.

123 Interview with R.P. Harriss, p. 1.

124 Interview with Ralph Vigoda, p. 12.

125 Louis Starr, "Oral History," in Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, ed. by David Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (Nashville, Tenn: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), p. 5.

make material available, it is likely that there would not be as much material as it there would have been in the decades beforehand -- it literally would have disappeared into electrical pulses on telephone networks, figuratively and literally into thin air. Only one real hope of analyzing finding documents seemed viable -- locating letters or memoranda from private collections of people dead or alive. The researcher secured some memoranda and other documentation from J. William Joynes, a feature writer and editor of the Maryland Life section, and James Toedtman, the last editor of the paper, but little other evidence is available, in part because some of the principals remain employed with the Hearst Corporation and do not want to divulge company secrets.

The staffers of the News American proved to be fertile ground for original oral historical research because none had ever been interviewed for any collections. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to not only analyze transcripts and tapes, but also to conduct the interviews and act as the oral history author. It gave the researcher a chance to allow his interest (the final decades of the News American) to dominate the interviews, although the researcher was careful to ask at least a few other questions of the subjects, which hopefully will be of use to any other

researchers who may want to avail themselves of the material.

What we call oral history has its roots in the second quarter of the twentieth century, when Louis Starr of Columbia University proposed that transcripts of interviews with potentially historical subjects be collected. Today, oral history, because of the interest in social history, basically has been enlarged to include everyone. The wire recorder and then the tape recorder have been the tools of oral historians, considerably easing the process of making transcripts. It is ironic that some of the same technology that enabled the rise of oral history also necessitated the creation of oral history, because telephones and tape recorders are technological cousins. A corollary that is appropriate to be recognized is that the same technological revolution that permitted the tape recorder to rise also begat broadcasting, a major factor in the decline of afternoon newspapers, including the News American.

Oral history was a major challenge to the traditional thinking of the historical community, which considered interviewing to be "merely" in the domain of journalists. Many historians saw it as a vehicle to immortalize

gossip.[126] Others noted that the best sources for the researcher are primary sources in which the source is not aware that his thoughts are being recorded for people of later generations to analyze. Collections of letters fit this definition; tapes made with an agent for eternity on the other side of the table or the telephone do not fit the definition.

Advocates, however, presented a convincing case that oral history provided testimony in an age lacking written materials and provided a human dimension to descriptive history. They argued that history need not revolve around the kings, generals and other "Great Figures" of history. Advocates said and proved that people like oil drillers, auto assembly-line workers and newspaper reporters and advertising salesmen could shed light on the historical process. If the "Great Figures" creation of policy is important (and this researcher believes that it is, and is worthy of recording and analyzing) so too are the stories and feelings of the rank-and-file who implemented the policies.

The standard methods of historical analysis comprise the basis of oral-historical methodology: Internal

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126 Barbara Tuchman, "Distinguishing the Significant from the Insignificant," Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, ed. by David Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, (Nashville, Tenn: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), p. 76.

correspondence, external correspondence, reliability, validity, source and motivation.

Internal correspondence is the examination of a subject's artifact and its comparison to another artifact generated , in its strictest sense, in the same document , and in a broader sense, by the same author. External correspondence is the examination of a subject's artifact with artifacts generated from other sources. In oral history, the artifacts are statements by subjects, on tape or transcript. Because oral history is difficult to study without using more traditional historical sources, the search for correspondence, particularly of the external variety, often involves other media besides the tape or the transcript. The study uses internal and external correspondence to analyze as much data as possible.

Such comparisons include tests for reliability and validity. Reliability is the consistency between artifacts; validity is the consistency between the artifact and the truth.[127] These concepts play an important part in this study, especially in the historical review of the News American's ancestors, and most particularly in the review of the Hearst

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[127] Alice Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," in Dunaway and Baum, op. cit., p. 69-70.

corporation's operations. A major source of information about those years is the information generated by the corporation, most significantly the product that the corporation produced for public consumption -- namely the News American. There's a major problem with the artifact, however. The Hearst organization, particularly before Hearst died in 1951, was famous for its distortions of the truth and outright lies.

Such a situation typifies the concerns of the historical researcher about motivation. Before 1951, the motivations that stemmed from the elder Hearst's need for power and desire to mold the public agenda -- and his disregard for the tenets of honesty -- were paramount. Items gleaned from the newspaper that relate to these subject must be analyzed in light of these concerns. Similar concerns must be addressed in studying the years after his death, too, although it is evident that such motivations lessened as the Hearst Corporation changed from the personal fiefdom of Hearst to the increased corporate culture during the years when the corporation was headed by Richard Berlin. Berlin, as chief executive of the company until 1973, retained much of the autocratic touch which Hearst displayed, but without wielding the total power of his predecessor. His 22 years are viewed by the researcher as a transitional

period between fiefdom and standard corporate culture. Therefore, Hearst materials of the Berlin era were reviewed with a skepticism that was not as strong as the skepticism with which those of the pre-1951 period were viewed.

In considering Hearst materials of the last decade, the researcher viewed them with still less skepticism -- although the researcher kept in mind that substantial skepticism is quite necessary for the historian. At this point, the leadership of the corporation is oligarchical instead of dictatorial. This researcher's skepticism about the Hearst corporation is similar to that which he uses to view any newspaper publishing company or, less closely, any commercial enterprise.

This skepticism can be defined in a concept, economic determinism, which is an established but certainly not universally accepted part of historiographical thought. As defined by Charles Beard, not coincidentally a lifelong foe of William Randolph Hearst, economic determinism basically says that, when people have opportunities to make decisions and there is a clear economic benefit in one choice over another, people will make the more economically expedient decision. Such was Beard's argument in his history of the United States and

several other works,[128] and such is the underlying assumption that the researcher makes in this study when analyzing the Hearst Corporation. This belief in the firm's motivation is well-founded when examining the history of the corporation and in studying its intent and very reason for being in Baltimore.

This set of values is consistent with the traditional historiography of journalism history, the Progressive school[129] also termed by some as the "whig interpretation."[130] This is not surprising, considering the fact that many scholars of journalism come from the ranks of journalists, who are described in at least one account as Progressive[131] because of their dominating values system. This system prizes meritocracy, morality, altruistic democracy and a suspicion of bigness. A notable example of such a Progressive historiography is

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[128] See Charles A. Beard and Mary Beard, Basic History of the United States, (New York: New Home Library, 1944), especially pp. 374-81.

[129] Joseph P. McKerns, "The Limits of Progressive Journalism History," Journalism History, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1977), p.8.

[130] James W. Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," Journalism History, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1977, p. 3.

[131] Harbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News, (New York: Vantage Books, 1979), pp. 68-69, 203-206.

Schudson's social history of the American press,[132] which is almost Darwinistic as it traces the evolution from party press to penny press to yellow press to objective press.

McKerns wishes for a new school of journalism historiography to emerge, saying that the Progressive school depends too much on the dichotomy of good versus evil, of liberalism versus conservatism. He uses the phrase counterprogressivism to describe his idea of good and evil in the same holistic system; liberalism and conservatism competing for the same public as much as they compete against each other.[133] His ideas certainly are worthy of attention, and from time to time are integrated in this study, especially in consideration of the concept of two news organizations competing for the audience's interest -- for customers can buy more than one newspaper -- as much as they compete against each other.

But the basic subject matter in this study does not lend itself to be studied counterprogressively. The newspaper generally saw its surroundings in terms of good versus evil. Management dealt with its employees in

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[132] Michael Schudson, Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers, (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

[133] McKerns, op. cit.

terms of black and white, just as all involved with the News American viewed the relationship between the newspapers in Baltimore as "us versus them." Few viewed or dealt with shades of gray.

The researcher generally has employed a Progressive historiography. The researcher brings the value system of six years as a professional journalist. This reflects the modern Progressivism that Gans ascribes to the journalistic craft. The chronicle of the News American's struggle for survival is not necessarily a story of good versus evil, and certainly is not a case of liberal versus conservative. But Gans's observation that the journalist distrusts bigness and welcomes plurality enters the value system of both the researcher and the people he interviewed. And certainly the Progressive viewpoint was the view held, largely subconsciously, by editorial and some other employees of the newspaper.

After all, the consequence of the News American's departure resulted in a centralized, monopolistic print media system for Baltimoreans. As Carey noted in his Whig interpretation, "the entire story is framed by those large impersonal faces buffeting the press: industrialization, urbanization and mass democracy."[134]

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134 Carey, op. cit.

In this study, this confluence of journalistic pseudo-Progressive ideology and the Progressive historiography found in the works of many journalism (and other) historians is a logical one, considering the background of the researcher and the object of the study. Moreover, there is also a methodological confluence between journalism and oral history that is impossible to deny, a subject that is among the most sensitive for oral historians and for journalism researchers of all breeds.

Quite simply put, the difference between journalism, particularly documentary journalism, and oral history is a difference that is difficult to define. However, there are many factors which distinguish material which is considered oral history and material which is considered journalism. These are:

-- Oral history is something that is intended to be an oral history. Journalism is something intended to be journalism. The transcript of a reporter's interview with a public official that is printed in a newspaper is not intended to be an item of oral history. However, the transcript made by Merle Miller in his conversations with former president Harry S Truman was intended to be a piece of historical research obtained orally from a source.

-- Journalism and oral history generally operate

with different temporal factors. Generally, historians are in search of information which provides knowledge about events in the past. Journalists generally are interested in information about the present, about current policy, about current activities.

-- Journalists and oral historians operate with different motives in mind. Journalists primarily are concerned with generating a product -- a news story -- and are willing to use a variety of processes to generate the product, including the oral interview, research into prior stories or research of records. Additionally, journalists until recently, generally have been uninterested in making tapes or transcripts (unless a transcript of an interview with a prestigious person could be used as a sidebar to the main story). Even today, tapes made by journalists are made with the objective of insuring that the product, the news story, correctly reflects the source and is libel-free. In contrast, the oral historian is most concerned with making sure that the process of interviewing and interpretation fits the generally accepted definition of oral history. Oral historians have less of a focus on the product of their labors: Tapes and/or transcripts can be entered into oral history collections without a consumer seeing the work immediately.

The delineation of such differences is important to note, especially in an academic oral history conducted in a journalism department, because of the difficulty that oral historians had in gaining acceptance for their discipline. These difficulties in part have been due to the fact that oral testimony and the emphasis that it places on the social aspects of history traditionally have not been a part of the historian's process. Thompson argues that oral history by its very nature brings non-professionals into the data-gathering process and into the pool of sources and is another element in the democratization of history. Oral history is tremendously useful socially, he says, but it disturbs

> academics who pursue fact-finding research on remote problems without attempting to relate their discoveries to any more general interpretation, insisting on the technical virtue of scholarship and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake ... This is a major reason why it has so excited some historians, and so frightened others.[135]

This democratization and social utility is similar to the social purpose performed by the penny newspapers, whose spiritual descendants dominate journalism today, as defined by Schudson.[136] Louis Starr and Allan Nevins, considered the founders of the oral history movement,

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[135] Paul Thompson, "History and the Community," in Dunaway and Baum, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

[136] Schudson, op. cit., especially pp. 10-31.

were products of the values of the penny press's descendants, as former reporters who earned Ph.D.s in history and instigated the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University.

Although a user of oral history on occasion, Barbara Tuchman reflects a less-than-democratic view of who deserves to be considered in the writing of history:

> With the appearance of the tape recorder, a monster with the appetite of a tapeworm, we now have, through its creature Oral History, an artificial survival of trivia of appalling proportions. To sit down and write a book, even of memoirs, requires at least some effort, discipline, and perseverance which until now imposed a certain natural selection on what survived in print. But with all sorts of people being invited merely to open their mouths, and ramble endlessly into a tape recorder, prodded daily by an acolyte of Oral History, a few veins of gold and a vast amount of trash are being preserved which would otherwise have gone to dust. We are drowning ourselves in unneeded information. I should hastily add here that among the most useful and scintillating sources I found were two verbal interviews with General Marshall tape recorded by Army historians in 1949. Marshall, however, was a summit figure worth recording, which is more than can be said for all those shelves and stacks of oral transcripts piling up in recent years.[137]

Tuchman's point is understandable, but is rejected by this researcher. History is more than the tracings of the "Great Figures." History, too, is the lives of the "lesser," the people who often unconsciously implement strategies, the people who can shed light on the

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[137] Barbara Tuchman, op. cit., p. 76.

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day-to-day operations and ramifications that connect abstract policies to tangible realities. General Marshall may have led the U.S. Army in the Second World War and proposed the economic plan that later rebuilt Europe, but the histories are incomplete if the stories of American soldiers and hungry German refugees are ignored. And, most importantly, history is neither metallurgy nor sanitary engineering -- today's "trash" could be tomorrow's "vein of gold." The PT boat captain of 1943 could be the president of the United States in 1963. The Naval Academy midshipman of 1945 could be the president of the United States in 1979. Even if an "anonymous" person remains little-known, unlike John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter, there is always the possibility that social veins of gold in oral-historical documentation later be found can be found in what had been considered a mountain of trash.

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Finally, there is the process of synthesizing the thesis of this study and the methodology of this study.

The thesis of this study is that the newspaper ceased to exist because it had been losing money for several years and had no foreseeable chance of making money because its poor circulation led to a lack of sufficient interest by advertisers. Factors that led to the

deterioration of its circulation included the disintegration of its longtime urban and inner-suburban blue-collar/housewife readership base, the failure to attract new readers in other demographic groups in sufficient numbers, the two-pronged opposition of the Sunpapers, the weakness of the Hearst Corporation's newspaper management, and a variety of logistic and cultural problems that were faced by all major metropolitan newspapers including television, distribution difficulties and changes in commuting habits.

But even though these factors -- these explanations for the drop in circulation -- are credible, they could only be considered assumptions from a historian's standpoint at the beginning of this study. The explanations of the causation were limited to answers derived from the "prevailing wisdom" or from "common sense," with little empirical data and even less critical analysis to support them.

Journalistic inquiries into the closing of the News American had been conducted by journalists as journalism, a situation that did not lend itself to objectivity, even if it had led to accuracy. Gaye Tuchman's seminal work on objectivity found that it can be no more than an ideal to attain, because of the inherent biases of observers and the constraints placed by journalistic form and

ritual.[138] The picture was complicated in Baltimore because the journalism inquiring about the closure of the News American was comprised wholly of inquiries by journalists about a journalistic institution, a situation that is among the ripest for subjectivity.

The media historically have covered themselves less than they have covered other institutions. With its little experience on its own "beat," the media has no tradition of trying to obtain objectivity there, and consequently no opportunity to define what they believe objective reporting about the media to be. That factor, however, pales compared to the real difficulty that the media had in gaining access to concrete facts when reporting the closure of the News American.

An acute problem with the journalist's ideal of objectivity -- or the existence of objectivity to journalists who believe in it -- is that journalists have little ability to be objective about a newspaper that has ceased to exist. The researcher found this viewpoint among the former staff members of the News American that he interviewed, among other members of the Maryland media, in the journalistic writing about the News American after its closure and, indeed, in other

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[138] Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual," American Journal of Sociology, 77, (January 1972) pp. 110-131.

journalism about other newspaper closures. Since there is little institutional reporting about journalists and journalism, there is almost no track record, no norms for the journalist to assume when assessing objective reporting about journalism.

The researcher realizes that he also may be imprisoned by his own biases, but is convinced that the situation is, at worst, not identical and, at best, substantially different. This study is by a professional journalist writing about journalism, but with significant historiographical and social science training. While many journalists believe in objectivity, most historians today are willing to acknowledge that their work is unavoidably subjective, at least in the way that journalists use the term.

Historians are faced with many of the same factors that prohibit objectivity to journalists -- although historians, too, try to approach objectivity if not attain it. Like journalists today, historians were once intrigued with the idea of objectivity, in the philosophy of "scientific history" developed by the German historian Leopold von Ranke in the 19th Century. With the duty to describe the events of the past wie es eigentlich gewesen

-- the way they actually happened[139] -- historians tried to be objective by searching for the truth endlessly, taking into account a knowledge of the factors surrounding events, an interest in all aspects of society, an interest in motivation and impartiality of the highest order.[140]

Von Ranke sought to define the historian's method and to define history as a discipline that permitted practitioners to find an ultimate, inalienable truth to each historical event. Along the way, he also conceptualized the idea of internal correspondence and the historical seminar.[141] But Beard, as well as Carl Becker and similarly minded historians, came to reject "scientific history" because each practitioner brought a different frame of reference to the subject of study. And, Beard said, subjectivity was inherent because, among other factors, the recordings of an event included only a fraction of an event, so historians had to either deal with or create a "selection and organization" of the

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139 Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1962, reprint of 1936 edition), p.246.

140 Leopold von Ranke, The Theory and Practice of History, ed. by Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, trans. by Wilma A. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1973), pp. 38-41.

141 Barnes, op. cit., p. 246.

facts and, "Into the section of topics, the choice and arrangement of facts, the historian's 'me' will enter, no matter what efforts he makes to be neutral."[142] An excellent definition of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity was provided by Barzun and Graff, who said that objectivity can be attained only after the objective is rejected as a synonym of truth: "An objective judgment is one made by testing in all ways possible one subjective impression, so as to arrive at a knowledge of objects."[143]

Barnes goes further:

> We must recognize that absolute historical truth is a complete fiction, and that at best we can only hope for approximation that are partly the result of accurate research, partly the result of lucky accidents of interpretation, and partly the product of special ingenuity and subtlety on the part of a particular historian.[144]

Above and beyond the subjectivity that accompanies the historical pursuit, there is an added element of subjectivity in oral history because of the interactive nature of the process. The oral history interviewee fields questions or responds to statements provided by

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142 Beard, op. cit., pp. 83-87.

143 Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, The Modern Researcher, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), p. 185.

144 Barnes, op. cit., p. 271.

the oral history interviewer. In such cases, the historian sets the agenda of the meeting and the conversation. When writing a letter or a diary, a artifact-maker is working within his own agenda, even if the historian later is selective in choosing the artifacts that relate most to the study. Not so with the artifact-maker who is interviewed for an oral history. In fact, the presence and questions of an interviewer can create a historical artifact that did not even exist until the moment expressed by the interviewee:

> Oral history is not strictly a means of retrival of information, but rather one involving the generation of knowledge. Essentially, an oral history narrative is the product of an interaction between interview and interviewee. By its very nature such a process determines what is going to be recalled and how it will be recalled. The interviewer is like a medium, whose own presence, interests, and questions conjure corresponding memories. Even if the interviewer tries to remain inconspicuous, the very process is intrusive.[145]

The mechanics of interviewing that were listed in several source of information about oral history were implemented by the researcher. These mechanics included:

-- Preparing for the interview by gaining a full

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145 Tamara Hareven, "The Search for a Generational Memory," in Dunaway and Baum, op. cit., p. 249, her emphasis.

familiarity of the topic studied,[146] which gererates confidence by the interviewee in the knowledge of the interviewer, helps establish motivations, jars memories, sorts out bad answers and provides the ability to recognize statements that would lead to useful follow-up questions;[147]

-- Developing a strong rapport with interviewees by being empathetic if not sympathetic with them;[148]

-- Knowing one's own biases and being able to conceal them from the interviewee as much as possible;[149]

-- Taking careful notes to help with interpretation, recalling important portions of the interview, making notes on validity and reliability and showing interest in what the interviewee has to say.[150]

-- Asking leading questions to provide context, provoke reactions and ample answers.[151]

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146 James Hoopes, Oral History: An Introduction for Students, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 72-75.

