

Another Web Site for People with Too Much Spare Time

I was doing some research last week into the founding of my family business - Tallgrass Business Resources - originally called Iowa Typewriter Co. My brother Doug and I still own and operate the business, founded by our maternal grandfather George H. Frohwein in 1922.

Newspapers.com, associated with Ancestry.com, is a remarkable archive of over 4,300 scanned newspapers from mostly the U.S. and Canada. A subscription costs about \$7.95 per month. The search feature is amazing – it will pull any sequence of words from any issue, no matter how old, almost instantly.

For example, below are some obscure Parsons-family-related historical items that were easy for me to find. The conversational tone of the reporting is curious.

George Frohwein (my maternal grandfather) was a BMOC (Big Man on Campus) at the University of Iowa, lettering three times in both basketball and baseball. The first mention of him in the Press-Citizen was on February 7, 1919, under the headline HAWKEYES OFF COLOR IN TILT WITH FROSH. “Iowa’s basketball five held a very discouraging practice Wednesday night when the freshmen romped away from the varsity in the first few minutes of scrimmage. The freshmen five composed of Lohman and McConnel forwards, Frohwein center and G Devine and Shimek guards played circles around this combination of varsity men...”

His next noteworthy mention was on July 27, 1920: FROHWEIN IS AN INDEPENDENT. “George Frohwein has joined the Iowa City Independents [a semi-pro sports team?]. The giant diamond star will hereinafter make Iowa City his home as his folk have moved hither from Monona. George was described as “a stellar hurler, a crack infielder and some sticker.”

On Feb. 18, 1921, there was an article about Iowa preparing for a basketball game against Purdue coach “Piggy” Lambert’s Boilermakers. According to the reporter, an “elongated senior liberal arts student” was moved to George’s center position, “while [football legend] Aubrey Devine took the splinters for Frohwein, who took the running guard job.” The substitute center was referred to as, “not the most alert center in the world.”

The August 4, 1921, issue featured a headline: AUTOS CLASH, WOMAN FAINTS. "Landlord Albert Burkley's Studebaker met Mrs. Kron's car on the Clinton Street side of the campus yesterday afternoon and the shock caused Mrs. Kron to faint. Mrs. Kron's machine was driven away safely by Mr. George H. Frohwein."

George took up the game of golf in 1923, noting the golf swing seemed similar to that in baseball. He eventually had seven holes-in-one in his lifetime. On October 11, 1924, the headline read: SHRADER BEATS GEO. FROHWEIN IN TOURNAMENT; Old Veteran Wallops Younger Generation in Semi-Finals for Country Club Golf Championship. "C.C. Shrader, postmaster, defeated George H. Frohwein, former University of Iowa baseball captain and athlete. It took the old veteran a score of 79 for the eighteen holes, a new course record by two strokes, to defeat the young athlete."

In the Personals section of the paper (Phone 964) on February 9, 1927, it was noteworthy that "Mr. George Frohwein spent the day in Cedar Rapids on business."

On February 23rd, 1927, there was a large advertisement for a new silent film called The Fire Brigade. The ad featured testimonials from prominent local businessmen William R. Hart (City Attorney), Dr. J. Ward (Dentist) and George H. Frohwein (Iowa Typewriter Co.) who is quoted as saying, "Oh! Boy! That's sure one wonderful picture."

I searched for my own name in the archives out of curiosity. I was born in 1953 and raised in Iowa City, but my first mention wasn't until 1966 for achieving an "A" rating on trombone in Iowa City's Junior High Solo Festival. Subsequent mentions (of events I barely remember) were lettering in football (1966), as track manager (1969), and as swimming manager (1970), being a West High School newspaper editor (1971), earning several Iowa State Music Contest division 1 ratings (1971), and winning a University of Iowa sailing regatta at ISU (1974).

There were also multiple letters to the editor, I was cited for winning the Press-Citizen's photo contest (1981), an Iowa City Jaycees Distinguished Service Award in 1986 and a mention for being treasurer of the Citizens for Local Option Sales Tax in 1987. In 1988 another Dave Parsons (egad!) became a Press-Citizen department head, so he was on the masthead in every subsequent issue for years, and searches on our name became very cluttered.

Browsing newspapers.com is a fascinating way to kill a few hours – at least - and a two-week trial is free. Knock yourself out.

Writer's Group member Dave Parsons has avoided Ancestry's 14-day free trial so far, but it's just a matter of time...