

S. Earle Richards, Messenger Founder, Succumbs—Sunday

Aug. 14, 1874 – Jan. 30, 1955

Funeral services for S. Earle Richards, 80 years of age, Monroe, founder of The Monticello Messenger and publisher for 40 years, who passed away Sunday afternoon in the St. Clare hospital, Monroe, from the results of a fall, were held at 2 yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon in the Voegeli funeral home.

The Rev. A. R. Achtemeier, pastor of the Zwingli Evangelical and Reformed church, officiated, and burial was in Highland cemetery. Pallbearers were W. E. Blum, Henry C. Elmer, Henry J. Elmer, Dr. J. M. Harden, Luther Lemon and C. M. Stauffer.

Mr. Richards fell on an inclined sidewalk Saturday, Jan. 22, as he was walking to the bus station in Monroe to make his weekly visit to Monticello. He sustained a fractured skull and fractured ribs in the fall and never regained consciousness.

Mt. Pleasant Native

Born in Mt. Pleasant township, Aug. 14, 1874, he was the son of John and Martha Lewis Richards. He attended the Monticello schools. On April 11, 1895, Mr. Richards was united in marriage to Ida M. Zwickey.

Started Printing at 12

Mr. Richards was seized with the printing bug when he was only 12 years of age. He obtained a tiny press and formed a plant known as the Climax Card company in a small corner of his father's Grange store here. This operation was limited to small calling cards.

At the age of 17 he branched out and entered the mail order printing business on a larger scale. This time it was printing for breeders of pure-bred poultry and pet stock.

When the late John Richards founded The Messenger for his son, S. Earle Richards, May 11, 1896, the late publisher was then preparing to transfer his newspaper activities to Monticello from Lone Rock, where he had established a weekly publication, the "Lone Rock Hustler," in October, 1895. The Messenger became the second weekly newspaper in Monticello, the Monticello News having been founded by J. A. Smith in 1888.

Under the competent and careful guidance of Mr. Richards, The Messenger survived in a village which at that time had a population of less than 500 persons. The community was predominantly of Swiss descent and the introduction of an English language newspaper was a task which only one of Earle's caliber and integrity could direct with success. Mr. Richards' son, the late Roswell S. Richards, joined him with the publication of The Messenger in 1926. Together they built The Messenger into one of the nation's leading prize winning weekly newspapers.

On May 8, 1936, after publishing The Messenger for 40 years, Mr. Richards sold the newspaper to C. M. Wittenwyler, who has since been the publisher.

After retiring, Mr. Richards continued to live here with his son, moving to Monroe in 1947 to make his home with his only daughter, Mrs. Charles J. Niles.

"Messenger Band"

Earle was fond of music and something over 50 years ago he promoted a musical organization known as the Messenger Band. He did the booking for the band and handled all of the other arrangements in connection with the organization's activities. Mr. Richards also served as village clerk for many years.

Surviving, besides the daughter, are one brother, John S., and one sister, Mrs. Blanche Kennedy, Monticello, and three grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife in 1912, his son, Roswell, in September, 1946, one grandson in infancy in 1939, one granddaughter, Lois Niles, in 1945, and one brother, Dane, in 1938.

Talented writer

Earle was an individual of tremendous ability. He had an unusual talent for writing and he had that uncanny ability to add color to his writings that all of his newspaper articles bore an added bit of interest. He could add just the right touch to a dry subject to give it reader interest. An untiring worker, Mr. Richards would stay with his job here at The Messenger office far into the night, so that his readers would receive their copy of The Messenger on schedule.

An unusually patient and level headed individual, Earle always had the ability and excellent judgment to work out the many problems he was confronted with in his printing and publishing endeavors.

He was a credit to the printing trade and the kind of an asset to a community which one deeply regrets losing.

Never Forgot Monticello

Earle never forgot the town in which he grew up and which grew with him, and where he spent nearly all of his life. He made a visit to Monticello every Saturday, if health and weather permitted. He looked forward to these weekly visits here by bus, and his countless hundreds of friends here and in the surrounding community shared his pleasure over his visits. If, on occasion, he did not make his weekly trip, his friends were always heard to say, "I wonder why Earle didn't show up today?" Yes, we'll all miss Earle and his weekly visits. His passing leaves one with a feeling of emptiness, a feeling that something is missing.

Earle was the last of three inseparable pals. W. A. Loveland passed away in 1953 and Jack Voegeli died in 1954. The trio was always together and the conversation invariably turned to politics. Earle was always outnumbered but not out-filibustered.

Despite his advanced years, Earle walked with an air of dignity and alertness. His mind was unusually sharp and he had an excellent memory

Earle will be deeply missed by all who knew him. He had the type of disposition which enabled him to build a deep friendship with all who knew him. That's why everyone held him in such high esteem and respect.

And now as we say "30" for Earle, it is done with a sense of true sadness and of a great loss.