147 Peter Friedlander, "Theory, Method and Oral History," in Dunaway and Baum, op. cit., p. 140.

148 Allen Nevins, "The Uses of Oral History," in Dunaway and Baum, op. cit., p. 33.

149 William Cutler III, "Accuracy in Oral History Interviewing," in Dunaway and Baum, op. cit., p. 82.

150 Hoopes, op. cit., p. 89.

151 Hoopes, op. cit., p. 100; Cutter, op. cit., p. 83.

Two editors of the newspaper were interviewed. Their observations were extremely valuable because their senior status provided them with exposure to the mechanics as well as to the human elements involved in the running of the newspaper.

Ronald D. Martin, editor of the News American from 1978 to 1980, provided information in a 45-minute interview about the substantial changes made at the newspaper during his editorship, the most dramatic period of change discovered by the interviewer. He was found to be frank but terse and unable or unwilling to recall details in some cases. Martin did not volunteer information, but provided answers in varying degrees of completeness to all questions. He was particularly helpful in giving the motivation and goals of the newspaper's management during his editorship, but the lack of detail volunteered sometimes disappointed the researcher. Martin, who was managing editor of USA Today at the time he was interviewed, reflected that newspaper's style during the interview -- speaking expositively but not particularly descriptively. He reflected on the News American in the framework of it being a part of his professional life, while most others interviewed placed the newspaper in a wider frame of reference.

James D. Toedtman, editor of the News American from 1981 to 1986, provided a wealth of detailed information about the period of his editorship in a three-hour interview. He was frank, expository, interpretive, descriptive, full of details and willing to provide documentation such as memoranda and rare copies of the newspaper that could not be found in any library. In short, Toedtman was an oral researcher's dream, and this researcher had to take care to try not to put a unduly positive bias on his observations. Toedtman would generally elaborate and respond well to follow-up questions. However, Toedtman was reserved when assessing the contributions of Martin, Jon Katz and the Hearst Corporation toward the newspaper's downfall. At the time of the interview, Toedtman was managing editor of New York Newsday, a position he still holds.

Hugh Brennan, the national advertising manager during the newspaper's last 15 years, was the sole advertising representative who consented to having his remarks taped. He was found by the researcher to be frank and reliable. He was chosen because of his executive position and his long familiarity with the situation at the newspaper. He was extremely helpful in explaining the importance of events as well as providing the raw information about events that occurred. He retired after the newspaper

closed. The other advertising representative interviewed was Michael Onorato, the newspaper's advertising director from 1983 to 1986. At the time of the interview, he was advertising director for the Pennysaver newspapers of Southern Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Anne Arundel County. He would not consent to having his remarks taped but permitted notes and quotes to be taken from his remarks. This researcher believes Onorato's information was truthful but sometimes self-promotional and incomplete.

Five veterans of the "old" News American, the period before the editorship of Martin, were interviewed. Feature writer J. William Joynes, who retired in the late 1970s, and reporter-columnist Michael Olesker, who left the newspaper during Martin's editorship; reporter Joseph Nawrozki, sports editor John Steadman and cultural critic R.P. Harriss, who remained with the newspaper until it closed. Joynes and Steadman, who is now a sports columnist with the Evening Sun, were the most bitter of any of those interviewed by this researcher. They were truthful but their interpretations lost credibility because they were unable to view the situation with a degree of detatchment. This researcher decided this was because of their professional setbacks during the Martin editorship, when Joynes was forced into retirement and

Steadman was effectively demoted from sports editor to sports columnist. In addition, the two shared the perception that the newspaper was not a predominantly "low-brow" newspaper, a perception that was countered by all other interviewees and by statistics found by this researcher. Their expository, reportorial comments are accepted by this researcher.

Olesker, who left the newspaper to accept a higher-paying, more prestigious and more secure columnist's position at the morning Sun, and Harriss and Nawrozki were better able or more willing to consider the situation broadly and to more closely approach objectivity. All appeared to be frank with this researcher. Nawrozki and Olesker provided valuable information and perspectives about the 1960s and 1970s at the News American. Harriss's knowledge of the newspaper, as an employee, stretched back to the 1950s and, as an observer of the Baltimore media, back to the 1920s. The sole drawback in the use of his interview was Harriss's self-acknowledged difficulty remembering names, which required this researcher to take extra steps in the verification process.

Ralph Vigoda and Liz Bowie, the other two people whose oral histories were recorded, provided special insight as middle-management and entry-level employees of

the newspaper who came to Baltimore after the Martin-Katz period began. Vigoda, an editor who came to the newspaper in 1980 and served in several middle-management posts, and Bowie, who was hired as a reporter less than a year before the newspaper closed, provided an outsider's view of the company. Their frames of reference were substantially different from those of the long-time employees and those of the two editors interviewed. Vigoda was state editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer at the time of the interview. Bowie was an environmental reporter with the morning Sun at the time of the interview.

Two lengthy discussions with former employees were also useful for this study. An interview with Tonnie Katz, the acting editor of the newspaper at the time it closed, was taped but technical problems prohibited making a fully reliable transcription. She was managing editor of the Orange County (Calif.) Register at the time of the interview. Notes taken at the time of interview and from audible parts of the tape were valuable. This researcher also had two conversations with Jacques Kelly, who became a neighborhood columnist at the Evening Sun, but was unable to schedule a final interview with him to be taped.

All of those interviewed provided oral releases for

their remarks to be used for academic purposes. In a departure from standard oral-historical methodology, written releases were not secured. The reason for this departure was because some of the interviewees were uncomfortable with the concept of written releases because of their familiarity with journalistic norms, which call for only oral releases from interviewees. In contrast with the standards of oral-historical researchers, transcripts were not returned to interview subjects for their approval. However, this researcher's practice of not returning transcripts was in keeping with those in the journalistic profession.

Chapter 4
The News American Until the Second World War

For most of the 1700s, Annapolis was the premier city in Maryland. It was the colonial capital, the colony's major port and its center of culture. In 1727, the Maryland Gazette was founded by the colony's official printer, Jonas Green, and Maryland's media history began.[152] Two years later, on the banks of the Inner Harbor between the Patapsco River and Jones' Falls, the settlement of Baltimore was founded.[153]

For many years, the settlement had no newspaper. Instead, settlers -- at least those that were literate and could afford the subscription price -- could get their news by subscribing to the Maryland Gazette or one of the Philadelphia journals. Baltimore grew through the 18th century, aided by a magnificent harbor and the westward migration of the people who would become the Americans. Baltimore became a trading town, catching up to Annapolis because it was closer to the farms of central Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.[154] The

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152 Capital-Gazette Newspapers (no author listed), "Notes & Anecdotes on America's Oldest Newspaper Publishers," (Annapolis, Md., Capital-Gazette Newspapers, 1987).

153 Walsh and Fox, op. cit., pp. 89-91.

154 Hoppenstein, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

growth was so pronounced that Baltimore, which had only 200 residents in 1752, became the third-largest city in the United States at the end of the century.[155]

And, in 1773, it got a newspaper.

The founder was William Goddard, born in New London, Connecticut, and the founder of Providence's first newspaper in 1762. After moving to New York and then Philadelphia, where he published the Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser for several years. In the early 1770s, he moved south to Baltimore, establishing himself as a job printer with type and a press that came to Baltimore from England without their owner, who died during the journey. The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser would contain, Goddard wrote in the first issue, dated 20 August 1773, "Not only the public news, which I shall collect and compile with the greatest of care, but on the failure of anecdotes of that sort, I will supply the room with such moral pieces from the best writers, as will conduce most to inculcate good principals." It also included several advertisements, including one from Colonel George Washington which offered 20,000 acres of land for sale.[156]

Goddard's newspaper, which brought news from the

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155 Zimmer, op. cit., p. 2.

156 Kelly, op. cit., pp. 3-5.

northern colonies via a postal route he had established between Baltimore and Philadelphia, was created with investments from local merchants and sustained by their advertising and the 10-shilling-a-year payments from subscribers. The newspaper, which appeared weekly, was usually four pages -- a single broadsheet -- with news from the American colonies, England and Europe. Little local news was printed, because the community was so small that residents usually received the news by word of mouth by the time the newspaper came out.[157] By 1774, Goddard had tired of the enterprise, reflecting the transitory nature of his enterprises in Providence, New York and Philadelphia. Leaving his sister, Mary Katherine Goddard, in charge of the Baltimore newspaper, William Goddard began piecing together a broader postal system to compete with the crown postal system as the American colonies moved towards rebellion.[158] Mary Katherine Goddard, considered to be among the most outstanding of the women in publishing in colonial days, led the paper for the next 10 years. Her newspaper was a Patriot newspaper, and she was responsible for the first official printing of the Declaration of Independence with

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[157] Hoppenstein, op. cit., p. 4.

[158] Kelly, op. cit. p. 4.

the names of the signers included, in 1777[159]. She was forced to beg for rags to make paper so the newspaper could survive the shortages caused by the Revolution.[160] But the newspaper survived the Revolution, and was the first newspaper in the new country to announce the signing of the Treaty of Paris, thanks in large part to a Baltimore clipper ship that came home first with the news. Later in 1783, it became a semiweekly, publishing Tuesdays and Fridays.[161]

After the war, beginning with the 6 January 1784 issue, William Goddard assumed control, leading to a permanent rift between him and his sister.[162] After that, the ownership changed quickly. In 1785, Goddard took Edward Longworthy into partnership, and later his brother-in-law, James Angell, joined the firm. In 1793, Angell assumed ownership of the newspaper, accepting Paul James Sullivan as a partner later in the year and turning the newspaper into a tri-weekly.[163]

The move, in response to the creation of the city's

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159 Maurine Beasley and Stella Gibbons (Eds.), Women in Media: A Documentary Sourcebook, (Washington: Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 1977), p.2.

160 Kelly, op. cit., p. 9.

161 Ibid, p. 11.

162 Ibid, p. 12.

163 Ibid..

first daily newspaper in 1791, David Graham's Baltimore Daily Repository, was the first of several in the 1790s that demonstrated a pronounced instability at the Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser. In 1794, Francis Brumfield bought the paper and a year later, he merged it with Philip Edward's Baltimore Daily Advertiser to create the Maryland Journal and Baltimore Universal Daily Advertiser. The paper ceased publication on 1 July 1797, but the hardware and subscriber list was purchased by William Pechin, who changed its name to the Baltimore Intelligencer and began publishing on 7 March 1798.[164] (This publication gap led the Baltimore Sun to write in its obituary of the News American, that the paper dated back only to 1799 -- not even 1798 -- instead of 1773, as claimed by the News American.[165] Alexander Martin took control of the paper for Pechin later that year, renaming it the American and Daily Advertiser. As the name implied, it was now a daily, and entered a 16-year period of stability, compared to the previous six years under five owners. The new owners were Martin and Pechin, with Mary Katherine Goddard retaining a share of the

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164 Hoppenstein, op. cit., p. 9.

165 Will Englund, "The News, fiercely unpretentious, leaves long, proud, spirited legacy," Baltimore Sun, 28 May 1986, p. 6A.

ownership.[166] The instability was caused in large part by the creation of Graham's newspaper. The conflict was the first Baltimore newspaper war, a conflict that would continue in various forms for another 195 years, even though Graham's newspaper died in 1835, after several permutations.[167]

Now a daily, the American and Daily Advertiser continued under the management of Martin and Pechin as the Democratic- Republican party organ until 1815. The Martin-Pechin years were marked by growth and the newspaper became a major voice of Baltimore's commercial interests.[168] The newspaper's content in 1811 was 71.1 percent advertising, 2.88 percent Baltimore news, 14.04 percent domestic news, 4.48 percent foreign news, 6.68 percent marine news and .63 percent "miscellaneous."[169] Corresponding percentages for the Federal Gazette, the other major daily in the city, were 67.96 advertising, 1.96 Baltimore news, 14.55 domestic news, 6.76 foreign news, 7.47 marine news and 1.31 "miscellaneous."[170] Although the local news proportions were tiny, the

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166 Kelly, op. cit., p. 13.

167 Hoppenstein, op. cit., p. 11.

168 Englund, op. cit., p.7.

169 Zimmer, op. cit. p. 358.

170 Ibid, p. 356.

American published half again as much local news as the Federal Gazette, which Zimmer[171] credibly believed to be due to Pechin's interest in civic affairs. Content analyses for the years 1799, 1803, 1807 and 1816 found similar results. No hard data was available on circulation, but the American was apparently the city's largest paper during the first two decades of the 19th Century.[172]

Near the end of this period, British land forces in the War of 1812 burned Washington, routed the Federals at Gaithersburg and turned north. British ships sailed up the Chesapeake Bay. The American and Daily Advertiser suspended publication for three weeks, from 29 August to 20 September 1814, as Major Pechin led a Maryland regiment at the Battle of North Point and British ships attempted to break through to the Patapsco. On 14 September, Francis Scott Key watched over the ramparts, penning his "Defence of Fort McHenry," which appeared in the American on 21 September.[173]

The paper was transferred to Catherine Bose Dobbin, Thomas Murphy and William Bose in 1815, with Pechin apparently controlling part or all of the stock for a

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171 Ibid, p. 114.

172 Ibid, p. 176.

173 Johnson, et al., op. cit., p.17.

period.[174] The newspaper retained the dominant position in the city -- among those who bought newspapers, a group that was still a small portion of the population.[175]

Baltimore at the beginning of 1837 was like most other major cities of its time, with commercial newspapers that catered to their few but powerful readers. Zimmer noted that the city's readership was "exclusive, not egalitarian. Its membership tended to be restricted to those who could read a newspaper and those who could afford its daily purchase." Skilled Baltimore tradesmen were earning $1.25 to $1.50 a day and annual subscriptions for dailies started at $6 a year, the equivalent of a week's pay.[176]

In 1833, however, a newspaper revolution began with the beginnings of the New York Sun, the first successful penny newspaper. Arunah S. Abell, a printer of the paper, joined in partnership with two others to create the Philadelphia Public Ledger in 1836 and, a year later, The Sun in Baltimore.[177] The penny newspapers catered to a different crowd than that sought by the American and other conventional newspapers, which generally sold for 6

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174 Kelly, op. cit., p. 13.

175 Englund, op. cit., p. 7.

176 Zimmer, op. cit., pp.46-47.

177 Williams, op. cit., p. 181.

and a quarter cents a day. Additionally, The Sun had different content: It offered something closer to what we consider to be news today -- police and court news. It was not only a new product to readers of the old commercial newspapers like the American, but it was also regarded as tasteless. But, as Johnson et.al. put it:

> The point that the elite habitually overlooked was that a vivid account of the beating administered to a constable at the Fish Market, while it may not be edifying, is far closer to the lives and interests of the masses of the city in which it occurred than are the complimentary letters exchanged between Daniel Webster and a welcoming committee at Pittsburgh. When Abell printed an account of the fight and his chief competitor printed the letters in full, the other may have been the more dignified, but Abell's story was the one that people read.[178]

Abell's non-partisan, general-audience newspaper shot quickly to a circulation of 11,000 in February 1838, at least three times the circulation of the American.[179] The American no longer dominated the city's newspaper market.

In 1853, the American was sold to Charles Carroll Fulton, and the paper changed course, seeking the same penny-newspaper market which had catapulted the Sun to such success. Circulation increased as Fulton advocated civic reform in the newspaper's columns and called for

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178 Johnson, et al., op. cit., p. 34.

179 Williams, op. cit., p. 13.

the creation of Druid Hill Park and municipal takeover of the city's police, fire and water departments.[180]

The newspaper's fortunes increased even more when the Civil War broke out, and the American was on the "right side." Fulton was a Republican, a strong supporter of Abraham Lincoln and the Union -- the only major publisher to be supportive in the city. The Sun, a states-rights supporter which was politically independent and wary of being suppressed like nine other newspapers in the city, was timid in its coverage of the war.[181] Despite the presence of the provost marshal's office in Baltimore and its scrutiny of copy, Fulton was able to publish and to send three correspondents (including himself) with the Army of the Potomac to Gettysburg in 1863. During its 1864 campaigns to the war front in Virginia, his was the only newspaper in the ideology-torn city to send any.[182] The importance of being on the right side of Union authorities during this period cannot be overestimated: Aside from the threat of shutdowns, Baltimore newspapers were prohibited from printing any references to the Confederacy (including using "C.S.A." in obituaries) or

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180 Kelly, op. cit., p. 14.

181 Williams, op. cit., p. 154.

182 Williams, op. cit., p. 57; Kelly, op. cit., p. 15.

reprinting content from five northern newspapers: The New York World, the New York Express, the Cincinnati Enquirer, the Chicago Times and the Caucasian.[183] Fulton emerged from the war having spent two days in jail (for supposedly disclosing military secrets; Lincoln ordered him freed) and enjoying a healthy circulation increase that brought his newspaper near the Sun. He also gained a son-in-law who would eventually take over the paper.[184]

Felix Angus, who at 26 was the youngest man to be promoted to brigadier general in the Union Army, had been taken in by Fulton after suffering a war injury in 1862, with Fulton's daughter, Annie, as his nurse. After returning to war, and then coming back from the front in 1865, Angus married Annie. Fulton gave Angus a job in the business office, and the two cooperated in running the newspaper by the 1870s. The newspaper was making money, enough for Angus to be lauded for his business acumen and to build a six-story iron building, which opened in 1876.[185] The building, a story taller than the Sun building at Baltimore and South streets, was meant to show the newspaper's rising stature, but 1876 circulation

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183 Williams, op. cit., p. 54.

184 Kelly, op. cit., p. 16; Johnson et al, op. cit., p. 62.

185 Kelly, op. cit., p. 15.

figures showed a decided gap (Sun: 35,000; American: 20,000) in favor of Abell's paper.[186]

There was another newspaper in the neighborhood at the nation's centennial. It was the Baltimore News, distinct from the other Baltimore newspapers in three ways: It was a penny newspaper in an age when inflation had raised the price of the others to at least two cents; it was a tabloid; and it published in the evening. Founded by Edmond V. Hermange, a former Sun journalist, it was accepted by advertisers quickly[187] gaining a circulation of 15,000 in 1876[188] even if it failed to distinguish itself editorially.[189]

By the 1890s, the News and the American had switched positions: The News was Baltimore's second newspaper, and the American was its third. In large part, the switch was due to Angus's lethargy and the energy and crusades of the News's new editor, Charles G. Grasty.[190] The American had become a joke in Baltimore newspapering. Mencken, wrote that "Sun reporters were hobbled by their

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186 Document in Enoch Pratt Library archives, date and source of the document unknown.

