

# Industry Pioneers

*The free-paper industry has a rich history. And, many people from the Midwest played an important role in its development and growth. The caring, sharing and support members offer each other make this an industry like no other. In this section we will share features from people past and present who helped create the unusual dynamic we enjoy today.*

*If you know of a person or company that should be featured, please contact Lee at [director@mfc.org](mailto:director@mfc.org)*

**This month we are featuring Trevor Slette with Citizen Publishing Company and the Windom Shopper.**

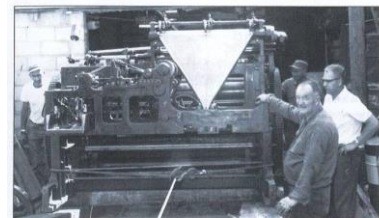


*The Slette Family-Conner, Trevor, Katie, and Cullen*

**Meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation  
of the  
Citizen Publishing Company**



*Like the building that housed the Citizen in 1966, the employees inside were also a little rundown and decrepit. That soon changed.*



*Two happy publishers watch 10,000 pounds of press go out the back of the old Citizen. Ken, far right, is happy to get rid of the old clunker. The publisher from Grackle (front) is happy to get the press.*

*Left: Like the building that housed the Citizen in 1966, the employees inside were also a little rundown and decrepit. That soon changed.*

*Center: The Citizen at its current location in Windom, MN*

*Right: Two happy publishers watch 10,000 pounds of press go out the back of the old Citizen. Ken, far right, is happy to get rid of the old clunker. The publisher from Grackle (front) is happy to get the press.*

I'll start this journey with my grandparents, Ken and Gerrie Anderson. Ken grew up in Grand Rapids, ND, and Gerrie in Wahpeton, ND. Both of them were heavily involved in WWII; my grandma served with the WAVES (Women's Auxiliary Volunteer) and my grandpa, with most of his buddies already in the services, enlisted in the Air Force. He was stationed in Norwich, England, and served as a top turret gunner on a B-24 bomber. His squadron flew 11 bombing missions over Germany.

While volunteering for the auxiliary, my grandma obtained a journalism degree from the University of North Dakota.

When my grandparents met shortly after my grandpa returned from WWII, it was love at first sight. After dating for some time, they started planning their course of action. They hit upon a plan: they would both take printing courses at the State School of Science in Wahpeton, ND. This would prepare them with mechanical abilities so they could one day have their own newspaper.

There, they learned how to operate the linotype, which was the composition machine of the day. Printing presses, type drawers, and page forms soon became familiar to them. They also took classes in business law and other subjects that would prepare them for their goal of eventually owning their own newspaper.

In the spring of 1948, the Andersons heard of the death of Harry Thompson, publisher of the Cooperstown, ND Sentinel-Courier. My grandma had worked as an intern for Thompson for two weeks earlier in her college career. They contacted his widow, Genevieve, who badly needed someone to run the paper for her. They were hired at a wage of \$40 per week each. They were in the big money!

Genevieve tried to supervise her young employees by enacting such brilliant office rules as insisting that all 3-cent stamps be removed from the building each night "in case of fire." What she planned to do should she ever see flames licking away at expensive machinery and piles of newsprint was a mystery.

Six months in Cooperstown was all that the 26-year-old Andersons could endure. So they resigned their lucrative positions and returned to Wahpeton to make their home temporarily while they looked for a small newspaper to buy for their own.

Eldon Lum, an established Wahpeton publisher, and Gil Reeder, a kindly Wahpeton banker, took the penniless would-be publishers under their wings as the search began. In business and in debt, Lum knew of a family man operating his own paper in tiny Battle Lake, MN, population 706, called The Battle Lake Review.

The price? \$10,000. No quibbling was involved on the part of either the buyer or the seller.

From there, they went to Barnesville, MN, and eventually to Windom, MN, where they purchased The Cottonwood County Citizen in 1966. And we have been here since.

It was a motley crew that came with the Citizen. In the back shop were an ex-convict, an alcoholic, and a long-haired biker. The ex-con, also a linotype operator, carried a gun, and holes in the ceiling were mute evidence of former occasions when he had shot at some innocent bird that had flown in through an open front door. Tales of past incidents were hilarious but also frightening to the new owners.

Through the years, both my grandma and grandpa continued to write their columns. The office staff increased. Gramps assumed the stature of publisher, boss, and father adviser to upset employees (mainly his kids). Grandma's reportorial duties decreased, and she was able to spend more time at home, yet was always on hand to fill in as a line of editors and reporters came and went at the Citizen. "My Say" continued to garner both state and national awards.

In 1967, area publishers gathered together to form the Peach, a weekly agricultural supplement to each of the newspapers: Windom, Lakefield, Mt. Lake, St. James, Madelia, Jackson, and Trimont. The peach-colored advertising pages were printed in Madelia. The publishers and their spouses gathered monthly at a business (and some monkey-business) meeting. A great camaraderie was formed.

The Windom Shopper was started in 1969, which is our link to the Midwest Free Community Papers organization. We are coming up on our 55-year anniversary this summer!

In 1979, my grandpa became involved with two young fellows — Chuck Draper of Pipestone and Jim Keuhl of Jackson — in starting a printing plant centrally located in Slayton, about 25 miles from Windom. The three newspapermen built a new building and installed state-of-the-art equipment. Page One was the name chosen for the plant.

My Grandma and Grandpa continued to own a majority interest in the Citizen until 1991 when the newspaper was sold to Kim and Terry Anderson (my mom and dad).

I graduated from St. Cloud State University in the spring of 1996 with a degree in teaching. I taught for two years in the Eagan, Apple Valley, Rosemount school district, working with kids with special needs. I have always been a firm believer that college is there to help you grow up, not necessarily for the degree you earn. So when the opportunity arose to move back to my hometown to work for my parents, Katie and I were excited for the move.

Then, in June of 1997, my wife Katie and I came back to work for my parents at the Citizen. Positions became available when my parents purchased the Mt. Lake Observer and Butterfield Advocate.

I started in subscriptions, and Katie in sales. Unfortunately, Katie contracted Lyme disease shortly after starting and eventually had to quit because of the debilitating illness.

As is often the case, there is a silver lining in all setbacks. Katie's departure from the business allowed me to move into sales, giving me exposure to all facets of the Citizen.

On July 2, 2007, my Dad and I became partners as we inked a sales agreement that would allow us to buy the Citizen over the next ten years. The Citizen remains one of only five or six county seat weeklies to be independently owned. All the others are owned by newspaper chains.

I am forever grateful and proud to be a third-generation publisher and am excited for our future!