

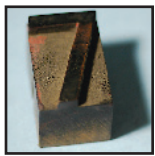
A life's work in sections

By Phillip Ritzenberg

If it's Home, it must be Thursday ...

Twentysomethings and thirtysomethings working at newspaper design — even some fortysomethings — may be surprised that some of the big moments in the craft were accomplished without

MOMENT



benefit of flat panel monitors and Photoshop. Rather, they were the product of important ideas given form by newspaper people who understood the

disciplines of design and journalism and had some zeal to spare for proselytizing.

The 1970s were so long ago in the history of our craft that the words “newspaper” and “design” rarely occurred in the same sentence, not in design circles nor certainly among editors in respectable newsrooms. Indeed, most newspapers were still graphic and information anomalies. They were ugly, inaccessible and disorganized, still assembled much the same way as they had been in the early part of the century as an indiscriminate mix of city hall, foreign cabinet crises and faraway disasters. But a handful of insurgents already was beginning to wage a guerrilla war for newspaper design.

Among the papers where noteworthy things were happening was the New York Times, where under Louis Silverstein, Sunday sections were emerging in new ways and the op-ed page had become a showcase for distinguished opinion with a signature sort of conceptual illustration that had never been seen in American newspapers.

But the world's most distinguished newspaper was in serious trouble by the mid-'70s. The convergence of New York City's near-bankruptcy, recession, labor problems, escalating newsprint prices, tumbling ad revenues and aggressive suburban competition had created a grim financial outlook.

In his marvelous memoir, *City Room* (Putnam, 2003), Arthur Gelb, longtime metropolitan

editor and managing editor, writes that, after much study and agony, “Times executives awoke to the narrowness of their approach” and the realization that “readers wanted news that went beyond the financial, the governmental and political.”

He recounts that A.M. Rosenthal, who was to become executive editor, characterized the new service journalism of magazines and some papers as a “kind of intimacy and affection with their

gave readers a different broadsheet magazine every day (and many designers their jobs). And, one after another, they were dramatic circulation and advertising successes that have been credited with bringing the Times back from the fiscal brink.

Newspaper sections were not new, even in the mid-'70s. But these transcended the conventional — and often frivolous — versions not uncommon in the industry. They represented a major infusion of money for new content and talent and a commitment to real journalism rather than puffery. The design, in the context of newspaper design history, broke new ground for graphic journalism, and in the ancient technology of hot metal, it has rarely been bested.

There was more to the design achievement than what came out of Silverstein's pencil and layout tissue and through the haze of his cigar smoke.

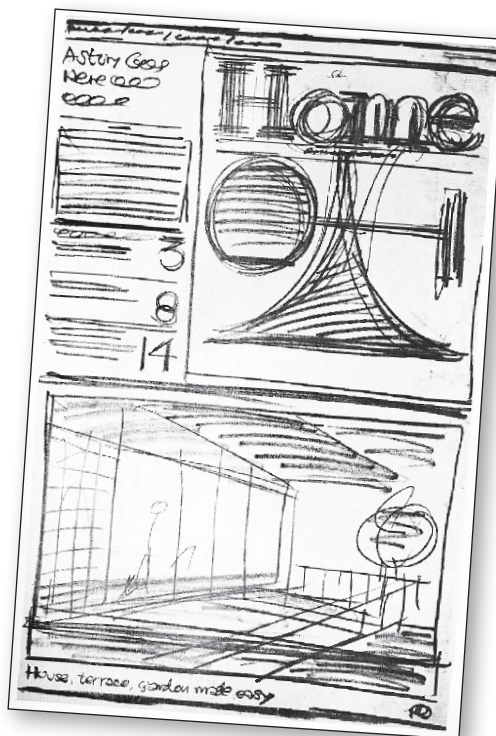
■ Coming from the newspaper's promotion design department (eventually to become assistant managing editor and corporate art director), Silverstein succeeded in raising the consciousness of editors through his credibility and insight as a designer with the natural instincts of an editor.