187 Kelly, op. cit., p. 15.

188 Enoch Pratt Library, op. cit.

189 Englund, op. cit., p. 7A

190 Williams, op. cit., p. 193.

paper's craze for mathematical accuracy, and most American reporters were too stupid to recognize good stuff when they saw it."[191] In 1895, when political controversy erupted over the machine politics of U.S. Senator Arthur Pue Gorman and Baltimore city Democratic Party boss I. Freeman Rasin, the American -- still the Republican Party newspaper in Baltimore -- had employees on the Gorman-Rasin payroll without the fact being concealed, and public respect for the paper and circulation diminished.[192] The Sun, by now the city's Democratic paper, and the News, now the independent paper, were attacking the machine at every opportunity -- to the point where Marylanders elected Lloyd Lowndes governor, the first time that any Republican had been elected to the governorship since the Civil War.[193]

There were other changes, including one very important shift that would set the stage for the Sun-News American rivalries in the 20th century. When created by Abell, the Sun was the paper for the masses. As time went by, it became the newspaper of the elite in the city, while retaining strong circulation among the general audience. By the end of the century, it was no

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191 Mencken, op. cit., p 23.

192 Johnson, et al., op. cit., p. 189.

193 Walsh and Fox, op. cit., p. 605.

longer a penny newspaper. As a two-cent broadsheet, it was more difficult to read than the tabloid News (which shortly thereafter converted to a broadsheet) on the trollies, which increasingly became more and more used by the middle and lower classes to get to and from work. The Sun's policies, stories and typographies were very conservative, compared to those of the News, as Abell aged and his successors were afraid to adjust the founder's formula. In many senses, the Sun at the end of the century was in the position that the American was in 1837, and the News was in the position that the Sun had once been in.

Grasty, the News's publisher, was a journalistic prodigy. He was a high-school Latin teacher at the age of 16 when he took a reporting job at the Mexico (Mo.,) Intelligencer. Two years later, he moved to the Kansas City Star as a reporter. Eighteen months later, at 20, he was editor. He came east and, in late 1891, noting that Hermange wanted to sell the News, he tapped into his Kansas City business connections and bought the paper with four investors.[194] Grasty was a civic crusader fighting against the inadequacies of city government, attacking utility trusts and investigating the housing and employment conditions of the city's poor. Grasty's

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194 Kelly, op. cit., p.12.

efforts not only helped those hurt by the bad city government, but they also resulted in a healthy circulation increase. The News's successes -- perhaps the most outstanding of which was a expose of an illegal lottery operated by the Democratic machine -- propelled the Sun into aggressive reporting.[195]

At the turn of the century, the Sun was still the largest newspaper in the city, with the News rising and the American sliding. The Sun, which had cost two cents since Civil War inflationary pressures forced an increase in its price in 1864, lowered its price to one cent in 1902, undoubtedly in large part because of the pressure from the penny News.[196] Grasty's News, and the American -- which would remain in Angus's hands until 1920 -- meanwhile had engaged in a mutual assistance agreement in cases of emergencies that would prevent one newspaper or the other from publishing.[197]

Such an emergency occurred -- in spades -- on 7 February 1904, a Sunday, when Baltimore's downtown burned down. In all, 1,343 buildings, including those of the all the city's newspapers except for the soon-to-die Baltimore World, were destroyed with damage estimated at

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[195] Williams, op. cit., p. 90.

[196] Ibid., p. 142.

[197] Ibid, p. 108.

$100 million.[198] As the News building burned down, Frederic Taylor said, "Thank God the roaches and the waterbugs are dead," a portend of the comments that News American staffers would later make about the surroundings in which they worked.[199]

That evening, Grasty and Angus assembled at the Raleigh Hotel in Baltimore, outside the fire zone, with Grasty irritable and Angus whining for Grasty's help, according to an account by a Grasty deputy.[200] That day, arrangements were made for both papers to be published in Washington, with the evening News sharing the morning Washington Post's quarters and the morning American sharing the old evening Washington Times's building. On Monday, the American was unable to print, but the News appeared in Baltimore on the 4 p.m. train from Washington, distributed only a half-hour later than usual. By the following day, the American was back on the streets.[201] By that time, action had started for the papers to be printed in the city again. On Monday, Grasty called Adolph Ochs, knowing that the owner of the

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198 Johnson, et al., op. cit., p. 241.

199 Williams, op. cit., p. 108.

200 Stuart Olivier, "Olivier Tells How News Came Out Despite Fire," Baltimore News-Post, 5 February 1954, page unavailable.

201 Ibid.

New York Times had recently purchased the Philadelphia Times and merged it with another Ochs-owned Philadelphia newspaper. He bought the presses and linotype over the telephone, and the equipment was in Baltimore within 10 days. On 28 February, the News and the American were printed in Baltimore again in an abandoned foundry, the machinery powered by a steam locomotive parked at the side of the structure.[202]

Grasty sold the News in February 1908, because he was crushed by the actions of an employee who, during the 1907 election campaign, sold to the Sun proof sheets of a News expose on Austin Crothers, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate. The Sun, which by now had settled with the Democratic Party, was able to publish a rebuttal to the charges, disproving many of them, 12 hours after Grasty's "October surprise."[203]

But one thing happened just before Grasty sold the newspaper -- the News surpassed the Sun. In Grasty's last month in control of the newspaper, January 1908, the News averaged 82,661 in circulation -- more than the Sun, although the margin was not clear. For the first time in 70 years, the Sun was not the city's best-selling newspaper. The newspapers began a fierce battle for

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202 Williams, op. cit., p.108.

203 Johnson, et al., op. cit., pp. 279-284.

primacy, which escalated when Grasty returned to Baltimore as publisher of the Sun and started the Evening Sun in 1910. Meanwhile, the News was re-designed and began issuing multiple editions, which updated the afternoon news on the streets of Baltimore for the first time.[204] The News by now was also battling against the Sunday Sun, which had been founded in 1901, with a unique creation: A Sunday afternoon News. The paper, which started 20 December 1908, was profitable even if unconventional in its publication time.[205]

The buyer of the News was Frank A. Munsey, who, it was said, "bought and sold newspapers with the reckless abandon of a sailor on leave."[206] Munsey was an out-of-town chain owner, the first of this breed in Baltimore but certainly not the last. He owned several newspapers, including the New York Herald, the Paris Herald and the Washington Times, and was known to be a "ruthless killer of newspapers," immediately folding those which were unprofitable. But there was no need to do that with the News, because Munsey increased Grasty's $800,000 annual gross revenues in 1909 to $2 million in 1912 -- in large part because the new product did not

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204 Ibid., pp. 317-321.

205 Williams, op. cit., p. 161.

206 Kelly, op. cit., p. 18.

annoy potential advertisers the way Grasty's muckraking journal had done.[207]

Munsey and Grasty fought a personal war in the most public way during the first half of the 1910s, the period when Grasty was in charge of the Sunpapers. The dispute was especially nasty during the three-way presidential campaign of 1912, when Munsey and the News supported Progressive candidate Theodore Roosevelt against Democrat Woodrow Wilson, the Sun's choice, and incumbent Republican William Howard Taft. The debate, conducted with front-page editorials in the Evening Sun and the Evening News, soon centered on Grasty's creation of the Evening Sun, which Munsey said violated an agreement that Grasty stay out of the Baltimore market. Grasty replied that the Evening Sun was in place to prevent Munsey "from transplanting to Baltimore the men and methods that have caused the failure of his newspaper enterprises elsewhere."[208] The feud, no doubt, was not helped by Munsey's decision in 1910 to tear down the News building which Grasty had erected only six years earlier, after the Baltimore fire, because Munsey claimed "it looked like a club." He erected the Munsey Building, as it is still called, which ranked among the tallest in the city

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207 Englund, op. cit., p. 7A.

208 Johnson, et al., op. cit., pp. 318-19.

-- 19 stories tall -- with a large lobby to accommodate a bank. When no bank emerged to lease the space, he started the Munsey Trust Company, with $1 million in capital, which eventually became a key part of the Equitable Trust Co.[209]

Ownership of the News was transferred to Stuart Olivier, Munsey's general manager in Baltimore in 1915, and transferred back to Munsey two years later. In 1920, Angus's morning American -- and the evening Baltimore Star, which he had created in 1908 -- was swallowed up by Munsey for $1.5 million, after the octogenarian Angus demanded a increase from the already agreedupon $1.25 million just before papers were signed.[210]

This time Munsey lived down to his reputation as a killer of newspapers, folding the Star instantly. The American was retained as a morning companion to the evening News. After buying three newspapers in the city -- or four, if one considers the re-purchase of the News from Olivier -- the "drunken sailor" of journalism had one more deal to make in Baltimore. On 1 April 1923 he sold the News, the American and their Sunday papers to William Randolph Hearst.[211]

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209 Williams, op. cit., p. 162.

210 Ibid.

211 Englund, op. cit., p. 7A.

When the News and American were sold to Hearst, they joined his largest newspaper chain -- the largest in terms of circulation in American history. Hearst's father, George Hearst, bought the San Francisco Evening Examiner in 1880, and operated it as the California Democratic Party organ[212] giving it to his son, William Randolph, in 1887 when he was elected to the U.S. Senate.[213] The younger Hearst, 23 years old, emboldened and empowered with the family's fabulous wealth, sent correspondents worldwide and tripled the circulation by 1899 to 80,000 -- although he had to spend $500,000 to put it on a break-even basis.[214] By the 1890s, Hearst was a plutomaniac, "treating his newspaper employees as a part of his personal retinue," in one case ordering his New York advertising representative to send a parcel immediately to his vacation spot in Eqypt. The contents: 12 cans of baked beans, 12 cans of clam chowder and two codfish.[215] As such behavior became more and more extreme, he drained the newspaper empire that he created. Baltimore was not immune from Hearst's whims. In the 1940s, Hearst ordered his Baltimore newspaper to find

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[212] Carlson and Bates, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

[213] Ibid., p. 47.

[214] Ibid., p. 74.

[215] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

some Maryland terrapins to be flown to his San Simeon castle to be made into terrapin stew.[216]

Hearst newspapering became a chain affair in 1895 when Hearst bought the New York Journal, a newspaper with 77,000 circulation, anonymous in a city with more than a dozen dailies. He quickly noted that the city's most intellectual paper of the time, the Post, had the city's lowest circulation, and the raciest, Joseph Pulitzer's World, had the highest. In this, Hearst saw the formula to high circulation, and he pursued it with stories -- some true -- of scandals and crimes and Cuban revolutionaries fighting the evil Spaniards.[217] Keying upon the Cuban situation as a way to raise circulation, Hearst unleashed a torrent of meglomaniacal jingoistic fiction sustained by reports of violations of international law.

His tactic helped bring the United States to war with Spain and, above all, raised the Journal's circulation. By the end of the war, the Journal's circulation was 1,250,000.[218] Except for the opinions of writers on his own newspapers, or those of people close to him, such as Coblenz or Older, there was

a unanimous verdict: William Randolph Hearst was a

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[216] John Steadman interview, p. 7.

[217] Swanberg, op. cit., p. 95.

[218] Ibid., pp. 119-204.

a unanimous verdict: William Randolph Hearst was a contemptible journalist who often was successful in the first third of the century, but at the price of pouring millions of dollars into unsuccessful products in cities where newspaper readers had become discriminating.

When the News and American were added to the Hearst empire, this raised his roster to nine morning newspapers, 15 afternoon newspapers and 14 Sunday newspapers, not including the Sunday afternoon News, which was discontinued immediately.[219] The morning Sun then proceeded to destroy Hearst's morning American. In the evenings, the News pulled farther ahead of the Evening Sun but it still remained in second place overall behind the morning Sun. In 1927 and 1928, Hearst tried to pull ahead. The News was given a strong budget from the New York headquarters to have a news-rich News compared to the Sunpapers. A late sports section was begun at the News, and advertising was removed from pages two and three.[220]

Williams notes various other gimmicks introduced by Hearst:

> Munsey's News was conventional in design; few photographs were used, and headlines did not shout. As soon as Hearst took over, headlines

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[219] Villard, op. cit., p. 197; Williams, op. cit. 162.

[220] Parmeter, op. cit., p. 142.

> and photographs were splashed across the front page. Three ace reporters covered crime stories in depth and detail. A "pink" edition appeared on pinkish paper. Sports and features were emphasized and a page of fiction was added. Later a news-tip contest was introduced, paying $50 for the best weekly news tip, preferably about a crime.[221]

1928 was a critical year. The News assumed circulation supremacy, a position it did not yield until 1976. In 1927, the morning Sun circulated 119,000 copies and the News 116,000. In 1928, the News circulated 130,000 to the morning Sun's 127,000. However, the morning American folded in 1928, its circulation unable to rise above 55,000.[222] The folding was understandable, for the newspaper was losing money. But it had grave consequences. The Hearst newspapers lost their ability to sell package advertising, an ability the Sunpapers would exploit in its marketing against the News. Additionally, half a century later when the News American was at the beginning of its afternoon decline, it had no background in morning newspapering. And, when the subject of a joint-operating agreements was broached with the Sun papers in 1985 and 1986, there was no morning--newspaper bargaining chip with which to counter the Sunpapers' view that a joint-operating agreement would be

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221 Williams, op. cit., p. 176.

222 Parmeter, op. cit., pp. 142-149.

a losing proposition for them because the Evening Sun would have to close. A morning newspaper would have allowed each newspaper to kill its weaker paper in exchange for the joint-operating agreement and the monopoly it offered, business-wise if not journalistically.

The News's move into first place was more immediately important, however, in the scope of Baltimore journalism. Besides satiating the basic journalistic need to be first, it permitted the News to bill itself for many years as "the first in the sixth," meaning that it sold more newspapers than any other in the Baltimore market, the nation's sixth-largest through the much of the mid-20th century. This primacy in many ways was the newspaper's sole attraction to advertisers, giving them the ability to send out a single advertisement in a single newspaper to the region's largest audience.[223] Hearst, perhaps remembering the moribund state of the New York Evening Post in 1895, took the low road in his markets. His products were not geared to readers in the higher socio-economic classes, the group of readers to which advertisers more and more often directed their efforts.

In 1930, the figures were News, 151,000; morning Sun,

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223 News-Post, Working Sales Control, p. 1.

144,000.[224] Meanwhile, the other major daily in the city, The Baltimore Post, an evening tabloid established by Scripps Howard in 1920, reached a peak circulation of 107,000 in 1928.[225] It began to decline, and converted to broadsheet format in 1929. It was one of the losers with the onslaught of the Great Depression, dropping to 75,000 circulation before Scripps Howard sold it to Hearst, which combined the newspaper on 24 March 1934 into The Baltimore News and Baltimore Post, finally changing its name to the News-Post on 13 January 1936.[226]

The merger of the Post and the News proved to be the quantum leap -- 45,000 subscribers out of a 75,000 circulation[227] -- needed to put the Hearst paper securely atop the Baltimore dailies, as it proclaimed on page one of its 4 October 1934 editions[228] next to its annual publisher's statement. The figure was 200,344. "Ten years ago," reporter Louis Azreal wrote, "anybody who would have said that a newspaper could get a 200,000 circulation in Baltimore, under competitive circum-

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224 Parmenter, op. cit., p. 139.

225 Ibid., p. 141.

226 Williams, op. cit., p. 176.

227 Parmenter, op. cit. p. 147.

228 Louis Azreal, "Paper Enters 4 out of Every 5 Homes in Baltimore," Baltimore News-Post, 4 October 1934, p. 1.

stances, would have been regarded as fantastic." Additionally, many important staffers were brought to the News in the sale, including Azreal, the newspaper's leading columnist until his death. Other major newspeople who came with the Post purchase were Gale "Gaby" Haugh, the paper's handicapper; James A. Newell, political columnist, and Rosalind White, the NewsPost's society editor.[229]

By 1937, the Baltimore property was doing considerably better than most of the other properties in the Hearst chain. The organization was down to seven morning papers, 10 afternoon papers and 14 Sunday papers, and many of them were losing money.[230] Hearst had lost a great deal of his fortune during the Depression. In 1937 the company owed more than $126,000,000, according to Swanberg, who noted:

> Although he had been warned many times, he was the one who insisted on investing $50,000,000 in New York real estate at high mortgages, on maintaining papers in New York, Chicago, Omaha and elsewhere that lost millions annually, on spending an estimated $50,000,000 for art. He had blithely led the world's greatest publishing empire from riches to wreckage. Unequaled in his technical skill, he had proved himself fiscally

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229 James C. Mullikin, "A News-Post for 25 Years," (column), The News-Post, 25 March 1959, page unavailable, from clipping file at Enoch Pratt Free Library central branch.

230 Villard, op. cit., p. 198.

the world's worst executive.[231]

Not wanting to close any of his newspapers, Hearst agreed to a series of unprecedented moves urged upon him by the chain's financial officials, including auctions of some personal items, a cap on his personal spending and the offering of stock to the public on a number of the chain's properties. (The corporation formed to handle the stock offering, Hearst Consolidated, counted among its properties the News-Post and the Sunday American. The Hearst Corp., always a private firm, re-purchased Hearst Consolidated in 1961, when times were much better).[232] Even with the moves, some newspapers had to be folded, including the Wisconsin News, the New York American (which was merged into the New York Journal), newspapers in Rochester and Omaha, and the Washington Times-Herald was leased to Eleanor (Cissy) Patterson, who bought it two years later.[233].

As the Second World War loomed, the Hearst empire was in disarray. It was a harbinger of the chaos that the firm would find itself in afterwards.

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231 Swanberg, op. cit., pp. 574-575.

232 Chaney and Cieply, op. cit., pp. 235-239.

233 Parmenter, op. cit., pp. 192-193.

Chapter 5
The Onset of Failure: 1945-1978

Baltimore changed after the Second World War. However, its best-selling newspaper did not.

In 1947, the News-Post's advertising staff compiled a document that was a blueprint of the newspaper's vision of the way the Baltimore metropolitan area would grow.[234]

The document showed plans for new shopping centers, sewer lines and road improvements inside the Baltimore City limits, detailing the changes expected in the city. Breaking down Baltimore into more than 25 neighborhoods in 50 pages, the document detailed improvements to be made to each block in the city. The book forecasted strong growth for the city, an understandable projection. After all, the city had grown since the 18th century, and time -- and progress -- march forward.

Outside the city, the blueprint portrayed a different picture. Little growth was foreseen for the suburbs -- an occasional road here, a sewer line there. Because so little growth was expected in the areas ringing the city, little attention was devoted in describing them to advertisers. The six counties covered in the overview -- Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Harford, Howard, Carroll and

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[234] See Baltimore News-Post, The News-Post and American: A Working Sales Control, (Baltimore: News-Post, 1947).

