

Rain tonight and tomorrow.
Low in the 60s, high in the
70s. Details /17



It seems like only *Yesterday*

THE RICHMOND NEWS LEADER

35 Cents

Richmond, Virginia, Saturday, May 30, 1992

31,691

Metro

It's the last day for The Leader, it's our last day at your door!

'Nevermore'

After 95 years, the guest departs

Parts of NL live on in T-D

By Randy Hallman
Staff writer

When the merger of The Richmond News Leader and the Richmond Times-Dispatch is consummated Monday, many elements of The News Leader will be recognizable in the new newspaper.

The News Leader ceases publication with this afternoon's issue, but most of The News Leader's editors, reporters, columnists and artists are moving into jobs at the revamped Times-Dispatch.

Several News Leader once-a-week sections will survive the merger. The News Leader's popular Green Section will be published on Saturdays with 24-hour television schedules. Monday's Metro Business section, another News Leader product, has been carried in both papers since the first of the year and will continue. The News Leader's Richmond Weekend section and the Times-Dispatch Weekender have combined into the Weekend tabloid carried on Thursdays. The two papers' food sections also have merged.

'News leader' phrase to survive

The Young Virginians section and The Mini Page for children move from The News Leader to the new Times-Dispatch. The YV section will publish on Thursdays, The Mini Page on Tuesdays. The merged paper's lifestyle, or features, section will borrow its name, Flair, from The News Leader's Friday features section.

The community Plus sections, originated in The News Leader, will continue in the Times-Dispatch.

Even the phrase "news leader" will survive. Under its name, the merged Times-Dispatch will carry the slogan "VIRGINIA'S NEWS LEADER."

But the afternoon newspaper that has chronicled the life and times of this city since the last years of the 19th century, won't make it to the 21st. The News Leader joins scores of other newspapers that have published and perished here.

Bore witness to enormous change

In its time, The News Leader bore witness to enormous social, technological and cultural changes. When The Evening Leader made its debut most of Richmond's civic leaders were Civil War veterans. The Wright Brothers' first flight was still seven years away. The term "World War" hadn't been coined. A cavalry unit still rode horseback. That first year the Supreme Court approved racial segregation with its Plessy vs. Ferguson decision. Computers were not yet dreamt of.

The printed word was the prime medium for mass communication. It would be nearly half a century before television was invented, and another 25 years after that before "happy talk" evening news became a staple in the American household.

Now, afternoon newspapers in major metropolitan areas have become an endangered species.

The News Leader's circulation was above 125,000 in the mid-60s. By the 1980s, it was in a gentle but steady decline that accelerated each year, slipping under 100,000 in the '90s. In a final touch of irony, today's issue

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Today Inside

Capitol crossroads

The halls of Congress were the starting point for Michael Fitzsimmons to enter the ministry. He graduates tomorrow from Union Theological Seminary. Page 4.

No second-guessing

May Department Stores Co. might be willing to give away the vacant Thalimiers building in downtown Richmond, but company officials refuse to second-guess their decision to close the store. Page 6.

'American hero'

Amenda C. Goad, the National Spelling Bee champion from Henrico County, prepares to return home as "an American hero." Page 19.

Assessing damage

A preliminary assessment of the damage done by the grimmest episode in University of Virginia sports history suggests that the school's pride has been bruised more severely than its football and men's basketball programs. Page 20.

168 pages, 4 sections

Brides	35	Financial	7
Classifieds	24	Green Section A-1	
Comics	16	Ann Landers	35
Crime log	3	Obituaries	6
Diversions	19	Religion	4
Editorial	18	Sports	20

Today's chuckle

Change is a good thing — when it comes to baby's diapers.



Jim Caelella/The Richmond News Leader

The City Desk of The Richmond News Leader was hard at work preparing the final edition.

It's not just another Saturday

By Steve Clark
Staff writer

On a normal Saturday in the newsroom of The Richmond News Leader, a skeleton crew shows up to produce the newspaper.

But this was no normal Saturday.

The dozen red roses on the city editor's "OUT" basket told you that.

So did the tuxedo worn by copy editor Hew Stith, as well as the T-shirt worn by Assistant City Editor Jane Zemel — the one with the dates (1896-1992) of The News Leader's existence on the front and these words on the back: "WE DID IT IN THE AFTERNOON AND DIED."

