

Nostalgic Reunion Of The Globe-Democrat

“Those were the days my friend; we thought they’d never end...”

And although no one at the St. Louis Globe-Democrat’s recent reunion actually uttered that melancholy phrase – that was the tenor of the evening. The literati and glitterati, past and present, of that spittoon-laden, hurly-burly, competing-paper era gathered in St. Louis Saturday, Oct. 29. The event was sponsored by the St. Louis Media History Foundation under the dedicated leadership of Frank Absher.

“This is what our foundation exists to do – preserve history,” Absher said of the gathering.

A flurry of sterling names were bandied about, and most (not all*) were on hand: John Auble, Jerry Berger*, Bob Byrne, Joe Castellano, Dan Caesar, Joan Dames*, Martin Duggan, Susan Fadem, Jack Flach, Pat Gauen, Katy Gurly, Holly Hildebrandt, Julie Hohman, Myron Holtzman, Kim Plummer Krull, Rich Koster*, Bob Lowes, Mike Montgomery, Tim O’Neil, Joe and Ann Pollack, Tim Poor, Del Schwinke, Margaret Sheppard*, Sue Evans Spoto, Ted Siegel, Jackie Siekerman, Rick Stoff, Joe Tannian, Ted Vessell, Lynn Venhaus, Ken Winn and Sue Ann Wood*.

The festivities were emceed by the amiable and relaxed Alvin Reed, ably abetted by Absher, Tom Pagano, Bob Byrne and the faithful Bill Greenblatt, who captured those fleeting moments and faces with his camera.

As the ebullient crowd of 50 or so hobnobbed and gnoshed, Martin Duggan (especially), Lynn Venhaus, Susan Fadem, Rick Stoff and John Auble shared their Globe-Democrat tales and tributes, adding pizzazz, wit and lightness to the evening.

The hit of the evening was Rick Stoff’s cobbled-together media

montage (with Holly Hildebrandt's archival support); and it was roundly cheered. The memorable Globe-Democrat images streamed across the screen like stills from 1931's Front Page (though no one, thankfully, ever actually looked like Adolph Menjou.) And the flow of pressrooms, headlines, nostalgic images and familiar, often departed, colleagues gently carried the audience along – though some of the details were curious.

Stoff commented: "Someone in the audience noticed that the desks, chairs, cabinets – all the furniture that the paper had in the '30s and '40s, we still had in the '80s."

Everyone cheered, remembered and reveled in Stoff's collective vision of the way "we" were ... the nonconformist, eccentric, often unpredictable mold that the Globe-Democrat forged.' All were reminded that the Globe was never boring and that it can still surprise.

Like this: On Oct. 15, 1964, two headlines appeared above the fold, on 1A; "Khrushchev Resigns" ... and ... "Cards Win Series." (placed at the top of the page.)

Or this: In early March, 1982, the Globe ran an "obit" for John Belushi, on the editorial page. The headline proclaimed: Death of a Slob.

And this: Jack Flack, crackerjack reporter and active retiree, remembers – sometime in the '60s, conferring with publisher Duncan Baumann about endorsing, or not, a particular high-profile candidate (almost certainly a Republican). The next morning, after their decision had landed on the front yards of at least 300,000 St. Louisans, Flach and Baumann heard, sort of, from the overlooked, unendorsed candidate. Large urns, overflowing with plump, yellow chrysanthemums, were delivered to both Baumann's and Flach's front porch. The attached white tags read: For yellow journalists.

Several of the many stalwarts who made the two-block trek to work for the Post-Dispatch were on hand, including two who

were gently corralled for comment: Tim O'Neil, a reporter still toiling away at the Post; and Joe Tannian, copy editor, still toiling away at retirement. (They were members of a 1986 contingent of what one Post-Dispatch was called the Globe-Democrat Boat People. They were also called the Post Toasties.

O'Neil recalls that being at the Globe – near the end when the paper was shut down by the Newhouse chain, and a new publisher Jeff Gluck was in charge (cue: hissing and booing) – was unique.

“It was like being in a old black-and-white movie,” O'Neil said. “A little stark and harried, but everyone was pulling together, trying to keep the outfit going. It was noisy. We were scrappy. It was fun.’’

And Tannian, summing up the evening for almost everyone, said: “It amazed me that we were that much older ... and still recognizable.”

The Globe-Democrat, 1852-1986. Oh yes, those were the days ...