Queen Anne's -- were covered in less than 10 pages.

But soldiers were returning to the United States, couples long delayed by the Depression and the Second World War were about to start or expand their families, gasoline rationing had come to an end and suburbia was about to encircle Baltimore.

Baltimore County, closest to the city, grew first and fastest. Its population leaped 73.4 percent from 1940 to 1950, with the 1950 Census showing 270,273.[235] The increase was even greater in the decade ending in 1960, when the county's population increased 82.2 percent to 492,428.[236] The composition of the increase is as important as the fact that the population increased occurred: More than two-thirds of the increase in Baltimore County between 1950 and 1960 came from migration instead of births in the county.[237] Much of that migration was of people who had abandoned Baltimore City. In the decade ending in 1970, the trend slowed, but Baltimore County's population still increased 26.0

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235 U.S. Bureau of the Census, "City and County Data Book, 1952," p. 218.

236 U.S. Bureau of the Census, "City and County Data Book, 1966," p. 460.

237 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1952, p. 218.

percent, to 620,409.[238] In the decade ending in 1980, the county's population rate of increase tailed off, rising 5.7 percent, to 655,615.[239]

Anne Arundel County followed with increases that were only slightly smaller. In the decade ending in 1950, the county's population increased 71.7 percent to 117,392.[240] Ten years later, the county's population was 206,634, up 76.0 percent.[241] In 1970, it was 298,042, up 44.2 percent.[242] In the decade ending in 1980, Anne Arundel County population rose another 24.4 percent, to 370,775.[243]

Other counties followed suit, although their increases tended to be larger in the 1960s and 1970s because they were farther away from Baltimore's downtown and developed later.

Baltimore City's population increased in the decade

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238 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1977, p. 222.

239 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1982, p. 256.

240 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1952, p. 218.

241 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1966, p. 460.

242 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1977, p. 222.

243 U.S. Bureau of the Census, City and County Data Book, 1982, p. 256.

ending in 1950, to 949,703, up 10.5 percent from 1940. However, the city's trend turned at mid-century. The population dipped to 939,024 in 1960, down 1.1 percent. It dropped again in 1970, to 905,787 in 1970, down 3.5 percent. In the 1970s, the News American's circulation plummeted from 217,658 for the daily edition in 1970 to 142,547 in 1980, after staying stable from 1947 to 1970. Meanwhile, the city's population dropped dramatically, down 13.1 percent in the ten years ending in 1980. The city's share of the metropolitan area's population declined to 71 percent in 1950 to 36 percent in 1980.[244]

The projections that had been made by the News-Post in 1947 were wrong. Many people appeared where the newspaper expected few to appear; people disappeared from the region where the newspaper thought people would appear.

According to Audit Bureau of Circulation statistics and the observations of News American staffers, the newspaper sold best in Baltimore City and in the region's inner, blue-collar suburbs, such as Dundalk in eastern Baltimore County and Glen Burnie in Anne Arundel County.[245] More generally, they say, the paper performed

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244 Callcott, op. cit., p. 81.

245 From survey by author of Audit Bureau of Circulation reports on file at the Annapolis Capital for Sunpapers and the News American for the years 1968, 1972,

better in the city than in the surrounding suburban counties. (Michael Olesker remembered in his interview that his News-Post newspaper route in a comfortable part of northwest Baltimore had many fewer subscribers than the newspaper routes of the competing Sun carriers in the area.)[246]

Above all, the surrounding suburbs became the dens of prosperity, the households most attractive to advertisers. The News American's failure to appeal to this population led to a failure to appeal to advertisers. The demographic advantage held by the Sunpapers, particularly the morning Sun, became a more critical factor to the News American.[247]

An analysis of population and housing-price data supports the assumption that the News American's readership was lower on the socio-economic scale than the Sunpaper's readership. For example, the median price of an already-occupied home in Baltimore City was $32,425 in 1980 and the average rental was $176 monthly. In Anne Arundel County the figures, respectively, were $72,667 and $272. The figures in Glen Burnie, a News American stronghold, were $50,621 and $211 -- considerably less

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1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984 and 1985.

246 Interview with Michael Olesker, pp. 2-3.

247 Interview with Michael Onorato.

than the countywide means. In Baltimore County, the figures were $61,484 and $250, respectively. Again, the News American stronghold, Dundalk, compared unfavorably with the countywide means: a home price of $38,563 and a rental of $181.[248]

Not only were the demographics difficult for the News American, but so were the raw numbers. As Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County posted population increases, Glen Burnie and Dundalk experienced rare suburban occurrences in the 1970-1980 decade: they both shrank. Glen Burnie dropped from 38,608 in 1970 to 37,263 in 1980. Dundalk dropped from 85,377 to 71,239.[249]

The newspaper's readers were fairly homogeneous economically -- lower-class to middle-class -- and socially -- blue-collar -- but there was one divider among the readership: race.

The readers in the inner suburbs to the east and south were usually white. In Baltimore City, many of the readers -- an increasing share as time went on -- were

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248 Regional Planning Council (no author listed), Census '80: Population and Housing Characteristics for Regional Planning Districts, (Baltimore: Regional Planning Council, 1982), pp. 1-7.

249 Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, Maryland Statistical Abstract, 1986-87, (Annapolis, Md.: Department of Economic and Community Development, 1987), p. 3.

black. Blacks felt alienated from the Sunpapers, which often did not run their obituaries and wedding announcements, and felt they did not cover local news and high school sports as well as the News American.[250] The News American paid at least some attention to black issues, if not very much, which was more than the Sunpapers generally could say.[251] The Hearst paper, too, scored points because it was the first to hire a black reporter and a black manager in the newsroom.[252] Blacks, who became the dominant racial and ethnic group in Baltimore City by 1977,[253] helped the News American maintain its lead in Baltimore City until 1981, five years after it lost its circulation lead in the aggregate metropolitan area.

Beyond ethnic populations and home prices, there was a dynamic increase in the amount of disposable income in

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250 Sandy Banisky and Amy Goldstein, "News American Folds," The Baltimore Sun, 28 May 1986, p. 1A.

251 Michael Olesker interview.

252 James H. Bready, "So Ends the Hearst Era of Baltimore Newspapering," Baltimore Evening Sun, 28 May 1986, p. A13.

253 The percentage of non-white residents in Baltimore City, mostly blacks, rose from 35 percent in 1960 to 52 percent in 1977, in large part due to the "white flight" to the suburbs. From: Task Force, Report on Population Loss in Baltimore City to Mayor William Donald Schaefer, (Baltimore: City of Baltimore, 1978), p. iii.

the newly developed suburbia.[254] But the stronger development, in both population and retail growth, was in places to the north and west, towns where readers more frequently read the Sun, in places like Perry Hall, Randallstown and Reisterstown. To the south and east, in News American country, there was less room for growth. To the east, there was the bay just beyond the already mature inner suburbs.[255] To the south, there was Washington and Annapolis, increasingly competing markets for Baltimore. The Washington Post made circulation inroads in suburban Baltimore and the Annapolis Capital tripled its circulation in the 15 years between 1972 and 1987.[256]

As the Baltimore newspaper market changed, the Baltimore News American stayed the same, maintaining the same formula in a changing region.

In large measure, Eddie Ballard saw to that.

Isaac Edward Ballard was the newspaper's city editor from 1955 to 1973.[257] He was the person responsible for

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254 Callcott, op. cit., p. 66.

255 Brooks and Rockel, op. cit., pp. 379, 383.

256 From discussions with Edward Casey, editor of The Capital, circa 1988.

257 Joe Nawrozki and Richard Irwin, "Edward Ballard, Retired Editor, Dies," Baltimore News American, 23 August 1985, pp. 1A, 10A.

deciding what the News American's readers would find on their doorstep every afternoon. In theory, he answered to the newspaper's publisher, editor and managing editor. Reality did not correspond with theory, however.

Ballard, weaned in the days when local radio was not competitive and television was an apple in the eyes of a small number of electrical engineers, by all accounts was the perfect man for the pre-television age when he began in the newspaper business. However, he remained city editor until 1973.

"He was a tough guy," said Olesker, a columnist with the Sun who worked at the News American for 13 years, moving to the Sun in 1979. "(Editor) Tom White did not want to go one-on-one with him," even though White's news agenda was different from Ballard's. Neither did any of White's predecessors nor his underlings, even though Ballard's "vision of what a newspaper should be did not coincide with what a newspaper had to be in the late 20th Century."[258]

Eddie Ballard died nine months before the newspaper did, in the summer of 1985. Ballard's death mirrored that of his newspaper, but his life mirrored the life of his newspaper chain.

Introduced to reporting by murders, speakeasys and

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[258] Michael Olesker interview, p 17.

gambling hang-outs as a police reporter in the Northwestern Police District of the 1920s, Ballard moved up the ranks in the 1930s, covering high-profile murders and strikes. In 1955, Ballard became city editor and, in between telephone calls to his stockbroker and his bookmaker, set the tone for the newspaper for the next 18 years.

When it came time for him to decide what was news and what wasn't, police news usually won. Ballard hated politicians, zoning boards and interpretive pieces, but loved police news and deadline news -- the type of news that broadcasters could provide faster. Eddie Ballard was the man who, during a prison riot, once said, "I hope they have breaking news in heaven."[259]

Ballard's journalism reflected William Randolph Hearst's journalism, but Olesker said he wouldn't call the News American's agenda "sensationalistic:"

> It wasn't the type of sensationalistic that people associated with Hearst. It wasn't. It really wasn't. But it was simplistic news in terms of -- they'd run an eight-column banner if there was a warehouse on fire. And the Ten Star, the last edition of the day, would always be some kind of grabber.[260]

Ballard's news agenda was an extension of the news

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259 Nawrozki and Irwin, op. cit.

260 Michael Olesker interview, p. 11.

agenda that had dominated the News-Post/News American since Hearst bought the paper in 1923. Robin Harriss recalled that when he started at the Evening Sun in the 1920s, he saw the News-Post's boast that it had the highest circulation of any Baltimore newspaper.

Harriss thought the boast was false, but another Evening Sun staffer set the record straight:

> "Unfortunately that's true. They do have the biggest circulation in town and you might as well know other facts in life: They beat us in quite a few ways. Their sports department is way ahead of ours. On crime, they just snow us under." And I, I was soon to discover that that was true."[261]

The Hearst news agenda was an agenda that got Hearst newspapers into increasingly serious trouble after the Second World War. The newspaper chain, almost forced into receivership from its chief executive's excesses and the poor economic conditions of the 1930s, was saved by the war that William Randolph Hearst tried so much to avoid. During the war, newspapers had to be reduced in size for war conservation, lessening costs. Advertising prices increased because the supply of advertising space in newspapers could not meet the demand of advertisers in a rebounding economy. By 1945, the $126 million debt of 1937 had been reduced to $4 million. After the war, the newsprint supply opened up and, with it, the renewed

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261 Robin Harriss interview, p. 3.

availability of advertising space. The Hearst chain declined nationally. Advertisers and readers alike turned to the alternatives in most markets.[262]

After Hearst's death in 1951, his personal empire assumed a new corporate identity -- which was distinctly biased against the corporation's newspaper properties and in favor of the broadcasting, magazine, mining, ranch and paper components. The lack of interest in the newspapers is attributed to the leadership of Richard Berlin, a career magazine-division man who succeeded Hearst as chief executive officer. Berlin resented the newspaper division's history of shoddiness, despised its profound ability to lose money and felt the newspapers hurt the corporation's image, confusing outsiders who knew the company through its more respectable magazine and broadcasting divisions. Berlin, who rued the boisterous reputation of the Hearst newspaper chain, even once wondered aloud whether it might not be a good idea to dispose of all of Hearst's newspaper properties.[263]

With Berlin at the helm, several Hearst newspapers closed after a five-year, respectful pause.

The first to go was in Chicago, where the American was sold to the rival Tribune on 21 October 1956 after

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262 Chaney and Cieply, op. cit.

263 Chaney and Cieply, op. cit., p. 221-233.

the Hearst paper had lost money for 40 consecutive years.[264] The International News Service, the Hearst wire, was merged from an inferior position into the United Press on 9 May 1958.[265] The San Francisco Call-Bulletin was merged with the Scripps-Howard -owned News on Aug. 9, 1959,[266] and the Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph was folded into the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on April 22, 1960.[267] On Nov. 7, 1960, the Detroit Times fell. Even if News American staffers felt that they were shabbily treated when their newspaper folded in 1986, the treatment of Detroit Times staffers was even worse. At 3 a.m. all received a telegram that their services were no longer needed, and that they could receive their final paychecks on the usual payday. It wasn't until daybreak that the workers learned that the newspaper, too, was terminated.[268]

The Hearst Boston papers were merged into a single publication in 1961 and eventually sold to Rupert Murdoch in 1981, the Milwaukee Sentinel was sold in 1962 and the New York Mirror folded in 1963. The New York

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[264] Ibid., p. 190.

[265] Ibid., p.194.

[266] Ibid., p. 200.

[267] Ibid., p. 201.

[268] Ibid., p. 202-204.

Journal-American was closed in 1966.[269] In Los Angeles, Hearst agreed to close its morning paper in exchange for the Chandler family's decision to close its afternoon newspaper. The Chandlers, flabbergasted by their good luck, invested in their product and nurtured the morning monopoly Los Angeles Times into one of the nation's premier and most profitable newspapers. Hearst's fortunes, meanwhile, sank with the circulation of its afternoon-monopoly Los Angeles HeraldExaminer, a decline that was hastened by a disasterous strike in 1967.[270]

The News American was generally unaffected because it made money, making profits through the late 1970s.[271] The newspaper's profitability was aided by the fact that it had considerably less competition than newspapers in other cities. The Baltimore newspaper market had already been substantially winnowed before the Second World War, with Munsey's purchase of the Baltimore American and the Baltimore Star in 1920, Hearst's closure of the daily American in 1928 and Hearst's purchase of the Baltimore Post in 1934. While Baltimore was left with only three newspapers, other large cities had more. For example, Washington, substantially smaller than Baltimore at that

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269 Ibid., pp. 223-250.

270 Benjaminson, op. cit., p. 162.

271 Orrick, "Bad News for the News," op. cit., p. 12.

time, had four newspapers in 1943, including the Hearst-owned Washington Times.[272] Eight newspapers remained in Boston at the time, which was only somewhat larger.[273] In short, the Baltimore pie did not have to be cut in so many pieces.

Additionally, Hearst maintained healthy revenues in Baltimore by driving up advertising rates as high as possible, reflecting Hearst's national newspaper policy. Reports throughout the late 1950s by Hearst Consolidated Inc., the publicly held subdivision of the Hearst Corporation which included the News American, disclosed that advertising and newspaper prices were increased as aggressively as possible.[274] In many markets, newspapers were weakened because advertisers would not buy space. In Baltimore, however, the move paid off because the paper had more readers than any other paper, and advertisers could not risk losing their exposure to such a large proportion of prospective customers.[275]

The Sunpapers, with their better demographics, were charging national advertisers 31 cents a line per 1,000 readers in 1968, while the News American was charging 46

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272 Villard, op. cit., 190-196.

273 Ibid., p. 176-177.

274 Chaney and Cieply, op. cit., p. 238.

275 Michael Onorato interview.

cents a line. Not only was the News American giving less demographic bang for the buck, it was asking for bigger rate increases than the Sunpapers. Linage costs for national advertisers went up 92 percent at the Sunpapers in the 22 years ending in 1968. At the News American, they had increased 156 percent.[276]

But, as Chaney and Cieply wrote, noting the closures across the country during the Berlin administration in the 1950s and 1960s, "It never seemed to occur to the Hearst management that improving the quality of their publication might attract more advertisers or readers."[277] It was a concept that Hearst was unable to grasp even in the 1980s, when the situation at the News American was at its most desperate.

By then, with News American's leadership in the metropolitan area gone since 1976, the policy had cost Hearst dearly in Baltimore. When the leadership disappeared, so did the newspaper's relationship with many advertisers. Advertisers had a history of advertising in several newspapers when no paper held primacy. But, by the 1970s, faced with having to buy television time as well, advertisers tended to make their

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276 Association of National Advertisers Inc., Newspaper Circulation and Rate Trends. (New York: Association of National Advertisers Inc., 1968), pp. 32-33.

277 Chaney and Cieply, op. cit, p. 238.

purchases in the newspaper with the highest circulation.[278] While the Sunpapers could survive without leading the circulation wars because of their more attactive demographics, the News American had much more severe problems when it was not in first place. The News American was losing its lead just when having the lead mattered the most.

During this period, there were other yardsticks against which the News American measured poorly. One measurement was the paper's ability to get maximum efficiency from its employees. During the workdays, newspaper stories were reported, written, edited and laid out. But human resources were wasted. Some workers played chess. Some played the ponies. Some were on the fringes of their sanity. And some drank.

Harriss had worked for the Sunpapers for more than 20 years before taking a job as the News American's fine arts critic in 1957. He was struck by how different the News American newsroom was from that of the staid Sunpapers.

> When I walked into the city room the first Saturday ...it was wild! The Sunday paper was being put out by like a bunch of madmen! But it was very funny....They turned the (police radio)

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278 Leo G. Bogart, "Why More Dailies Will Stop Publishing," Editor and Publisher, 26 September 1981, p. 42.

> up full blast. And an old guy there... was playing chess with a girl reporter... And the copy desk over there, inaccessible because the desks were all jammed up, and to get your copy to the copy desk sometimes a reporter might find it more convenient to walk across several desks and drop it on rather than try to squeeze his way through to it. And in the midst of all that, in walked a guy and began shouting obscenities and making statements about the assistant managing editor, accusing him of all sorts of heinous crimes, both sexual and otherwise, at the top of his voice....They had a guy who'd got loose ...and any minute now they would grab him, or any minute the keeper of the asylum where he escaped from or the police would come in and get him.[279]

This was no unauthorized madman running around the newsroom. Thomas Harry Riley was fully authorized to be in the newsroom. Riley, known to the world as "Fire Alarm" Riley, was a reporter at the newspaper who was usually dressed in a police uniform and drove a car adorned with police lights and siren. Riley, admittedly the News American's most colorful character, was forced to earn a living by his aunt's last will and testament. She left him $81,000 on condition he be "gainfully employed." Fire Alarm, who supposedly earned his nickname by abandoning his wedding night bed after hearing a fire alarm, got his job at the News American.[280] Among his more famous stunts was sending a

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279 R.P. Harriss interview, p. 4.

