



CARROLL BINDER – EARLY COMMITTEE CHAIR, PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL JOURNALIST

As the curtain fell on World War II, concern grew that Minnesotans would dial the postwar clock back to the isolationism that had prevailed in the state during the era between the two world wars. Among the concerned was John Cowles, owner of the state's largest daily newspapers, the evening Star Journal and the morning Tribune in Minneapolis.

In 1944, Cowles and his top editor, Gideon Seymour, wanted an experienced editorial page editor who could help foster a climate of international engagement among their many thousands of readers, someone who cared about and could explain well the state of the world beyond America's shores. They turned to the Chicago Daily News, where the publisher, wartime U.S. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, had died a few months earlier. Suddenly the newspaper had gone on the auction block, stirring fears on its foreign desk that a new owner would cut back on the paper's highly regarded international coverage.

The situation led Cowles and Seymour to approach Carroll Binder, a former foreign correspondent who was directing the foreign desk at the Daily News. Today, few Minnesotans know that name; then, Binder was one of the shining stars of American journalism.

In 1952, he became the chair of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Committee on Foreign Relations, succeeding economist Arthur Upgren.

Binder's career in journalism is chronicled in his extensive archives -- personal correspondence, articles and columns, photographs, speeches, awards, scrapbooks -- at the Newberry Library in Chicago. His papers make scant mention of the Committee. That likely reflected the organization's desire then to shun publicity and instead operate strictly under the radar.

But Binder's life was an open book. While he was at the Morning and Sunday Tribune, where he spent the last decade of his career, he supervised the editorial pages, wrote editorials on foreign affairs, turned out a weekly column on international topics and spoke to all manner of groups about foreign policies. He was known for his thoroughness, objective analysis, sense of fairness and large network of contacts around the world.

At the United Nations, Binder represented the American Society of Newspaper Editors as vice chairman of an international panel on Freedom of Information and the Press. At the Council on Foreign Relations, he worked with broadcasting legend Edward R. Murrow on the committee that selected American foreign correspondents for Council fellowships. In the 1950s, he was one of 50 Americans who served as guest commentators for the "This I Believe" broadcasts beamed to 350 radio stations around the world. Others included Pearl Buck, Bernard Baruch, Lionel Barrymore, Ralph Bunche, Will Durant, Helen Hayes, Helen Keller, Margaret Mead, Eleanor Roosevelt, Carl Sandburg, William Shirer and Harold Stassen. "Binder knows the world and its problems perhaps as well as any living American and he has learned that supreme lesson: the importance of knowing one's self," Murrow once said.



Stood Ground Against Red Scare

Binder led the Foreign Relations Committee in Minnesota during the Red Scare years of the 1950s, when Wisconsin U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy was leveling broad charges that many federal government officials, academics, Hollywood celebrities and others were Communists or sympathized with them. Binder did not hesitate to defend the victims of those charges and to speak out against McCarthy.

Binder's widow, Dorothy, described his remarkable life in a 14-page biography she wrote, shortly after he died, to mark the launch of a scholarship established in his memory by family and friends at the University of Minnesota Journalism School. His ancestors fled from Holland to settle in the Pennsylvania Dutch community, where they built a puritanical culture based on thrift and hard work. After his mother died when he was three, he was sent to live with a childless elderly couple on an isolated farm. He saved money from paper routes and odd jobs, graduated from grammar school with high honors, did four years of high school in two, entered the University of Pennsylvania when he was 16 and supported himself by working as a police reporter for the Philadelphia Press in the city's tenderloin district. He was a door-to-door salesman, making enough money to finance his first year at Harvard. He graduated cum laude from Harvard in three years, then joined the American Friends Service Committee to do relief work in the French war zone.

Rose to Direct Famed Foreign Desk

In 1919, he returned to the states. He and Dorothy first met in France, when he was in the Quaker Service there. Her father, Edmund G. Walton, was in the real estate business in Minneapolis. In 1919, Binder decided to pursue a career in journalism, initially seeking a job in Minneapolis. He couldn't find work there, so he took a temporary job as telegraph editor for the Fargo Courier News. After he and Dorothy were married, he got a job in Chicago with a press service for labor newspapers. Then he joined the Daily News staff as its labor reporter, succeeding Carl Sandburg. In 1927-31, he was a European correspondent for the paper, first in Italy, which then was under Mussolini, and then in the Soviet Union during a period of great famine under Stalin. "His intimate experience with the brutality of two totalitarian regimes convinced him against all his earlier pacifist persuasions that the West must defend its freedom, by force if necessary," Dorothy Binder wrote in her profile of him. In 1936, when he moved to the helm of the Daily News foreign desk, he inherited what was then one of the most important jobs in American journalism. According to John Maxwell Hamilton, who has written extensively about U.S. newsgathering abroad, the Chicago daily was the first newspaper to field a competent corps of reporters abroad, starting in 1898; its strategy for covering foreign news became the model for the New York Times and other major news organizations. Binder "organized and perfected the Foreign Service to the point that President Roosevelt once told him that the Chicago Daily News and one other American paper provided the most accurate and comprehensive war coverage in the United States," Dorothy Binder wrote.

When Binder started at the Cowles papers, he was swamped with speaking requests. The demand remained so high that in September of 1946 Seymour responded with a "resolute no" to almost all requests to hear Binder speak. Harold Quigley, a political science professor at the University and a charter member of the Committee, hailed Binder as "one of the best, if not the best, editors in the field of international affairs in this country." Binder traveled abroad frequently, including a trip around the world in 1955 with leading Minneapolis businessman David J. Winton.

In 1951, Minnesota Sen. Hubert Humphrey told Binder of his concern over McCarthy's attack on Gen. George Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff during the war and the architect of the Marshall Plan for reconstruction of Europe after the war. McCarthy implied that Marshall was guilty of treason for consorting with Communists. Binder noted that the Tribune was already on record with an editorial criticizing McCarthy's speech, adding that "I hate to pollute my pleasant office" with a copy of the



speech. Binder was also a staunch defender of Owen Lattimore, the former State Department official and Asian scholar who McCarthy accused of being "the top Russian agent in the U.S." In 1953, when U.S. District Judge Luther Youngdahl (a former Minnesota governor) dismissed charges of perjury and deception against Lattimore, Binder promptly hailed the decision in an editorial.

Binder died in 1956, at age 60. Jule Hannaford III succeeded him as the Committee's chair.

Scholarships Honor Heritage

The University of Minnesota has awarded more than 50 Binder scholarships so far -- 25 of them for a total of \$63,750 since 2004. Jessica Van Berkel, who joined the reporting staff of the Star Tribune late in 2014, won the scholarship in 2010 and again in 2011. Prior to coming to the paper, she was a reporter at the Sarasota (FL) Herald-Tribune. She traveled to the Mideast in the summer of 2014, as part of a fellowship with the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C. Her stories about the Syrian refugees pouring into camps and cities in Jordan appeared later in the Sarasota paper.

According to University officials, \$118,259 remains in the Binder scholarship fund, thus Carroll Binder's legacy is certain to live on for many more years.

