

Journalism Milestones

—*Arnold Cheyney*

Emma Bugbee

Shippensburg, Pennsylvania—halfway between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia—was the birthplace of Emma Bugbee on May 19, 1888.

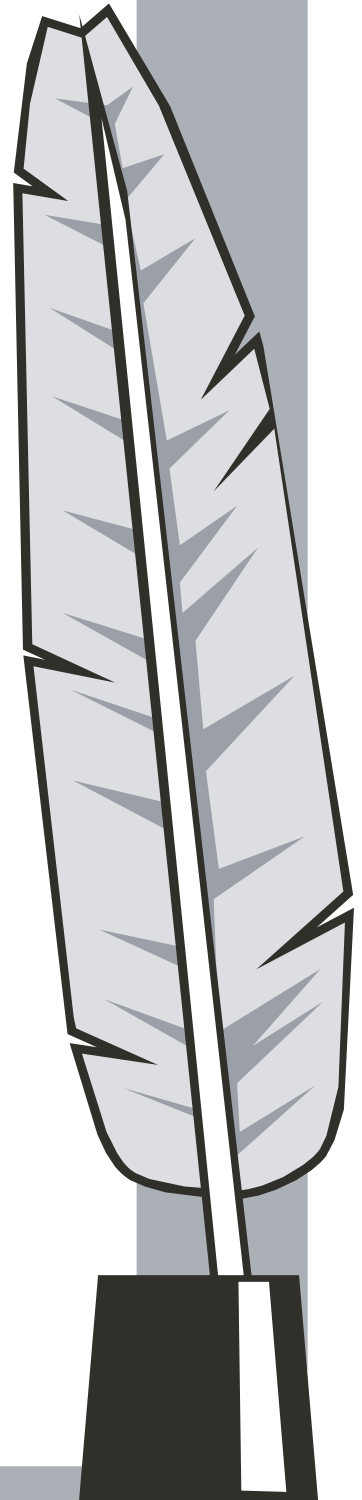
Upon graduation from high school, Emma enrolled in Barnard College in New York City. She studied languages and as an extracurricular activity, joined the college press club. As a result, she became the campus correspondent to the New York Tribune. Upon graduating, Emma taught classes in Greek language. At the end of the year the language was dropped from the curriculum. Emma was out of a job.

In August 1910, Emma substituted at the Tribune for a college friend. Emma was then hired full time, a job she held for fifty-five years.

For a number of years, Emma was the only woman on the Tribune staff. Her desk was in a small alcove on a floor above the city room where the male reporters worked. The editors had her cover women's activities such as the suffrage marches promoting a woman's right to vote. In 1911, for three weeks, Emma marched with women 150 miles from New York City to Albany, the capital of New York State. Every evening, after 5 o'clock, Emma hitchhiked a ride to the nearest telegraph office and sent her stories back to the Tribune. Finally, the Tribune gave her a desk in the city room with the male reporters.

At Christmastime 1914, Emma posed as a Salvation Army bell ringer collecting money for the poor. She was moved by the lack of compassion on the part of New Yorkers and questioned them in her article with this lead: "Is it the hearts or the hands of New Yorkers that are so cold?" This was the first article to contain her byline.

In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote. This made Emma's editors realize it was time for a woman on their staff to write political news. In 1924 (the year the newspaper became the Herald



Tribune), Emma was sent to the Democratic and Republican political conventions as a reporter.

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President. His wife Eleanor began the first press conferences for women journalists only. Emma received an invitation to lunch with Eleanor and they became good friends. The next year she went with the First Lady on a tour of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Emma covered the conventions for fourteen years. She interviewed many extraordinary women such as Marie Curie, winner of a Nobel Prize. She also wrote a series of "Peggy" fictional books dramatizing young women and newspaper reporting. She died October 6, 1981.



Learning Activities

Language Arts

- Imagine it's 1911 and you subscribe to the newspaper where Emma works. Write a letter to the editor telling him why you think Emma should have the same working conditions as the men.

Social Studies

- In an encyclopedia or reference book, read the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Share what you learn with your classmates.

Math

- How many years did Emma Bugbee work at the Tribune before she got her byline on an article in the newspaper?
- What percentage of Emma's life was spent working at the Tribune?

Juvenile Reference

Collins, Jean E. *She Was There: Stories of Pioneering Women Journalists*. New York: Julian Messner, 1980.

Mathematics Answers:

4 years; 59%