280 Tom White column, Baltimore News American, 14 December 1979, p. 13A.

bison cash-on-delivery to a local attorney whom he despised -- It cost the lawyer $500 to pay for shipping it back to Arkansas. He also achieved notoriety for walking across busy Pratt Street with sunglasses and a white cane without looking left or right to demonstrate the dangers of being a blind pedestrian (another pedestrian saved him from getting hit by a truck).[281] Riley also spend a good deal of time in a train conductor's uniform in the newsroom and other places in the city, bellowing the names of the various stops on Pennsylvania Railroad lines. He apparently hated the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road.[282]

Riley was not alone. Michael Olesker said there were plenty of brilliant but troubled souls at the newspaper. "It had bright people who, for one reason or another weren't here (at the Sunpapers). Some of them because they had been here and who had turned to drink. Some of them had never been here but who had turned to drink -- because of that, maybe."[283]

Olesker first joined the newspaper in 1966 during an editing class at the University of Maryland. He was assigned to work on the copy desk of the newspaper one

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281 Ibid.

282 John Steadman interview, p. 6.

283 Michael Olesker interview.

day a week. He reported to Perry Reynolds, now-dead, an alcoholic who was the chief of the copy desk. Sixteen weeks later, Olesker ran into the professor who was going to give the grade in the class, and discovered that the professor planned to check on his performance with Reynolds. This caused considerable distress to Olesker, who had not expected to be checked on because he was a senior. Consequently, Olesker had not returned to the copy desk at all since the beginning of the semester.

> And I thought, "Oh my God! I'm dead!" I drove into Baltimore, three o'clock in the afternoon. I ran up to the editorial floor, looking for Perry Reynolds. I see him over in the corner, sort of semi-slumped, and I walked up and said, "Mr. Reynolds, I don't know if you remember me or not. My name's Michael Olesker. I was here sixteen weeks ago, the first week of the school semester, and I was supposed to come back every week since." And he looked up at me with glazed eyes and said, "Well, you did, didn't you?" And I said, "Yes!" I said, "It's been one of the most moving experiences of my life." And he looked up at me and said, "I think you've done excellent work and if you want I'll write you a recommendation." And I got an "A" in the course. And I was brought on full-time.[284]

There were other examples of deviant behavior. Olesker recalls Seymour Kopf, a columnist for the newspaper who was convinced that the Soviets were about to attack any day because of a purported increase in

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[284] Michael Olesker interview, p. 6.

Soviet ownership of New Zealand sheep farms.[285] John Steadman, the former sports editor, recalls the time police reporter John Jennings had a police friend "arrest" him because Steadman was wearing his old Navy uniform to work. The officer came to Steadman, who was in the composing room, and the compositors fled, thinking that their bookmaking operation had been discovered.[286]

Through these years, some excellent reporting and civic work was being conducted. Rodger Pippin, sports editor for 52 years until 1957, spearheaded the drive for a Baltimore group to purchase baseball's St. Louis Browns and expand Memorial Stadium to accommodate major-league crowds. The Browns, renamed the Orioles, played their first season in Baltimore in 1954. Steadman, who replaced Pippin, was a prime force in writing about the National Football League and its team in Baltimore, the Colts. Steadman and the newspaper gained national notoriety for correctly predicting the score and the action that took place during the "Greatest Game Ever Played," the 1958 National Football League championship game between the Colts and New York Giants. The game was the first football game to go into overtime, and helped

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285 Ibid.

286 John Steadman interview.

ignite the American passion for the professional game.[287]

News American reporters were famous for arriving at police scenes before reporters from the Sunpapers, and were usually acknowledged to be superior police reporters and deadline writers on local news. The combination of Olesker and Joe Nawrozki -- sometimes singly, sometimes with other reporters -- broke several important investigative stories in Maryland, particularly in the early and mid-1970s.

One story dealt with a secret intelligence office established inside the city police department under Commissioner Donald D. Pomerleau which compiled dossiers on black leaders, public-employee unionists and people who protested increases in utility rates.[288] Another was the Turk Scott case, in which a member of the Maryland House of Delegates was exposed as being a heroin dealer in 1972. He was killed by a member of a prominent Baltimore family a year later.[289]

Right around then, however, in the early 1970s, the newspaper began to crumble.

In each of the 25 years ending in 1972, the

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287 Bob Wolff, "...and No Games to Rival the Greatest Effort," New York Times, 25 December 1988, Section 5, p. 9.

288 Michael Olesker interview, p. 9.

289 Ibid.

newspaper's daily circulation remained in a tight cluster of figures. Publishers statements printed in the News American indicated that annual daily circulation average was lowest in 1971, at 211,196 and highest in 1964, at 239,946. In 18 out of the 25 years, the figure was placed between 220,000 and 230,000. In 1952, 1962, 1970, 1971 and 1972, the figure was below 220,000. In 1964 and 1969, the figure was above 230,000.[290] Although apparently there was some embellishing of the circulation figures, it was not excessively inflationary, making the construct of a stable circulation during the era a valid one. The publisher's statement of 229,884 in 1968 was about 5 percent above the Audit Bureau of Circulations figure of 218,265 in 1972 and the publisher's statement of 215,872 was about 5 percent above the ABC audited figure of 207,028.[291]

The News American maintained a lead over each of the Sunpapers during this entire period, but the collective circulation of the Sunpapers was greater than the News American's. For example, in 1972, The News American

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290 From annual publisher's statments collected at the News American morgue, maintained by the University of Maryland College Park in Beltsville, Md. All publisher's statements from 1947 to 1973 were examined by this researcher.

291 Audit Bureau of Circulations reports, 1968 and 1972, compared to publisher's statements.

circulated 207,028, the Evening Sun circulated 199,316 and the morning Sun circulated 173,628, for a combined circulation of 373,044.[292] The battle was close on Sunday, but the Sunday Sun had a lead over the News American. In 1968 the lead was 350,039 to 315,981.[293] Four years later, it had widened to 347,898 over 293,783.[294] Even though the News American was behind in Sunday circulation, it always maintained its edge the other six days of the week, preserving the overall circulation advantage that was so critical to its survival.

There was a small upturn for the News American in 1973, its bicentennial year, when the newspaper was heavily promoted. In 1974 and 1975, however, the News American's weekday lead narrowed and the Sunday Sun's lead over the Sunday News American widened.

The first major reaction from Hearst came on 7 September 1975, when the Sunday News American was revamped, and Hearst managers began a bevy of changes in

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292 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures for the Sunpapers and News American, for the 12-month periods ending 30 September 1968 and 30 September 1972.

293 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures for the Sunpapers and News American, for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1968.

294 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures for the Sunpapers and News American for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1972.

the newspaper to try to shore up circulation. An opinion section and a home section were added, and the business section was combined with the sports section, which was expanded to include more high-school and recreational sports. The local section of the newspaper was brought into the first section, starting on page three. The Extra Sunday magazine was scrapped.[295]

Then came 1976, the beginning of the News American's last decade. The News American's daily margin was now razor-thin. In the 12 months ending 30 September 1976, the News American circulated 178,707 copies, compared to 176,033 for the Evening Sun and 174,956 for the morning Sun.[296] In four years, the News American's circulation had decreased by 28,821, compared to a 23,287 loss for the Evening Sun and an increase of 1,328 for the morning Sun. (Apparently both the Sunpapers and the News American were nervous about the circulation situation. In 1975, Maryland Attorney General Francis Burch suspected that circulation managers at the newspapers colluded to raise the price of the Evening Sun and News American from ten cents to fifteen cents when the prices

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295 Baltimore News American (no byline), "Let us Make your Sunday A News Funday," Baltimore News American, 5 September 1975, p. A1.

296 Audit Bureau of Circulations reports for the Sunpapers and the News American for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1976.

rose on the same day -- 18 August 1975. Although the newspapers denied any price-fixing, they agreed to return $190,000 to subscribers after Burch developed his investigation into the "coincidental" timing of the price increases.)[297]

There were other problems, among them newsroom morale. In the middle of the decade, a company-wide survey found workers across the plant expressing dissatisfaction with pay and internal communication. In the newsroom, staffers also felt that the newspaper was not well respected in metropolitan Baltimore and panned "supervisory leadership practices."[298]

During this period, the tone of the paper did not change much, sticking to the traditional Ballard-Hearst news agenda. But the pressures to remain that way were easing. Ballard, who left the city editor's position in 1973 to become assistant managing editor, retired from the newspaper in 1975.[299]

On 2 August 1976, the newspaper introduced a substantial set of changes for the daily newspaper. The News American abandoned afternoon publication on

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297 Michael P. Weisskopf, "Burch Says 2 Papers Fix Prices, Baltimore Sun, 27 May 1977, page 1C.

298 Barbash, op. cit.

299 Nawrozki and Irwin, op. cit.

Saturdays, moving to the morning. During the week, it added a morning edition aimed at commuters. The morning edition, however, was for newsstand sales only. Subscribers still got the afternoon edition. There was a modest redesign for the morning edition, which included new type for page one and a one-column, Gannett-style news summary on the page.[300]

But the slide continued. By the end of the year, both the Sun and the Evening Sun passed the News American. The leader at the beginning of 1976, the News American was third at the end of the year.[301] For the News American, this was a tragedy of the highest order. Because of their combined circulation majority and more appealing, more salable readership, the individual Sunpapers, particularly the morning Sun, could survive without being the city's best-selling newspaper. For the News American, however, the loss was immense. The newspaper's best bargaining tool with its advertisers, the readers who provided most of the newspaper's revenue,

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300 Maryland-Delaware-D.C. Press News (no byline), "News American Zaps with Morning Edition." Maryland--Delaware-D.C. Press News, 1 September 1976, p. unavailable. Taken from clipping file at the News American morgue, maintained by the Marylandia Room of the Theodore R. McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland.

301 Sandy Banisky and Amy Goldstein, "News American Folds." Baltimore Sun, 28 May 1986. p. 1A.

was gone.[302]

There was some more tinkering to reverse the situation in 1977. The move toward morning publication was reversed on 8 August, with the newspaper moving back its first edition to 9:30 a.m. with the move aimed at attracting the Pimlico-Laurel racing crowd. The newspaper announced that it would include late jockey changes and racing scratches.[303]

But circulation continued to drop. Tinkering did not do the trick.

The next set of changes at the News American would not be considered tinkering. In fact, it was nothing less than a revolution.

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302 Michael Onorato interview.

303 Baltimore News American (no byline), "Notice," Baltimore News American, 5 August 1977, p. A1.

Chapter Six
The Martin-Katz Years: 1978-1981

In July 1978, Hearst's counterattack began. The standard-bearer was the News American's new editor, Ronald D. Martin.

His job was to save the newspaper.

Martin came from an unorthodox source. His background included stints at the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, the Miami Herald and the New York Post, but he most recently had been editor of US Magazine, the New York Times Company's rival of People Weekly. His deputy at US Magazine, Jon Katz, was named as managing editor. Tom White lost his job as the News American's executive editor and was given the title senior editor of the editorial page, where he remained until the newspaper closed. Steve O'Neill, the managing editor replaced by Katz, was put in charge of overseeing the installation of a new computer system in the newsroom to bring it into the electronic age.[304]

Entering the battle, Martin knew two things.

One thing he knew was he did not want his newspaper to be like the Sunpapers, particularly the morning Sun. The Sun had too much money, too many reporters, too many

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304 John Consoll, "Baltimore News American restructured by Hearst," Editor and Publisher, 4 November 1978, p. 10.

overseas bureaus and too much inertia covering standard "highbrow" news package that appealed to the audience that the Hearst Corporation needed to capture so badly.

The other thing Martin knew was that, as much as he did not want his newspaper to look like the Sunpapers, he surely did not want the his News American to look like the old News American.

The old paper, he said, was "black": "It was...black in terms of personality, not too wildly different from other papers, many other papers around the county in the sense that it was a fairly dull mix of wire news and syndicated features and not terribly exciting local coverage."[305]

Even the advertising underwhelmed Martin, who said the type of advertising he saw in the News American revealed what was wrong with the readers who preferred the newspaper -- discount stores, low-end bargain furniture- and carpet-store shoppers.

Martin said the News American did its best to retain the old group of readers while it embarked on its efforts to attract readers such as young professionals, who would be more attractive to advertisers.

But first there had to be some personnel changes.

Eight new positions -- including executive news

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305 Ronald Martin interview, p. 2.

editor, night city editor, Maryland editor and television writer -- were created. New personnel, non-Baltimoreans, were brought from other newspapers to fill the positions. The city desk and the news desk were reorganized, and many of the beats were shuffled.[306]

Richard Curtis was named director of graphic arts and became responsible for the redesign that won national acclaim for the newspaper.[307] Three years later, he became graphics editor at a new national newspaper, USA Today.[308] Russ Brown was imported from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette to fill a newly created position, executive sports editor.[309] The move left John Steadman with the sports editor's title, but only with the column-writing responsibilities.[310]

And then the purge of the rank-and-file troops began.

Ralph Vigoda, who was hired as Brown's assistant in the sports department, recalled the case of the newspaper's outdoors writer:

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306 Consoll, op. cit., p. 10.

307 Ibid.

308 Peter Prichard, "The Making of McPaper: The Inside Story of USA Today," (Kansas City and New York: Andrews, McMeel & Parker, 1987), p. 155.

309 Consoll, op. cit., p. 10.

310 John Steadman interview, p. 17.

> He was an outdoors writer who never went outdoors. It was just very bizarre. And at one point he wrote a column on innertube rafting. Okay, you get these big innertubes and blow them up and just sort of sit in them and go out in the middle of the stream and float around and catch fish. And he had pictures to go with the story and the story ran. Well, somebody in the News American morgue was going through it and discovered that that story and picture had run three previous times in the last, like, 15 to 20 years or something. That's how long the outdoors writer was there. And he was just recycling his old stories. Not really recycling. For all we knew, the guy in the innertube could have died 15 years ago. And he was just passing it off as new stuff.[311]

The outdoors writer was then fired.

Many others were fired, pressured to resign or so discouraged by the situation that they decided to resign. By one count, fifty reporters and editors, about half of the newsroom, was excised during the Martin-Katz years.[312]

J. William Joynes, the former editor of the Sunday Maryland Life section, the earlier version of the Extra magazine, and now one of the newspaper's leading feature writers. Joynes, who said he was partially immune to the staff purge because he was employed under a personal-services contract to publisher Mark Collins, was reassigned to cover police news on the overnight shift. Joynes, 61, went into Collins' office to resign. Collins

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311 Ralph Vigoda interview, p. 3.

312 Korn, op. cit., p. 40.

overruled Martin, allowing Joynes to remain on the feature beat until his 62nd birthday, when he could retire.[313]

Others had similar stories. Steadman, who was stripped of most of his responsibilities, said one city-desk editor, Tom Hughes, was fired between editions and an unnamed food-page editor was fired at the end of a shift, with a replacement at her desk the next day.[314]

Frank DeFilippo, the newspaper's political columnist, recalled that a group of reporters petitioned Martin and Katz for a parking space next to the building for fifty-year columnist Louis Azreal, who was dying of cancer. The request was denied, and Azreal had to continue parking in the regular employee lot on a pier five blocks away from the newspaper.[315]

Martin said that, in retrospect, too many people were dismissed or "decided to leave." Looking back, Martin said, he "didn't try hard enough to take advantage of the knowledge that those people had about the city -- about

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313 J. William Joynes interview, p. 35.

314 John Steadman interview, p. 20.

315 Frank DeFilippo, "Stick it in your Ear, USA Today," Baltimore News American, 21 December 1982, page unavailable. From clipping file at the News American morgue, maintained by the Marylandia Room of the Theodore R. McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland.

Baltimore, about the history of the place."[316]

But, he said, many of the old-timers "didn't want to stay or buy into it."

The "it" that the old-timers did not "buy into" was Martin's vision of a new News American. "It" was a heavy play of feature reporting, about common denominators of city life, things that blue-collar and white-collar Baltimoreans shared. These were non-game stories about the Orioles, such as the price of beer rising at Memorial Stadium, and about development in the city's centerpiece areas, such as Fells' Point and Harborplace. The latter turned downtown Baltimore into a tourist mecca.[317]

"It" was enterprise reporting, the process providing interpretation and looking for the facts beyond those provided in press releases and news conferences. Martin called enterprise reporting "more than just a meeting story." David Holmberg, a former reporter with the Washington Star and the Chicago Tribune, was hired as projects editor, to oversee such projects.[318]

The newspaper tried to win prizes with its special-project team. One reporter spent six months researching every murder in the city in a previous year.

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316 Ronald Martin interview, p. 9.

317 Ronald Martin interview, p. 10.

318 Consoll, op. cit., p. 10.

Another investigated migrant conditions in Western Maryland. Many of the projects turned into dead-ends, never seeing print in the newspaper.[319] Quantitatively, the newspaper's own special-projects efforts could not fill the large space set aside for enterprise magazine-style reporting. Often, the space was filled instead by long stories from the newspaper's supplemental wire services, usually from the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal. Qualitatively, there were problems because much of the writing was done by inexperienced reporters, who had not yet mastered the genre.[320]

The first large reorganization visible to readers of the newspaper came on 23 October 1978. The newspaper decided to publish three sections daily: General News, Features and Sports /Business/ Classified. Most of the important local news, newly defined as it was, was moved to page three in an

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319 Korn, op. cit., p. 40.

320 See Jon Franklin, " 'Literary' Journalism Brings Vitality While Providing Reading Pleasure," in Associated Press Managing Editors, Afternoon Delight: A Report of the APME P.M. Newspaper Committee, (compiled by the staff of the Reno GazetteJournal and issued at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors, Louisville, Ky., November 1983), pp. 17-19. Franklin pointed out that neophytes in literary journalism are less able to do it well and do it on time. He also noted that, if done well, the genre can attract new readers to newspapers.

effort "to broaden coverage of the city and suburbs." A feature called the Back Page was put on the last page of the newspaper, which included the horoscope, Dear Abby, the crossword puzzle and a personality column. Enterprise reporting appeared more often. The famous Ballard blood-and-guts news agenda, already on the wane, evaporated.[321]

By the spring of 1979, the changes became more pronounced. And the changes were visible to the public. Even to passers-by looking at the newspaper in a vending box, it was evident that there was something different about the new News American. The banner was modernized. The layout was changed, with all items modular and many items boxed. Better and larger photography was displayed in the newspaper. More extensive graphics were added. Headlines appeared in a new sans-serif format.

Beyond the new form, there was a radically different content in the newspaper. The newspaper became very personality oriented. Columnist Tom Coakley often appeared on page one. Jacques Kelly's column on the city's neighborhoods appeared four times a week, usually appear on page two or page three. Michael Olesker's

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321 Baltimore News American (no byline), "To our Readers...," Baltimore News American, 23 October 1978, p. 1.

street column on page three. Michael Powell's column, developed as a suburban complement to Kelly's city column, was usually on page two. Judith Kreiner's "BaltiMORE," a calendar and notes column, was usually on pages two or four. A "People in the News" feature was on page two, and included photographs of entertainers. Louis Azreal and Tom White remained on the editorial page. Even the daily agate diary of selected burglaries and robberies in the city had the names and photographs of the police reporters and a column logo.

