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Meyer 'a wonderful mentor'

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Newell G. Meyer was a student at Marquette University when he took a part-time job as a tour guide at The Milwaukee Journal.

That was in 1936. The next year, he was offered a job as a promotion copywriter and researcher, working full-time while finishing his degree.

Meyer eventually retired from the promotion department — the same one he began working for as a tour guide — but by then he was the boss. In addition to serving as promotion and research director, he was named to the board of directors and became a vice president of the company.

Through it all, he believed “working with people and getting them motivated” was his most important accomplishment.

Meyer died Aug. 31, of complications from injuries suffered in an auto accident. He was 90.

In his extracurricular life, Meyer was known as a history buff. He served as a curator of the Wisconsin Historical Society board and on its executive committee. He served on other society committees, including the one that led to the development of Old World Wisconsin, the outdoor historic museum near Eagle.

In 1982, Meyer offered a gift of \$200,000 toward construction of an outdoor amphitheater on the Old World Wisconsin grounds. He first made the offer anonymously but came forward as the donor when the issue of future expenses was debated.

He served with the Army Air Corps during World War II. Meyer, who had an instructor's



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rating for meteorology, aerodynamics and aerial navigation, also taught electronics for the military.

Back home, Meyer's roles included serving as the company's consumer research manager until 1964, with responsibility for the Journal's longstanding Consumer Analysis project. He also was involved with special events and promotions, as well as marketing and planning groups for the Journal and the Milwaukee Sentinel.

“Newell was always a wonderful mentor to me,” said Abigail J. Nash, retired vice president-marketing services director for the company. “He was willing to cultivate and develop professional women at a time when that was unusual. I couldn't have had a better teacher.”

Mary Riedel, who began working for Newell in 1968, agreed.

“He was a great mentor to young people in the profession, and he was very supportive of women in the workplace,” said Riedel, who was later named promotions and communications manager. She is now community affairs manager for the Sun-Sentinel, based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

“Early on, he also recognized the value of new technology,” she said. “I think he was a visionary that way.”

Meyer lectured at Marquette University and taught a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee class on marketing research and sales analysis.

In 1977, he served as the first

chairman of the Milwaukee Neighborhood Pride Committee, and then as a member of its steering committee.

He met his wife, Ann Meyer, at work. A widow, she worked in the company's advertising department. They first made their home in Wauwatosa, collecting antiques and installing pieces of Milwaukee history there.

Meyer, who called himself an “old-time scavenger,” was excited to acquire parts of the old Plankinton and Patrick Cudahy mansions, as well as cherry paneling from the Pillsbury house that once stood on Milwaukee's east side.

With the help of restoration expert Alan Pape, the Meyers also acquired a turn-of-the-20th-century log cabin from Michigan, reconstructing it on their farm in the Town of Eagle.

While Meyer never worked as a newspaper reporter, he did get his share of bylines. Meyer liked to travel — away from the most famous tourist destinations, if possible — and wrote about his travels in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Professional honors included the Byline Award from the Marquette University College of Journalism. A former president of the International Newspaper Promotion Association, Meyer received its two highest honors: the Silver Shovel Award for promotion and the Sidney S. Goldish Award for research.

Ann Meyer died in 2004.

Visitation will be held from 10 a.m. today until the funeral service at noon. Both will be held at Wisconsin Memorial Park, 12875 W. Capitol Drive, Brookfield, in the Family Center (South Chapel).