Yes, this was no normal Saturday.

This was the last day of publication.

This was the day we died.

So instead of a typical Saturday skeleton crew, we had a healthy crew on hand. Seems many staff members wanted to be here for the Last Hurrah.

Not to mention ex-staffers. Heck, even Dean Levi, who retired Jan. 1 after writing more weather stories

than any human who ever lived, showed up to bang out one last weather report for old time's sake.

He picked up the telephone, called the National Weather Service office and asked: "What's causing this gloomy, gloomy stuff?"

Associate City Editor Ed Kelleher, sitting next to Levi, cracked: "Dean Levi, weather writer emeritus."

Considering the circumstances, the mood in the newsroom was upbeat.

City Editor Dave Burton cracked jokes and worried about the rainy weather.

That's an inside joke. Burton used to live in a house near the James River, which sometimes floods, so rain always brings him visions of flooding.

To their everlasting credit, editors and reporters went about their jobs this morning as though The News Leader were just beginning — not ending.

Reporter Jim Mason checked the police beat in case there was one more murder to report.

Reporter Bill Wasson was delighted to report that he

See Balling, Page 14

Merged paper starts Monday

By Jerry Finch
News Leader managing editor

"The Leader will always be a guest whom you will not be ashamed to entertain at your fireside," said the editorial published in 1896.

Today, this guest takes its leave of Richmond after more than 95 years.

The Richmond News Leader, formed by the combination of The Evening Leader and the Richmond News in 1903, published its last edition this afternoon. On Monday, the merged News Leader and Richmond Times-Dispatch will be transformed into a new morning newspaper. The Times-Dispatch name will survive.

Richmond will be without an afternoon daily newspaper.

Beginnings traced to 1896

The News Leader traces its beginning to The Evening Leader and 1896, when Joseph Bryan purchased the Manchester newspaper to get into the afternoon field. He had held the morning Times since 1887. The Leader rather than the News, founded in 1899, was regarded as the parent paper, and The News Leader took its policy from that Nov. 30, 1896, editorial.

Bryan deliberately set up The Leader as a friendly newspaper. The plan achieved immediate success as readers took to the new publication brought across the James River and printed by The Times.

For many years after World War II, the slogan carried in The News Leader's nameplate was "Your Family Newspaper." Staff members were admonished to make certain their stories could be read without embarrassment in a family setting.

Circulation of The News Leader, newspaper files show, made tremendous gains during World War I. The News Leader published daily reports of war news, and Richmonders who had been only cursory readers suddenly became focused on reports from overseas, much as they did last year during the Desert Storm operation. Sales, which had grown by the hundreds in the early years of the century, began growing by the thousands in 1917-1919.

By 1919, a News Leader story said, as many copies of the paper were being sold as there were houses in Richmond.

Largest circulation in state

Ten years later, News Leader circulation surpassed 70,000 and was ahead of the daily Times-Dispatch by 15,000. Through the late 1920s and the 1930s, The News Leader circulation was the largest in Virginia.

In 1965, The News Leader circulation reached its all-time high of 127,697. Today, circulation has fallen below 100,000, and the newspaper ranks only as the fourth largest Monday-Saturday operation in the state, behind The Virginian-Pilot of Norfolk, the Times-Dispatch and the Daily Press of Newport News.

Last September, Publisher J. Stewart Bryan III announced the decision to concentrate on producing one newspaper. The News Leader was still strong, but times

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Goodbyes Inside

Goodbye to the old downtown presses. By Rex Springston, Page 14.

Tilt back in your cane chair... and read. Commentary by John Hall, Page 15.

A review of a year ending early. Editorial, Page 18.

How cartoonist Gorrell has seen 1992. Page 18.

A newspaper ends with a deadline. Diversions by Steve Clark, Page 19.

It never seemed like work. In This Corner, by Paul Woody, Page 20.

The empty seat in the press box. By Tim Pearrell, Page 20.

TV just one factor in larger lifestyle changes. Station Brinks by Kathy Phillips.



P. Kevin Morley/Staff photographer

City Editor David Burton, Assistant Managing Editor Nelson Hyde, Managing Editor Jerry Finch and artist Mary Garner-Mitchell look over the first papers of the final edition of The Richmond News Leader.