Features generally replaced news on the front page. On some days, there would be no breaking news on the newspaper's front page. In almost all of the twenty editions under Martin's editorship that were examined by this researcher, less than half of the front page was devoted to hard news.

The 18 April 1979 newspaper illustrated the Martin news agenda. The lead story of the day was a bannered Tom Coakley column about the reaction of a family of a man convicted of attempted murder in the shooting of a police officer. The news peg for the column, the sentencing of the assailant, was not noted until the fourth leg of the five-leg banner. A dropquote occupied the first leg of the banner. In the center of the page, with a three-column photograph, was a long Washington.

Post newsfeature about a Marine investigated for treason. The "Q&A" column occupied the leftmost column of the page beneath the bannered Coakley column. The question-and-answer session featured the reaction of a member of the Fells Point Community Association to a planned apartment complex. The right-hand column beneath the banner was a story about Mayor William Donald Schaefer's reaction to a rise in the city crime rate. At the bottom of the page, teased by a three- inch-deep flagdropper on top of the page, was a story and sidebar about the "palimony" verdict against actor Lee Marvin. A boxed dropquote divided the story and sidebar.[322]

Martin said the measures were an attempt to somehow thrust the News American into readers' minds -- to get the newspaper noticed, somehow:

> I couldn't define where it came from except just through a process of trying to figure out how to use your resources effectively to establish an identity.... It's got to be a little hit-and-run. We've got to attack them (the Sunpapers) over there and create a little attention by doing this -- try to, by doing those things, find some pockets of interest around the city that [readers] would hopefully become aware that we were doing some interesting things and so on. We weren't able maybe to have the consistency and the overall newspaper that the Sun could deliver.[323]

There was no strategy, only a set of interrelated

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[322] Baltimore News American, 18 April 1979, p. 1.

[323] Ronald Martin interview, p. 7.

tactics, to boost the News American's circulation and appeal. If there was a strategy, it more resembled a prayer. Martin hoped that, somehow, the News American would get to have the afternoon field all to itself:

> I guess, in retrospect, [I] think that the strategy was more of let's save and save and hold and cut and be very cautious and careful and hope that something happens somewhere. Maybe the Baltimore Sun people will just decide to close the Evening Sun and we'll be -- we can have the evening market, and so on. And that's one strategy that obviously didn't work.[324]

As the old News American staffers left the newspaper, several beats were consolidated or discontinued. All of the bureaus were closed -- except for the one in Towson, the seat of Baltimore County government, and Annapolis, where the State House contingent was reduced to a single person -- including suburban bureaus in Howard, Harford and Carroll counties.[325] Court houses were left uncovered, with general assignment reporters handling "big" trials as needed. In fact, in many ways, the entire beat structure broke down, with most reporters becoming general assignment reporters.[326]

The drop in suburban coverage came at a critical time. In an age when the newspaper desperately needed

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[324] Ronald Martin interview, p. 10.

[325] Ralph Vigoda interviews, p. 11.

[326] Joseph Nawrozki interviews.

readers with higher demographic profiles, the News American failed to cover their home territories. The newspaper failed to cover the portion of the Baltimore metropolitan area that was growing. Instead, gambling that the lowest-common-denominator theory would work, it concentrated its efforts on Baltimore City and topical reporting that was not directly connected with any particular geographic region in the metropolitan area.

The failure to cover the suburbs was a conscious decision by Martin. Hearst management would not budget funds for more reporters, meaning that new hires could only be hired with money saved under other budget lines, including those of veteran reporters who were fired or who resigned from the newspaper. Martin blamed the money woes for not only the inability to cover as much territory as the Sunpapers, but also for part of the morale problem in the newsroom:

> If you'll talk with any editor of a metro paper in this country, what you will hear is that it is a very expensive project to get the suburbs covered properly. It's a big commitment. And there's a dilemma there because, you say you need ten reporters to cover things [elsewhere] and an editor for that and a photographer for that and so on, which do you choose? That's a great dilemma, even if you're on a prosperous news-paper.... You could certainly fault us, and I suspect a lot of people have, for not having a good, strong suburban strategy to help us against the Sun -- and in those day they were developing their Anne Arundel Suns and their Howard Suns and all that. Somehow, there just wasn't a way to do

that and to do other things, too.[327]

For a while, it appeared that circulation had stabilized, even going up by a few hundred in 1979. Shortly thereafter, it was reported, some circulation staffers were discovered padding the rolls, apparently by several thousand, using an undisclosed method. The padding shrouded a continuing hemorrhage of readers, and did little to impress the advertising community.[328] (A second, similar, circulation incident reportedly occurred in 1984, when Dan Sparby, the son of the newspaper's publisher, who was soliciting subscriptions by telephone, was dismissed after a Hearst auditor found that circulation figures were padded).[329]

In fact, circulation declined dramatically during Martin's editorship. Between 30 September 1977 and 30 September 1978, the News American's circulation dropped from 171,594 on weekdays to 161,994, down 5.6 percent.[330] In the 12 subsequent months, weekday circulation dropped

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327 Ronald Martin interview, p. 10.

328 Phyllis Orrick, "Black and White...but Read?" Baltimore City Paper, 12 December 1980, p. 14.

329 Korn, op. cit., p. 40.

330 From Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American for the 12 months ending 30 September 1978.

6.4 percent, to 151,677.[331] In the year ending 30 September 1980, weekday circulation dropped 6.0 percent, to 142,527.[332] The News American's share of daily newspaper circulation in the city dropped from 33.0 percent in 1978 to 29.0 percent in 1980.[333] The News American dropped from fist place in Baltimore City in 1977, with a 38.4 percent share of Baltimore newspapers sold, to second place in 1980, behind the morning Sun, with a 33.0 percent share. It fell from first place in Anne Arundel County in 1977 to third place in 1980. In the region's most white-collar subdivision, Baltimore County, the News American's third-place showing in 1977 continued into 1980, with the paper's share of the Baltimore County market dropping from 28.8 percent to 27.4 percent. During the same three-year period, the total Sunday News American circulation dropped 15.0 percent, from 251,171 in 1977 to 213,541 in 1980. The Sunday News American's market share dropped from 41.4 percent in 1977 to 36.6

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331 From Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American for the 12 months ending 30 September 1979.

332 From Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American for the 12 months ending 30 September 1980.

333 From Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American and the Sunpapers for the 12-month periods ending 30 September 1977 and 30 September 1980.

percent in 1980.[334]

Throughout the period, there was a continuing problem with the circulation department's ability to process new orders. Joseph Nawrozki, a reporter with the newspaper, said he had heard from several people about the problems with the circulation department, but did not realize the scope of the problem until an aunt complained that the newspaper was not coming to her home and that she had been treated rudely when she called the circulation department. "Then I called them up, and I told them I worked for the paper, and they started giving me crap. That's when I knew we were in big trouble," he said.[335]

Advertising director Michael Onorato, Martin and Tonnie Katz, the acting editor during the last three months of the newspaper, all rued the difficulties of dealing with the circulation department. All shared the same opinion about the reason: No money to hire an adequate staff -- the same problem that plagued other departments of the newspaper.

During the Martin-Jon Katz era, as in the years before and those to follow, Hearst was cheap. Martin said he was expected to perform a turnaround at the newspaper without the benefit of an increased budget:

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334 Ibid.

335 Joseph Nawrozki interview.

> I think that so many numbers games were played in an effort to sort of keep it in the black -- that probably was one of the key factors in its ultimate downfall, that there wasn't really a re-investment to begin with...There was really a focus on saving and shaving costs, too, and not replacing equipment when it needed to be replaced...I think there was a perception at that time that suddenly here was a new editor who had a lot of money to spend and the Hearst people were going to pump a lot of money into this paper to really make it go. And in fact that wasn't true. In fact, the money that I had available was what had been available.[336]

Martin did not want to compare the News American's efforts under his editorship to those undertaken by Stephen Isaacs in his bid to turn around the failing Minneapolis Star during the same period, saying that Isaacs took magazine journalism to an extreme.[337] Nonetheless, there are strong similarities between the newspapers' reactions to their declining circulation in the afternoon. The philosophical difference, if there was any, was in the degree that the newspapers embraced the unorthodox journalism. There was certainly a monetary difference: Isaacs was given a substantial budget to work with and was able to increase his reporting staff by 18 writers. Nonetheless, even with the additional troops and the luxury of knowing that the

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336 Ronald Martin interview, p. 4.

337 Ibid.

Star's sister morning newspaper was the only other daily newspaper in the city, the Star folded on 2 April 1982.[338] The Minneapolis failure suggests that the Baltimore venture may very well have failed even if generously capitalized.

In December 1980, Martin joined the Gannett Corporation in its venture to create a national newspaper, which began publishing as USA Today in 1981. Jon Katz took his place.[339]

Although the names Martin and Katz are usually used in a single phrase by observers and former employees of the newspaper, Katz's editorship appeared to be significantly different than Martin's.

There is evidence that the News American under Katz placed a greater emphasis on hard news than it did during Martin's editorship. While the Katz-era content differed, the form was similar to that of the Martin reign. During Katz's editorship, the newspaper placed strong emphasis on a single topic on the front page on most days. An example was the Friday, 11 December 1980 edition of the newspaper, appearing a few days after Martin's departure. More than half of the front page of the newspaper was filled with a long interpretive report

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338 Shuman, op. cit., p. 2.

339 Orrick, op. cit., p. 12.

on the availability of handguns and feasibility of gun control. The jump of the story and two sidebars occupied all of page ten, and a fourth story appeared on page eleven. The Sunday-newspaper type of package included a "point-counterpoint" pair of articles, explaining the philosophies of proponents and opponents of gun control.[340]

Katz used different terminology to describe the journalism of the News American under his editorship. Considering how poorly the capitalistic system of supply-and-demand had supported the newspaper, it may have been appropriate for Katz to use the phrase he did to describe it. The News American, he said, practiced "Maoist journalism."

> We rush down from the hills and blow up the bridges and pick up our dead and wounded and run off before the enemy has time to turn their guns around.[341]

Of the editors during the last decade of the newspaper -- Tom White, Ronald Martin, James Toedtman and Katz -- Katz actually performed best, in terms of circulation. In the year ending 27 September 1981, the

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340 Baltimore News American, 11 December 1980, p. 1.

341 Orrick, op. cit., p. 14.

newspaper's average daily circulation was 140,635,[342] down 1.3 percent from 1980. The newspaper's circulation drop that year was the smallest of the last 13 years in the history of the newspaper. Although circulation dropped in all other subdivisions, circulation increased in Anne Arundel County by 21.8 percent during the year, up to 15,073. It was the best subdivisional report in the last decade of the newspaper's existence, although the possibility of fraud in the circulation department or elsewhere cannot be dismissed.

When the Audit Bureau of Circulations released the report in February 1982, however, Katz was long gone. As Martin was departing in December 1980, Katz told the Baltimore City Paper, "I'm certainly not going anywhere. I'll be as strong in that as I can make it."[343] On 4 September 1981, however, Katz resigned to become managing editor of the Dallas Times Herald, saying that the competition in Dallas was more "evenly matched."[344]

The Katz and Mao game was over.

Despite the purge and the continuing decline in

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342 From Audit Bureau of Circulations report for the News American at the Annapolis Capital for the 12 months ending 27 September 1981.

343 Orrick, op. cit., p. 13.

344 Will Englund, "Editor Leaves News American to go to Dallas," Baltimore Sun, 5 September 1981, p. B12.

circulation throughout their editorships, Martin and Katz did have some defenders from the old guard at the newspaper. One was Jacques Kelly, who said the pre-Martin News American was so destined to fail that the drastic measures were warranted:

> A lot of that stuff really needed to be done. It became a better paper...and they worked -- hard. Martin would get in there and roll up his sleeves. And, at dinner time, someone would go out [and get dinner] or they would have it delivered. They would stay there until 7, 8, 9, 10 o'clock, working on ideas, and they were always back there at 7 in the morning. It became a better paper.[345]

But a larger portion of the News American veterans shared the opinion of columnist Frank DeFilippo. In a remarkably pungent and succinct expression of hatred, DeFilippo wrote in a column on 21 December 1982:

> The man who became editor of The News American in 1978 almost succeeded in killing the paper. He failed. Now he's trying to do it by remote control. There is no reason to remember his name outside the paper's newsroom. In fact, many of those who do remember it would rather forget it. But it was Ron Martin. His food-taster and brief successor was Jon Katz...Martin came to Baltimore with a chip on his shoulder and a snoot full of ill will. His brand of journalism drove down circulation and spooked advertisers, and The News American is just beginning to recover from the Martin-Katz reign of terror. Martin killed what is known as news. He closed down county bureaus. He virtually did away with local coverage. He threw out pictures of brides. He threw out the bar mitzvahs and the trips to the Holy Land and the Polish weddings and the 50th anniversaries

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345 Jacques Kelly interview.

and the stories about people and pets -- all the reasons why people read a newspaper. Martin threw Baltimore out of The News American. The News American, instead of a newspaper, became an experiment for USA Today.[346]

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346 Frank DeFilippo, "Stick it in your Ear, USA Today," Baltimore News American, p. unavailable, from the News American morgue, administered by the Maryland Room of the Theodore McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland.

Chapter 7
The News American ends: 1981-1986

With the departure of Katz, the experiment of magazine journalism was over. The Martin-Katz years clearly had been a failure.

The 1981 ABC report showed circulation down to 140,635 -- 27,000 behind the Evening Sun and more than 37,000 behind the morning Sun. For the News American, circulation had dropped 21,500 from the 1978 report, and was now less than three-fifths of its all-time high.[347]

The newspaper lost readers in all subdivisions (Maryland's counties and the independent Baltimore City). The Baltimore City loss was crucial, because the newspaper had gone from first place in 1978 -- 77,060 compared to 71,747 for the morning Sun and 60,965 for the Evening Sun -- to second in 1981 -- 64,265 to 75,392 for the morning Sun, with the Evening Sun at 60,358. By 1983, the News American was in last place.[348] The loss of leadership in Baltimore City took away the News American's last claim to circulation supremacy. If the Sunpapers owned the suburbs, the News American had owned

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347 From Audit Bureau of Circulations reports at the Annapolis Capital for the News American and the Sunpapers for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1981.

348 From Audit Bureau of Circulations reports at the Annapolis Capital for the News American and the Sunpapers for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1983.

the part of Baltimore that was really Baltimore -- until 1981.

Except for Anne Arundel County, where the phenomenal increase in 1980-81 caused a 5 percent circulation rise during the three Martin-Katz years to 15,073, the suburban situation was worse. In Baltimore County, circulation had dropped 13 percent, to 47,586 in the three years ending 30 September 1981. In Harford County, the outer suburban county to Baltimore's northeast, where population was exploding, circulation was down 31 percent, to 4,239. In Carroll County, Landmark Inc. had purchased the weekly Carroll County Times and converted it into a daily during the Martin-Katz years.[349]

Meanwhile, the Sunpapers in the year ending 30 September 1981 were generally stable. The Evening Sun's circulation was down 2 percent, to 168,040. The morning paper's was up 2 percent, to 177,836.[350]

The news from News American the advertising department was worse: Linage in the daily newspaper was down 17 percent from its 1978 level to 12,717,000 lines

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349 From Audit Bureau of Circulations reports at the Annapolis Capital for the News American for the 12-month periods ending 30 September 1978 and 30 September 1981.

350 From Audit Bureau of Circulations reports at the Annapolis Capital for the Sunpapers for the 12 months ending 30 September 1981.

in 1981, based on a nine-column format. On Sundays, the drop was more dramatic: Down 23 percent to 9,196,000 lines.[351]

The News American was out of control.

Aside from the morale problems, the declining circulation and advertising had the most tangible of effects on the News American's staff. On 7 October 1981, the newspaper was reorganized, with employees laid off in most departments. Publisher B. Maurice Sparby attributed the layoffs to the sluggish Baltimore economy, not to the weakness of the News American's position in the marketplace. Hearst and the News American, he said, "have a commitment to Baltimore and intend to be here for a long, long time."[352] The lay-off led to the loss of 43 jobs, including 24 in the newsroom. Nine other employees in the building, including at least one in the newsroom, resigned to preserve jobs for others. The workforce, counting all departments of the newspaper, before the cuts was at 735.[353]

The newspaper put the best face on the layoffs -- the

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351 Editor and Publisher, 29 May 1982, p. 37.

352 Lorraine Branham, "News American plans layoffs for this month." Baltimore Sun, 7 October 1981. p. D1.

353 Baltimore Evening Sun (no byline), "News American Lists 43 Layoffs." Baltimore Sun, 10 October 1981, p. 6.

first economic layoffs in its history, at least under Hearst ownership -- that it could. Without explaining how, company spokesman Charles L. Coyle said the newsroom layoffs would boost coverage of both local and regional news.[354]

Sparby and other Hearst and News American executives tried a variety of other measures, most of them small and all of them tactical, to shore up the newspaper. The first edition was brought out an hour earlier, hitting the streets before 7 a.m., completing the transition to all-day coverage.[355] The measures became more creative, or desperate, depending on the point of view. One was an proposal for an odd alliance between Hearst and the Baltimore chapter of the AFL-CIO which almost came off. The Hearst newspapers were known as being vehemently anti-union. The News American was no exception. But for several weeks the paper and the union worked on a plan to have a section devoted to union news, written by unionists, to be included in the News American each Sunday. The union would sell the advertisements to predominantly union-oriented businesses, the newspaper would get the revenues and exposure to a new market, and

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354 Baltimore News American (no byline), "News American plans staff cutbacks this month." Baltimore News American, 7 October 1981. p. 1B.

355 Ibid.

the union would have a wide audience and a chance to expand its scope, as well as distribute its news to 139,000 readers.[356] It was given a 90 percent chance of success by union leaders, but it fell through for reasons not disclosed.[357]

Months went by with the newspaper in limbo. There was no talk of the newspaper closing, but the layoffs had shown to the staff that the financial situation was becoming more difficult, and there was an uneasiness over the question of who would lead the newsroom.

Enter James Toedtman.

Toedtman arrived in Baltimore on 2 February 1982 with little of the flash or promise of metamorphosis that Martin and Katz brought to the newspaper four years earlier. He arrived with a reputation as an evolutionist rather than a revolutionist. As executive editor, he had played a part in a miracle in the Hearst organization, turning around the Boston Herald American. The Boston paper, a merged product between Hearst's old newspaper and an independent, had plummeted from 400,000 circulation to 200,000, but had managed to rise to the 250,000 area when Toedtman came on board. For once, a

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356 Branham, Lorraine. "News American, AFL-CIO Weigh "Union Section.' " Baltimore Sun, 19 December 1981, p. unavailable.