■ He made the creation of generous and useful space a priority of the design process.

■ He pursued quality photography and illustration as key design elements.

■ He disdained the typographical faddism that was rampant in the early days of photocomposition. Instead, he developed a type “battery” from families already used in the paper, Bookman with Stymie for black contrast, and designed a unique system for each section. Few others would have chosen the fonts then — and few would now. But they remain a refined New York Times signature.

■ And because of the paper's stature in the industry, he helped pave the way for newspaper designers to be valued as participants in newspaper journalism, even at tradition-bound



One of the first rough sketches for the Home section anticipated the actual first issue.

readers because through this kind of service, they relate to the happy and upbeat part of their readers' lives.”

Between the spring of 1976 and the late autumn of 1978 the Times was virtually reinvented. A long-debated four-section newspaper evolved under the leadership of Gelb, with Silverstein as his indispensable partner whose “innovative designs,” says Gelb, “had the touch of genius.”

The concept was to be emulated — sometimes just plain copied — as daily themed sections that

LOU SILVERSTEIN'S NEW YORK TIMES

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1997

The New York Times

THE Home SECTION

Instant Furniture Boom: The Latest Look Is Sophisticated, The Assembly Is Easy
Page C4



Elmhurst to Manhattan— One Classic Style

By ALAN COHEN BEATMAN

Here it is: the classic style of the Manhattan elite. It is a style that has been around for a long time, and it is a style that is still going strong. It is a style that is based on simplicity and elegance. It is a style that is based on quality and craftsmanship. It is a style that is based on tradition and heritage. It is a style that is based on the best of what the world has to offer. It is a style that is based on the best of what the world has to offer.

The sun helps bring heating costs down to earth in Connecticut **8**

Television: Lynn Redgrave on her new career **29**

Books: A look at human behavior and Virginia Woolf **32**

White House Acquisitor

By HELEN FRIEDMAN

When you think of the White House, you think of a grand, white, neoclassical building. You think of a place where the President of the United States lives and works. You think of a place where the most powerful man in the world lives and works. You think of a place where the most powerful man in the world lives and works.

How to cope when your apartment's unfinished, Jose Kron on interim decorating. Page C15

The New York Times

The Living Section

Cooking for One: The Pleasures, the Pitfalls and the Pratfalls

A Lone Diner Is A Happy Cook

The Very Basic Kitchen

Snail Breaks And Other Tyros' Tales

On Fifth Avenue, Shoppers' Jungle



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Strong graphics characterize The Living Section that did not settle for the light fare of the typical Wednesday food section.

The New York Times

Weekend

The City Opera Turns to Bellow, O'Horgan. Page 13

Galleries Spring Surprises. Page 16

More Than Jam At the Jazz Clubs. Page 17

Stars Drawing Full Houses in The Suburbs

New Faces Lighting Up The Season On Broadway



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WEEKENDER GUIDE

Friday

Saturday

About a third of the Home section front was essentially a magazine cover — major art with a cover line and the story inside.

institutions, and to help silence the tedious debate about art people versus word people.

On Silverstein's retirement in 1985, A.M. Rosenthal, an early skeptic (but soon a convert) on the role of designers at newspapers, said of his AME that he was not only the best art director in America, but he was also one of the best editors at the New York Times.

Although there have been changes through the years, and sections have been added (Circuits, for example, as a Thursday extra),

the essence of the originals survives to tell readers that if it's Home (now House & Home) it must be Thursday — and another major moment in newspaper design.

Phillip Ritzenberg, SND's only two-term president, is a newspaper design consultant and a veteran of almost 50 years in journalism as an editor, publisher, and designer. When Silverstein was AME at the New York Times, Ritzenberg was his across-town colleague as AME at the New York Daily News.

First of the sections, Friday's Weekend used heads as refers similar in size to story heads, with the effect of having five stories on the page. The breezy Weekender Guide went beyond listings and was brought out front.