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The Call and Post celebrates 95 years

This week marks the Call & Post's 95th Anniversary. A celebration will be held at the Galleria in downtown Cleveland.

Since nearly a century ago, the Call & Post has been known for reporting in the Black community. As we honor the longevity of our existence, we also honor the support of Ohio's African American community.

In the 95 year journey, the Call and Post and its readership have traveled spans of generations. No one knows better than some of our 40 plus year workers the challenges we've encountered over the years. I'm proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in 2011 as we've faced and overcame many of the obstacles.

As we celebrate our 95th anniversary, I wanted to congratulate and thank each and every one of you for being a part of making our paper what it is today and helping to fulfill its purpose.

Along the way, we have lamented our losses and celebrated our triumphs as a business, as a community, and as a people. Our history is your history. On behalf of our publisher, associate publisher, and staff, as we celebrate our 95 years, we invite you to celebrate with us. Our story is your story. A story we've been proud to tell for 95 years and a story we will continue to tell well into the future.

If you ever wondered how the paper got its name, today is your lucky day (smile).

The Call Newspaper started in 1916 by local inventor Garrett Morgan and merged with the Cleveland Post in 1929 to become the Call & Post Newspaper.

With the influence of editor and publisher W. O. Walker, from 1932-1982, the Call & Post established itself as the most influential voice for African-Americans in Cleveland and ultimately Ohio.

It earned praise as one of the finest African-American newspapers in the country.

While I was not even born, I've heard the newspaper was the place to get all the information about what was going on in the Black community. I have often heard of the red box on the front page where, if you messed up, W. O. called you out.

These days the paper is owned by legendary boxing promoter Don King and Associate Publisher Connie Harper runs the day to day operations. The Call & Post is still around and providing news statewide each week.

The Call & Post has been recognized for its excellence from the National Newspaper Publishers Association recently. I was asked once, if I thought online would take over the printed newspaper, I seemingly replied no.

Few things connect a community like a newspaper. That's been the case for generations and it remains so today, whether the newspaper is in printed form or in any of the various electronic forms now available.

Newspapers are usually the largest news-gathering organization in a community. They provide easy means for people to have their stories and opinions spread to a wide number of people and, to some degree, newspapers legitimize those stories and opinions by the very means of publishing them.

They also are community members and community partners. Newspapers take up the causes of groups needing help. They give charitably in many ways. They work with other organizations for the betterment of a community.

Even through leaps and bounds in the technology field, many seniors and non-computer literate people lack access to the internet and a computer. I can not imagine my grandparents sitting at the table, drinking coffee, and reading their laptop or iPad.

Here we are 95 years later in the modern age however it still takes people – in many instances your friends and neighbors – to create and deliver this news every week.

Whether it's in advertising, circulation, production, the business office, the online and information tech offices, the mailroom, or the newsroom, we do this because we enjoy it. Social media, online content and iPad applications are all part of the marketing mix today. Still, what excites marketers and media buyers is what IS NOT being done.

They want to do something different… something new. It's hard to believe but I've heard many marketers talk about leveraging print as something new in their marketing mix. I talked a few journalists recently who said it's harder and harder to get people to agree to an interview for an online story. But, mention that it will be a printed feature and executives rearrange their schedule.

The printed word is still perceived as more credible to many people than anything on the web. It

goes to the old adage, “If someone invested enough to print and mail it, it must be important.”

The Call & Post hopefully will be around for at least 50 more years and still telling the news in the Black community. In today’s business world, we’re no longer just a newspaper company. We’re a news media company. The newspaper is just one way we package and distribute the content we publish.

The newspaper companies that will survive will not consider themselves to be newspaper companies. They recognize that they are local media companies. They will distribute content on paper, through the internet, via the mobile web, through applications and any other way technology allows consumer to access news and information. They will make themselves an indispensable resource of local news and information for citizens of the communities they serve.

Looking back over the 95 years, I am sure many reporters faced situations from that era that had people wondering about the paper. Do we take up the fight to save the printed edition?

I want to preserve it so that, in turn, we can preserve our democracy. And these newsrooms will be preserved only if newspaper companies find a sustainably profitable business model in the digital media environment in which they now compete.

We as a media company has online news at www.callandpost.com and yes you can follow us on twitter at @call_post or even like us on Facebook but we will continue to print our newspaper every Wednesday. Happy Birthday Call & Post!