357 Joseph Nawrozki interview.

Hearst newspaper had been able to break its losing spiral, and Toedtman had played a role in that success.[358]

Toedtman's track record was considerably different from those of Martin and Katz. Toedtman had won a piece of the Pulitzer Prize garnered by Newsday's investigative team in 1970.[359] Martin and Katz brought journalism of enterprise and lifestyles to Baltimore and continued the decline of circulation and advertising. Toedtman had some success in Boston -- which was more than anyone else in Hearst newspapers had achieved. Martin and Katz had purged the newsroom. Toedtman did not.

Additionally, Toedtman had interpersonal skills that Martin and Katz had failed to exhibit to the newsroom. "Toedtman, number one, was a gentleman," said John Steadman. "I'd never say that the other two were gentlemen. I mean they were fakers."[360]

Toedtman faced the same problems that Martin and Katz faced. On the broadest level, there was the problem of declining circulation. The problem for Toedtman, like

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358 Baltimore News American (no byline), "Toedtman Named News American Editor," Baltimore News American, 3 February 1982, p. 1A.

359 Ibid.

360 John Steadman interview, p. 22.

his predecessors, was twofold: How to maintain (and, in many cases, win back) the old longtime News American blue-collar readers while simultaneously attracting white-collar readers, who were often reading the Sunpapers. A third level of readership was also courted: The non-readers of metropolitan Baltimore.[361]

Hearst's headquarters in New York gave Toedtman little support. In his four years at the newspaper, only two focus groups were commissioned, both in connection with the fall 1983 introduction of SportsFirst, a sports-oriented tabloid. Like Martin, Toedtman complained that there was little money to beef up the newspaper. The newsroom budget increased with inflation, but there were no increase in real dollars.[362] Toedtman chose, in part, to go back to the future. His product relied on some elements from the Martin-Katz years, such as design and the use of some features. But more elements were taken from the decades before 1978. Police reporting again enjoyed good play, although certainly not at the level it had in the Ballard years. More hard news appeared on the front page and local page. He called it the "professionalized News-Post," referring to the

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361 James Toedtman interview, p. 3.

362 James Toedtman interview, p. 6.

pre-1964 name of the newspaper.[363]

Unlike the oldtimers at the newspaper, he held no romantic notions about the "good old days." Like Martin and Katz, Toedtman generally hired only college graduates, and imported reporters and editors from smaller newspapers in the region, including the Annapolis Capital, the Carroll County Times and the Easton Star-Democrat. The new reporters, as well as the ones already in place from the Martin-Katz years and before, were able to write more aggressively and thoroughly than those of the old News-Post. Most of the reporters from the pre-Martin-Katz era were able to meet Toedtman's standards because the inflexible ones had resigned or were fired during by Martin or Katz.

There was also a continuation of Jon Katz's "Maoist journalism" philosophy, although Toedtman exercised more conservative phraseology. In 1984, the News American learned that the Sun was in the midst of producing a series on hunger in the world, sending reporters all over the world. Sun reporters went to Asia, Africa and South America.

The News American started its own project, sending reporters to the place that management though -- correctly, as it turned out -- that the Sun would not

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363 James Toedtman interview, p. 4.

find hunger.

The News American reported on hunger in Baltimore, a project similar to one undertaken at the Evening Sun six years earlier but largely forgotten in the city.

"This was in '84, right when Reaganomics was really starting to hit the community and the soup kitchens were springing up all over the place, long lines of people looking for food, homeless shelters overwhelmed," Toedtman said.[364]

The Toedtman years were heady years for the News American's reporting staff. New reporters like Liz Bowie, who went to Nicaragua (on rotation for the Hearst News Service) for two weeks shortly after her arrival, had come from small-town newspapers to find themselves thrown into major reporting assignments. Reporters were attracted by the opportunities provided by the News American only weeks after they had been working for small- city and small-town newspapers. The newspaper, increasingly unable to fill vacancies because of budget limits, was so understaffed that reporters could edit or cover prime stories on demand, because there were so few bodies and so much news.[365]

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364 James Toedtman interview, p.6.

365 Liz Bowie interview.

Tonnie Katz, no relation to Jon Katz, who had joined the newspaper in 1983 as managing editor and served as acting editor during the newspaper's last ten weeks, said the newspaper was a learning laboratory for many of the young reporters. "For someone who was ambitious, and wanted to learn more, there was always something to do. If you wanted to edit, we could have you edit. As long as you did what you were supposed to do, you could do almost anything else. We were that short."[366]

For Liz Bowie, and several other staffers who joined in the final few years, the News American was a place to do this kind of learning. A reporter for the Easton Star-Democrat for about four years, she joined the News American in the second half of 1985. "I hate to say it, but I'd recommend it to anybody, working for a failing major metropolitan newspaper. It provides you with great opportunities."[367] Bowie now works as the morning Sun's environmental reporter.

"We did it with mirrors a lot of the time," said Ralph Vigoda, a Martin hiree who served as metropolitan editor and sports editor at different times. "We had no pretenses about who we were. We all hoped for the best. I think we all -- that sounds so chiche-ish, God -- but I

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366 Tonnie Katz interview.

367 Liz Bowie interview.

just think we came in every day and wanted to do what we could. You know, we enjoyed our jobs a lot."[368]

While there was plenty of work for the reporters, there was precious little for advertising workers. After 1982, the newspaper stopped reporting advertising linage figures, apparently because they were too embarrassing. However, the amount continually went down.

Sales personnel used several pitches to advertisers in their efforts to get linage. To battle the combination rate offered by the Sunpapers for the morning and evening papers, News American sales representatives reminded clients that the Sunpapers' combination rates resulted in unnecessary duplication of advertising dollars. News American sales personnel also tried to make the best of the News American's weak audience demographics: If they were weak demographics, at least they were different demographics -- people who did not read the Sun. Another tool used by the advertising department was the News American Advertiser, Hearst's only money-making publication in Baltimore. Distributed as a free weekly to all News American non-subscribers, the newspaper netted points with advertisers for penetration but lost credibility because distribution was not audited. It was thought that because readers did not pay

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368 Ralph Vigoda interview, p. 9.

for the product, they were more likely to throw it away with advertisements unseen.[369] Despite the reservations, the News American Advertiser was credited with counter-balancing the mother newspaper's losses until 1984.[370]

But the biggest handicap for Hearst may well have been its price structure. The News American traditionally had been very aggressive with its pricing policies. In Baltimore, the price increases were phenomenal, and advertisers had to pay more to reach each News American reader than for each Sun reader. The basic measurement in the advertising industry is "CPM," the cost of reaching each thousand subscribers, which factors out circulation differences. In the vernacular, it is the "bang-for-your-buck" measurement. In late 1981, the CPM rate was $16.40 per line for the News American. For the Sunpapers combined, it was $10.96 per line. In other words, the cost of reaching each News American household -- a household generally making less money and less attractive to advertisers -- was 49 percent more than the cost of reaching each Sun household.[371] Within three years, the differential was greater: The CPM per inch

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369 Hugh Brennan interview, p. 12.

370 Michael Onorato interview.

371 Compiled from rate and circulation information on p. I-120, Editor and Publisher International Yearbook, 1982 edition.

(both newspapers began measuring advertising by the inch instead of by the line) in the News American was $664.30 per inch. In the Sunpapers it was $297.50.[372] The differential had ballooned. Each News American reader cost 123 percent more to reach than each Sun reader.

Through 1981 and 1982, circulation continued to plummet. Toedtman's moves towards creating a "professionalized News-Post" had not dented the spiral. Average paid circulation in the year ending 30 September 1983 was 115,133, down 18 percent from the figures from two years earlier, and less than half of the peak circulation. Since 1981, the News American had lost its second-place standing in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County, leaving the newspaper dead last in all subdivisions.[373]

Hearst, which had ignored the pleas of Martin, Katz and Toedtman for more money for new innovations for so many years, finally was willing to pay for a gamble. That gamble was SportsFirst, a tabloid version of the News American that was the opposite of the New York City tabloids, leading with sports through more than half the

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372 Compiled from rate and circulation information on p. I-146, Editor and Publisher Yearbook, 1985 edition.

373 From Audit Bureau of Circulations data at the Annapolis Capital for the Sunpapers and the News American for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1983, p. 3.

newspaper. News, from wire services only, began from the back. The tabloid also brought process color photographs to Baltimore for the first time. The tabloid was the paper's new first edition, appearing on newsstands before 7 a.m. and not available for home delivery. Advertising was not sold separately, however.[374]

With a payroll of $5,000 a week, Hearst authorized the hiring of eleven new staffers, ten for sports and one for news.[375] Additionally, it paid for the only market research that the newspaper performed in the Toedtman years. The research -- two focus groups -- found the most support for the edition among blue-collar workers, but some strength also from white-collar readers.[376]

SportsFirst was unorthodox. The front cover was always art and teasers, with the art usually coming from cartoonist Mike Ricigliano, newly hired from the just-closed Buffalo Courier-Express. More than 70 percent of the newshole was given to sports, with 10 percent each for general news and financial news. Additionally, the tabloid was not printed in Baltimore. The press at Lombard and South streets was too old

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374 Michael Onorato interview.

375 James Toedtman, "The News American Sports Special: A Status Report from the Editorial Department," internal memorandum, 3 June 1983.

376 James Toedtman interview, p. 22.

and outdated to handle process color, and executives wanted the circulation department to stay as far away from the tabloid as possible, favoring independent contractors. Instead, SportsFirst was printed in Gaithersburg, in Montgomery County, 30 miles southwest of the city. Toedtman and others hoped that the Gaithersburg location would be useful because of its proximity to Washington, which was seen as a possible secondary market for the tabloid.[377]

The timing of the newspaper could not have been better. The Baltimore Orioles were in the middle of a pennant race, and won the World Series in October. It was not a particularly triumphant fall for the Baltimore Colts, but it proved to be the National Football League's last season in the city before the Colts moved to Indianapolis. About 26,000 copies of the paper were printed, and all sold out during the first few weeks of publication, aided by a promotion by Hearst.[378]

The success continued through the World Series, even though some of the difficulties of having a tabloid edition of a broadsheet newspaper were readily apparent. Advertisements in the broadsheet that were larger than a half page were tilted 90 degrees to fit the tabloid

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[377] James Toedtman interview, p. 17.

[378] Korn, op. cit., p. 39.

format and looked bizarre. Advertisements were not sold separately for the sports edition to keep costs down and encourage purchases in the entire paper -- both SportsFirst and the later news editions. And, eventually, the circulation department and independent distributors -- the people who were blamed by both the editorial and advertising department for so many of the News American's woes -- saw its initial success and succeeded in gaining rights to distribute the sports tabloid.

Then the sports newspaper died. The baseball season was over, the Colts failed to ignite the city and the tabloid was unable to create its own market. The sports tabloid, now distributed by the broadsheet's distributors, was not getting to news stands in time to catch morning commuters and still was not delivered to homes.[379] The tabloid was folded after 13 months, averaging only about 7,000 circulation at the end.[380]

Onorato felt Hearst provided little support because it would not allow home circulation nor would it permit advertising salesmen to sell the edition separately to advertisers.

We made that product available for street sales.

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379 James Toedtman interview, p. 18.

380 Korn, op. cit., p. 41.

> It should have become quickly either a mailed or subscriber type of publication. People liked that publication. Sports buffs liked that publication. We made it difficult for them to buy. And it you make things hard on people to buy, they won't buy it.[381]

The SportsFirst concept was the only one of several proposals by Toedtman to be actively pursued by Hearst. A once-a-week showpiece consumer business section, called Smart Money, was cancelled after two weeks because of weak advertiser response. Plans to re-create a traditional society section, to fill the void after the Sun had abandoned its Society section, were disapproved by Hearst headquarters. A plan to revamp the newspapers television guide was also vetoed.[382]

Meanwhile, Hearst began increasing its rates twice a year instead of once a year.[383] The advertisers stopped calling. In 1984, Giant Food, the dominant supermarket chain in the Baltimore area, abandoned the News American. In 1985, the worst blow came: A Detroit advertising agency dealt the newspaper a dual blow, telling two of the paper's largest clients -- Chevrolet and Eastern Airlines -- to advertise in the Sunpapers only. "You get to the point where you can't sell Chevys and can't put

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381 Michael Onorato interview.

382 James Toedtman interview, pp. 14-15.

383 Hugh Brennan interview, p. 7.

anyone on Eastern Airlines, you were in big trouble," Brennan said.[384]

Unable to sell advertising at the newspaper's stated rate, salesmen started going "off the card." Unlike automobile salesmen or real estate agents, newspapers cannot wheel and deal -- "go off the rate card," Brennan explained.[385] Once a newspaper's advertising department goes off the card, it quickly destroys its ability to get clients to purchase advertising at full price. And, it invites lawsuits on discrimination grounds from advertisers who paid the full rate, he said. (Among some retail local advertising representatives, the negotiable rate card had been in existence for more than 10 years before the News American's death, Onorato said.)[386]

"You're at the end of your trolley trip when you start cutting deals with your advertisers," Brennan said.

To Toedtman, the end of the trolley trip had come by March 1985 as circulation continued to drop. In a memorandum to Sparby, he said the newspaper had four choices: 1) Dramatic expansion of the broadsheet package. 2) Conversion of all editions to a tabloid. 3) Conversion to morning publication. 4) Production of

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384 James Brennan interview, p. 8.

385 Hugh Brennan interview, p. 6.

386 Michael Onorato interview.

subproducts to be distributed, either with or without the newspapper, such as an early edition, a late edition, or a special society newspaper. "Continuing to tread water is out of the question," Toedtman said. "...Improved production/reproduction and improved distributorship are essential. A commitment to promote the paper is essential. A decision to increase the size of the staff is also essential."[387]

Toedtman recommended adopting the tabloid approach (in part to appeal to the tabloid-less Washington market), renaming the newspaper the Baltimore News for a succinct, distinct identity, adding circulation staff, linking up with weeklies in the region to cover neighborhoods and providing package deals for advertisers.[388]

Hearst made no moves. And the newspaper continued to die. Average News American daily circulation was down 2.7 percent in the year that ended on 31 December 1984, to 111,962. Sunday circulation was down 7.5 percent, to 151,135.[389] The figures for the Sunpapers were: morning

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387 James Toedtman, "Critical Choices -- March 1985," memorandum to publisher B. Maurice Sparby, p. 1.

388 Ibid.

389 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American for the 12 months ending 31 December 1984.

Sun, up 3.8 percent to 188,867, Evening Sun down 2.9 percent to 159,524 and Sunday Sun up 2.7 percent to 404,873.[390] The News American's share of the circulation market was down to 24.3 percent during the week and to 27.1 percent on Sunday.[391]

The News American's final circulation audit was for the year ending 31 December 1985.[392] Circulation was down to 101,456 during the week, down 9.4 percent, and to 140,224 on Sundays, down 7.8 percent. That same year, the morning Sun's circulation rose above the mystical 200,000 level, where no Baltimore newspaper had been in a decade. Morning Sun circulation was up to 200,047, up 5.9 percent. The Evening Sun dropped 4.2 percent to 152,737. The Sunday Sun was up 2.7 percent, to 415,823.[393] The News American's circulation share was down to 22.3 percent during the week and 25.2 percent on

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390 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the Sunpapers for the 12 months ending 31 December 1984.

391 Comparison of Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American and the Sunpapers for the 12 months ending 31 December 1984.

392 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American for the 12 months ending 31 December 1985.

393 Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the Sunpapers for the 12 months ending 31 December 1985.

Sunday.[394] The advertising figures were worse. The News American's share was down to about 18 percent in the spring of 1985.[395]

In the three months ending 29 September 1985, the daily circulation average was 99,808. The newspaper had fallen from its last plateau, the 100,000-circulation threshold.[396]

By then, the newsroom was disintegrating. With the staff shortages, the newspaper relied more and more on the Associated Press in its coverage of Baltimore, picking up wire stories which the wire service had picked up from the previous day's Sunpapers.[397] With the paucity of advertising, the newshole shrank. The business department was down to a single reporter. According to Washington Post writer Jonathan Yardley:

> It lapsed into a holding pattern, offering a diet so thin that only an anorexic could have been nourished by it. If its management cared about its reader, there was precious little evidence of it; its Sunday edition, printed so far in advance that the one delivered to my house, five miles from the News American's plant, contained neither scores nor stories from the previous evening's

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394 Comparison of Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the News American and the Sunpapers for the 12 months ending 31 December 1985.

395 Cherlin, op. cit., p. 34.

396 Banisky and Goldstein, op. cit.

397 Korn, op. cit., p. 40.

baseball games.[398]

In the newsroom, popular city editor Louis Linley died on deadline while editing a story on 22 November 1985. Several reporters and editors regarded his death as symbolic of the newspaper's collapse.[399]

Eleven days later, on 3 December, Hearst's headquarters announced that the newspaper was for sale.[400]

Staffers, looking for whatever parallels they could, recalled the situation in Boston, where Hearst had abandoned hope for the Herald American in 1983. There, a buyer was found: Australian media magnate Rupert Murdoch, who had kept the paper and later reported a profit in 1987.[401]

But what was not announced at the time was that Hearst had been searching for a buyer for six months, retaining the New York firm of Henry Ansbacher Ltd. to sell the newspaper. The Ansbacher company had circulated

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398 Jonathan Yardley, "Baltimore, from the Outside," Washington Post, 2 June 1986, p. B2.

399 Associated Press national wire, "Deaths," P.M. cycle, 22 November 1985; Korn, op. cit., p. 38, Joseph Nawrozki interview.

400 Associated Press national wire, "Hearst Searching for Buyer for Ailing Daily," 3 December 1985, P.M. cycle.

401 Boston Herald (no byline), "We're here to stay!" Boston Herald, 6 January 1988, p. 1.

thick books about the newspaper, offering it to media companies to no avail. There had been no interest among the "heavyweights."[402]

In retrospect, the sale announcement was more of a fishing expedition than a true turning point in deciding to sell the newspaper. Although Hearst said there were inquiries from 50 people and corporations,[403] there were only four major bidders among the "small fry" who were willing to seriously negotiate after learning the enormity of the financial problems -- of losses approaching $1 million a month. Theodore G. Venetoulis, a Baltimore County publisher of weekly newspapers and former gubernatorial candidate, said he offered $1 million for the paper plus an unspecified percentage of the profits, provided that Hearst kick in $15 million through 1989 and a profit-splitting plan. A local businessman, Harold Goldsmith, proposed purchasing the newspaper in a partial employee-ownership plan. That failed. Richard Mellon Scaife, publisher of the Sacramento Union, mulled buying the beleagered newspaper,

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402 Sam Fulwood and Ellen L. James, "Paper's Situation Made it Seem a 'Dog' to Possible Buyers, Analysts Contend," Baltimore Sun, 28 May 1986, p. 1A.

403 Baltimore News American (no byline), "So Long, Baltimore," Balitmore News American, 27 May 1986, p. A1.

but could not come to terms with Hearst.[404] The announced bidder of last resort, the Delaware- based Harbor Newspapers Inc., offered $13 million but could not raise the needed funds.[405] "When that happened, we knew we were dead," Nawrozki said.

There was an interesting hypothesis about why Hearst wanted to sell the newspaper to a well-endowed buyer, with none of the reasons involving the News American at all. If a poorly-financed purchaser folded the newspaper, compositors and pressmen would be left with no incoming money, even though they had signed lifetime contracts with Hearst during the technological, labor-saving revolution of cold type and computerization in the 1970s. John Morton, a Washington D.C., newspaper analyst, said that any perception that Hearst was trying to avoid paying the contracts could have led to strikes at other Hearst newspapers across the country, where similar agreements had been made.[406]

At this point, the newspaper's circulation was apparently near 90,000 for the first time in generations. But no one was sure. "Even among the staff, it was a big

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404 Korn, op. cit., p. 40.

405 Derek Reveron, "News American a Victim of Social, Economic Trends," Baltimore Evening Sun, 28 May 1986, p. G1.

406 Fulwood and James, op. cit.

mystery. No one in circulation would give us a count," Bowie remembered.[407]

As the end neared, employees, particularly those not native to Baltimore, looked for futures elsewhere. Toedtman left to return to Newsday to be managing editor of the newspaper's New York edition. He was replaced by Tonnie Katz, who was named acting editor.[408]

The end came swiftly, as it traditionally had at Hearst newspapers. The Baltimore employees at least were afforded the chance to witness their closure, unlike those of the Detroit Times. About 9:30 a.m. on 27 May 1986, staffers were called to an unscheduled meeting. The first two editions of the newspaper had already gone to bed, with only the final edition yet to be printed. Sparby announced that the day's final edition would be the newspaper's final edition. In the newsroom, there were tears and hugs and poses for the photographers. One reporter gathered a reaction story from employees on the closure.[409] However, it did not run -- it was against

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407 Liz Bowie interview.

408 Baltimore News American (no byline). "Katz to Take over Daily Running of News American News Operation," Baltimore News American, 18 February 1986, p. unavailable, (from the News American morgue at the Maylandia Room of the Theodore McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland).

409 Liz Bowie interview.

corporate policy. The end was announced in an eight--paragraph press release bannered beneath a headline that read, "SO LONG, BALTIMORE."[410]

Outside, Baltimoreans who usually had not bothered on most days to pay twenty-five cents for the newspaper snapped up copies from a newsboy who sold them for a dollar apiece.[411]

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410 Baltimore News American (no byline), "So Long, Baltimore," Balitmore News American, 27 May 1986, p. A1.

411 Kevin Thomas, "Young Carrier Hawks Farewell Copies for $1 Each," Baltimore Evening Sun, 28 May 1986, p. A8.

Chapter 8
Conclusion

The News American died because it failed to meet the needs of its readers and advertisers. More than half of its readers abandoned the newspaper between 1968 and 1986. The newspaper's daily circulation was below 100,000 in its last months, a tiny number in a United States major metropolitan area and certainly an unsustainable one. Almost all of its advertisers had abandoned the newspaper by the time it folded. There were only six advertisers in the final edition: Rite Aid, a regional drug-store chain, which had purchased four advertisements totalling about two and one-half pages, and five movie distributors who had bought a total of 25 column inches to promote movies. Classified advertising occupied the equivalent of two full pages.[412]

No single factor emerges as the dominant cause of the decline; all those discussed here played their roles: 1) The newspaper made no serious shift to morning publication. 2) It faced two-headed opposition from the Sunpapers. 3) It was unable to expand its circulation base beyond its core demographic groups, which advertisers increasingly regarded to be unattractive. 4)

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412 Measurement of final edition by this researcher.

Television siphoned off some of the News American's potential advertisers. 5) Hearst did not support the newspaper very well.

In fact, its support of the newspaper was so miserable that it can be considered the factor that insured the newspaper's failure. Competing against a media organization with the size and strength of the Sunpapers, it was wholly unreasonable for Hearst to expect the News American to improve its position without an newsroom budgetary increase in real dollars. Yet that was what Hearst expected from Martin, Katz and Toedtman. The unwillingness to provide long-term promotion of SportsFirst sealed the fate of the sports tabloid from the beginning of the enterprise. The failure of the chain to spend money on market research during the Toedtman editorship shows an absence of commitment and good sense.

The groundwork for the fall can be seen in the actions of the newspaper before 1978, the period when the News American created the framework it would later try to shed. This facet included the effects of William Randolph Hearst's news agenda philosophy, Eddie Ballard's priorities in deciding what readers would read, the failure to upgrade the plant or to fully professionalize the news staff in the 1960s and 1970s.

The problems could be traced almost to the time that Hearst purchased the afternoon Baltimore News and the morning Baltimore American. The decision to close the Baltimore American in 1928 created the two-on-one situation with the Sunpapers that plagued the News American for the remainder of its existence. The closure of the morning newspaper deprived Hearst of a way to directly compete against the morning Sun. Continuing the morning paper could have provided Hearst a change to offer morning-evening combination rates to advertisers and to dent the morning Sun's circulation. This researcher suspects that, if the morning American had been continued, it would have fared well because the morning Sun was so "highbrow" in tone it would have left a sizable vacuum for "lowbrow" and "midbrow" readers who had nothing to read until the afternoon. Hearst's inability to think of the Baltimore newspaper market holistically instead of viewing it as separate morning and afternoon newspaper markets precluded the possibility of maintaining the money-losing American in the late 1920s and later, in the 1960s and 1970s, of opening a morning newspaper or moving the News American to morning publication. Hearst missed another chance in 1934 when it bought the afternoon Baltimore Post. It closed the newspaper immediately instead of considering the

possibility of operating it in the morning against the morning Sun. As the decades wore on, the Sunpapers' monopoly in the morning provided it with a level of economic security that the News American would never have.

Hearst's cheapness to its employees after the Second World War kept made the newspaper weaker than it should have been. The newspaper's salary scale was always lower than those at the Sunpapers and, although there were important exceptions, the News American's staff was not as strong as the Sun's. The company kept several reporters and editors who should not have been working there. Alcoholism makes for colorful journalists but not necessarily for strong journalism. Sober staffers were not provided the incentive to excel because apparently nobody was fired from the newspaper before the Ron Martin-Jon Katz years. Managers and staffers were not encouraged to objectively analyze the audience that the newspaper reached and the audience that did not read the newspaper. Editors in important positions thought the newspaper had an across-the-board appeal when, in fact, the newspaper targeted itself to only a portion of the Baltimore metropolitan area's population. There is little evidence that there was much interest before 1978 by the newspaper's management to learn about the

strengths and weaknesses of the Baltimore market. Even after editors of the newspaper were interested in learning about the News American's audience, there is no evidence that Hearst was willing to pay for the systemic, long-term research needed to do so.

There is a question whether Hearst had any interest in the survival of the News American at all. Perhaps Hearst's actions were actually those of a corporation that knew exactly what it was doing. The possibility that Hearst used the News American as a tax write-off for other, profit-making properties can not be discounted. Except for its large, major metropolitan newspapers, which traditionally have been the millstones around Hearst's corporate neck, Hearst has performed very well economically. The shrewdness that has marked other Hearst efforts might have played a part in Hearst's management of the News American. Certainly, the corporation's apparent ineptitude in Baltimore was incongruous with Hearst's overall financial prowess. Perhaps the "ineptitude" was wholly deliberate -- and lucrative in ways that outsiders could not see.

If Hearst, indeed, was trying to save the newspaper, it could not blame market factors and absolve itself of its role in the paper's ruin. William Randolph Hearst's newspapers were a printed reflection of the man's

personality. They reflected his vision of news, a vision that failed to match the public's tastes as the decades wore on. Even though the News American from 1937 to 1964 was part of Hearst Consolidated Inc., a publicly owned piece of the Hearst empire, there was little difference between the years when the newspaper was privately and publicly held. In one case, Hearst did not have to listen to stockholders. In the other, Hearst refused to listen to his stockholders. In this case, the absence of shareholders hurt the organization because the autocrat at the helm grossly abused his power. Editors and publishers inside the chain had no power to shape their newspapers according to the needs of their local markets.

The problems of the Hearst company's management continued long after Hearst's death in 1951. Since dissent was not permitted within the chain, there was no one able to change course and rejuvenate the newspaper chain. With the corporation controlled in the 1950s and 1960s by Richard Berlin, the Hearst company was controlled by a person who disdained the newspaper properties. Ashamed of their journalistic reputation and financial performance, Berlin did not invest in the properties to try to their fortunes around. Like Hearst, Berlin was accountable to nobody in his stewardship of the newspaper chain. The owners of the company, Hearst's

heirs, could not criticize the demolition of the newspaper chain because many of them worked in the newspaper chain and had to share in the blame for its poor performance -- and all of them were descended from the man who was, not only the guiding force for the chain's construction, but also the architect of its destruction. Also, the profits of other divisions, particularly the magazine and broadcasting divisions, were so impressive that the sting of the newspaper-division failures could be assuaged by the lucre of the other successes.

The neglect showed, especially in Hearst properties in other cities, where competition between newspapers was keen. The list of closed newspapers included those in Milwaukee, New York, Boston, Syracuse, Rochester, Washington, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Chicago and Atlanta. Today, only five cities remain from the old Hearst empire, and the chain's newspapers in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle are moribund. The newspaper in San Antonio is locked in a close battle with a newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch. The newspaper in Albany has a monopoly. The legacy of what was once the world's largest newspaper chain is underwhelming. The News American's successes in the middle of the 20th century and its survival into the 1980s were in spite of Hearst's

management rather than because of it.

There is some question about exactly how successful the News American was even in its heyday. Even when it was Baltimore's best-selling newspaper, its circulation was far less than a majority of daily newspaper circulation in the city. In 1968, one of the News American's strongest years, the newspaper's circulation of 218,265 was 35.6 percent of the total daily circulation of Baltimore newspapers. The remaining 64.4 percent was split between the two Sunpapers.[413] Although the News American was Baltimore's leading newspaper, it certainly was not dominant.

The tragedy of the era lies in the fact that the News American failed to try to change the situation during the period when it could best control the situation. There was no attempt to try to improve the newspaper or to change the Ballard news formula, which was quickly becoming obsolete. When the newspaper was making profits, it made no moves in the newsroom to insure the continuity of its strength.

The reason for the inaction is unclear. But there was certainly no indication that anybody had any

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413 Derived from Audit Bureau of Circulations figures at the Annapolis Capital for the Sunpapers and the News American for the 12 months ending 30 September 1968.

long-term plans to deal with the situation. The only adjustments made by the newspaper through the mid-1970s were to raise advertising rates.

When changes were finally made by the "old" pre-1978 News American, before Ron Martin and Jon Katz arrived, they were late, minimal and half-hearted. One of the biggest changes in the 1975 revamping of the Sunday News American was dropping of the Extra magazine. Despite the newspaper's effort to put a good face on the changes, readers would not buy the News American. The changes in the daily newspaper in 1976 were not effective either. The paper made a feint towards morning publication, printing 22,000 copies for news stands, but made the morning paper unavailable to subscribers. With little commitment, the venture failed to yield immediate results and the newspaper retreated the following year, scrapping the morning edition. In the few cases where major metropolitan newspapers in the United States have been able to avoid extinction, a partial or complete transfer to morning publication has been an integral part of the success.

When Hearst finally decided to make major reforms, it brought in Martin to edit the newspaper. In retrospect, the Martin-Katz era was a failure, much of it due to the pair's choice of a magazine-style news agenda. However,

magazine-style journalism was not the singular cause so many employees and Baltimore media observers thought. There continues a debate and there is room for academic work on the financial viability of literary journalism, but the case of the News American makes it plain that literary journalism will not succeed when it is underfinanced and forced to rely on the copy of neophytes and wire services with questionable gatekeeping.

Martin and Katz were short-circuited by Hearst before the enterprise could get off of the ground. Hearst made phenomenally high demands of the two editors. The corporation wanted Martin and Katz to take the News American back into first place. The corporation wanted the newspaper's audience demographics to improve. But Hearst did not give Martin money to pay for the turnaround. The new News American would have to be produced with the same slim budget the old News American had. Martin made many changes at the newspaper and changed the focus of the newspaper, but at the expense of purging many of the old employees, whose salaries were needed to pay for the new people. Some certainly were worthy of expulsion, but many good journalists also left the News American.

This is not to absolve Martin of any of the responsibility. The News American that he created was a

failure of the highest magnitude. The basic problem with the newspaper was that it had precious little news.

Martin's news judgment was wholly inappropriate for the newspaper's old audience, who were weaned on Ballard's front pages. The single-minded drive to get new readers unnecessarily drove away old readers, people who had been loyal to the News American for decades. Martin's desire to change the newspaper is understandable, but his erasure of everything the old News American had been is not.

Part of Martin's problem was his lack of a strategic vision for his newspaper -- ironic considering the vision he later helped develop into USA Today. He acknowledged that, as much as anything, the changes made at the News American were made to gain notice from Baltimoreans. Tactically, Martin was an innovator of the highest order, finding new avenues that certainly distinguished the News American from the morning Sun and Evening Sun. But, aside from "getting new readers" and wishing the Evening Sun would go away, Martin created no goals for the newspaper.

It is easy to use 20/20 hindsight in evaluating the actions of a person in the middle of an ongoing conflict, but it is evident now that some of the "magazine-style" philosophy that permeated the News American was bad

journalism. Some of the magazine stories and multi-story packages that were in the newspaper were excellent articles that provided information and interpretation that were useful to readers. Such stories were usually produced by local staff. But several editions of the News American studied by this researcher featured long stories, often tedious and poorly written, from supplemental wire services that had no relation to the Baltimore community and seemed to have a tenuous link, if any, to national stories or to trends. Such journalism easily bored readers and took valuable space from the front page for stories that would have provided readers with well-timed local, useful reporting. Additionally, many of the supplemental wire items were taken from the Washington Post, which was available on many news stands in Baltimore. The reprints in the News American provided the same stories later than they ran in the Post and undoubtedly helped promote the Post.

Martin's decision to get the newspaper out of the suburbs is understandable, considering the budgetary restraints. However, the allocation of reporters into often fruitless investigations was a dubious use of re-sources because of the loss of day-to-day coverage. The decision of allocating resources was undoubtedly difficult, but the population migration to the suburbs

was a demographic situation that demanded something other than complete retreat.

The newspaper even had a dilemma when dealing with its core audience. Its two major groups of readers shared a similar economic status, but differed culturally: One was black and the other was white. There is room for research on whether the newspaper's drive to appeal to both groups -- blue-collar inner-city blacks on one side and blue-collar inner-city and inner-suburban whites on the other -- detracted from its appeal to each group during the 1970s and 1980s. The effect is unclear to this researcher.

The failure in getting newspapers to customers also undoubtedly was a major blow. The inability of the newspaper to service people who called for subscriptions was a tragedy of the highest magnitude. The distribution problem was not a case of working with an abstract concept, such as trying to decide which news stories on the front page would attract the most readers. Instead it showed the newspaper's inability to respond to people who had agreed to accept it newspaper into their homes each day and, more importantly, pay for it and examine its advertising.

The distribution problem afflicted the newspaper from

the mid-1970s and continued into the days when Hearst put the newspaper on the market in late 1985. Toedtman estimated that as many as 40 percent of new starts were not serviced by the circulation department because of inadequate funds to hire staff.[414]

Although the names of Martin and Katz are interwined by analysts and former employees of the newspaper, largely because their employments at the newspaper overlapped substantially, the News American under Katz's nine-month editorship was quite different than it had been under Martin. The news package was strengthened during Katz's editorship and circulation somewhat stabilized during this period. Nonetheless, after the News American closed, Katz said that during his stint at the newspaper he had felt it was doomed. Katz had to deal with many of the same problems as Martin, and was despised by much of the staff because of his role as Martin's second-in-command. It would have been intriguing to see what would have happened if Katz had not left Baltimore in 1981.

The financial problems continued during Katz's tenure and worsened during Toedtman's editorship. Like Martin, advertising director Michael Onorato and several other

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414 James Toedtman, "Why the News American has Failed," memorandum, recipient not listed on document, dated November 1985.

News American veterans, Toedtman was upset by the lack of promotion the newspaper received. Tonnie Katz, who was acting editor in the newspaper's last months, complained bitterly that SportsFirst, the newspaper's biggest effort to grow in its last five years, received only two weeks of promotion from Hearst.

Toedtman compiled a memorandum called "Why the News American Has Failed" in November 1985, about two weeks before Hearst announced that the newspaper was for sale. Calling the failure "self-inflicted," Toedtman noted three broad factors:

> Looked at over a period of years, the failure of the News American is less the consequence [of] the Sunpapers' successful strategy than it is the failure of the News American management to 1. see the profound demographic and behavioral changes underway in the market; 2. alter the product and marketing strategy to capture that change; and 3. develop a delivery system that worked.[415]

Toedtman identified five long-term problems and six short-term problems that killed the newspaper. Long-term problems were listed as (1) paucity and poor mix of advertising, (2) perception of the News American as the paper of the poor, elderly and blue-collar, (3) failure of the circulation department to adequately service the suburbs, (4) failure to respond to demographic changes

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415 Ibid.

and (5) television. Short-term problems were listed as (1) alienation of the News American's traditional readership without simultaneously promoting the paper to people who would be interested in the new News American, (2) changed focus from hard news to features as reader interest in hard news increased, (3) lack of a unified strategy, (4) insistence on an immediate payback on new projects and features in the newspaper, (5) budget concerns that dominated decision-making at the newspaper, and (6) the inability to deliver new orders.[416]

Toedtman left three months later, and the newspaper folded three months after that.

The decline and fall of the Baltimore News American is a fascinating story, filled with men and women who devoted themselves to fighting a battle that probably could not have been won even in the best of circumstances. With varying personal agendas and philosophies, they shared a commitment to maintain a third daily newspaper voice in Baltimore. In the years before the newspaper closed, Baltimore was the smallest city in the nation with three daily newspapers.

These journalists, however, were denied the chance to compete fairly "in the best of circumstances" with the

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[416] Ibid.

two Sunpapers. They worked with tiny budgets against a daunting pair of opponents, a self-destructive tradition and a penny-pinching corporate parent.

The News American was a victim of economic Darwinism, unable to survive because it was not the fittest. It was not the newspaper that advertisers and readers of Baltimore needed the most. The relationship between the Hearst Corporation and its newspaper in Baltimore illustrates a pure case of what Charles Beard termed economic determinism: Hearst operated the News American until it could no longer make money from the newspaper; it was unwilling to risk money to revive it.

Under the best of circumstances, the newspaper might have survived. The best of circumstances were not available. The newspaper died.

Jacques Kelly, the newspaper's Baltimoreana columnist, said of the newspaper's closure, "This is not a case of a newspaper dying. It's a case of a newspaper committing suicide."[417]

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[417] Korn, op. cit., p. 40.

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