

## **From Cox to Cox**

### ***Garrard Central Record Under New Ownership***

After 75 years of ownership in the Cox family, The Garrard Central Record has changed hands. The hand that now holds it, however, is also a Cox.

Ted Cox, an employee of the local paper since October 2008 and the editor since January of 2014, has purchased the Garrard Central Record.

As the old saying goes, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” 33-year-old Ted Cox said about the operation of the newspaper under his leadership. “I don’t know any other way to run a business than the way I’ve seen it done the last 10 years.”

Both Coxes made it clear during the emotional announcement on Friday morning that they consider the employees as family members with no changes in staffing planned any time in the near future, other than Jimmy and Pattie Cox’s full retirement, a foregone conclusion once the transition is complete. For that very reason, though, nearly 43 years invested by Oneida Black and 38 by Pam Fathergill, the day was difficult to say the least. At 65 and realizing the changing landscape of the newspaper business in recent years, Jimmy had been considering selling the business for the past several years. Paramount for him was that the business would stay privately owned and not bought off by a large conglomerate. So when Ted Cox expressed an interest in ownership, negotiations began.

“It’s a hard day for me today,” Jimmy told employees. “I wanted someone who would keep it private and someone who would carry it on like I would. I hope it’s okay with all of you.”

Fathergill, the resident comedian, chimed right in with, “I don’t know, Ted. Can I let you know on Monday?”

Following the laughter, Jimmy continued.

“I’ve run the paper very conservatively and I think Ted will continue to do that. Ted has established himself in the community and he needs your (employees) help.”

Reminiscing about his years of involvement, all the way back to the early 1970s when Jimmy helped his parents, Judge Henry Clay Cox and Lucy Cox, by taking photographs for the paper and then, when they passed, deciding it was time to take on a role full time in 1990 with his aunt Marguerite Whittaker still at the helm, the realization that change is necessary for the newspaper to remain successful became more evident. Jimmy moved the paper from cold typesetting to desktop publishing with Apple computers that, although they have changed drastically in appearance and capability, remain the staple for publishing the Garrard Central Record today.

“If I was 30 years younger, there would be no question,” Jimmy said. “It takes young people to do it. . . It’s something that I didn’t want but it’s something that had to be done to guarantee that it carries on.”

Ted made it clear that the changes he would incorporate would benefit every member of his staff.

Known by so many as the face of the Central Record, Black who turns 80 in June and graces the front desk, appreciates the continued support of her employer in her difficult situation at home with her sick husband.

“You’ve all been awfully good to me, especially with my situation at home,” she said. “You’ve gone beyond.” And Jim Cox replied, “We’re a family.”

Although the Garrard Central Record’s newest employee and youngest member knew very little about the struggles of years gone by, when compugraphic machines set the type in the late 1970s and the paper was put together on a light board and pasted on the pages, sports’ editor Brandon McGlone could clearly relate to the way he has been treated since his recent hire.

“They gave me a chance and took me under their wings at a time in my life when most others would have simply turned a blind eye,” McGlone said. “I’m new to this business but I credit Jim, Pattie and Danny Elam (the former sports’ editor who retired in June of 2016) for putting a paper together each week that taught me about life and sports as I grew up in Garrard County. I’m not sure where I would be without them.”

And although change is difficult for everyone, collectively the employees agree that the new owner will carry on things as usual.

“It’s going to be different but it’s going to be okay,” Fathergill said through tears, explaining that the hard part will be not working with people she considers family.

Black loves Ted like a son and believes he will do an excellent job with the newspaper and carry on its legacy well.

Elam, who worked in various capacities in the paper for more than 20 years before retiring in June 2016, was taken aback when he learned the news. “It’s sad to see it change hands. It’s been in the same family for as long as I’ve been alive. I’m sure Ted will do just fine. He’s a Cox; not the same breed of Cox but a Cox just the same. I wish Ted all the success in the world.”

“. . . The newspaper, the community and I couldn’t ask for a better heir than Ted Cox,” McGlone said. “Ted is a consummate professional. He is level-headed, thoughtful, fair, savvy and a great teacher. He has proven himself since coming to Lancaster and has been a role model to me early in my journalistic career. I have zero doubt that he will do what is best for the business and for Garrard County. I look forward to working with him more closely as we continue to bring quality, hometown news to our community.”

### **Ted’s Background**

While still studying journalism at Eastern Kentucky University, Ted joined the Garrard Central Record as a reporter. He learned about the position through a friend, Garrard County Deputy Judge Executive James Bushnell. A job recommended by a trusted friend with strong ties to the community, which was also in close proximity to ECU, he determined would work well for him. He also knew that if he was going to pursue this avenue as a long-term career choice, a small community newspaper would help him get his feet wet. And with large corporations buying out the smaller, family-owned newspapers “left and right” acquiring a job with a newspaper that had more than 100 years of history just made sense.

“It was an opportunity to have a chance to have a hand in not only the many aspects of the business but also have a little security,” he said in 2014 when he was named editor. “I felt more secure.”

Originally from Harlan, Kentucky, where most of his family still resides, Ted fits right in with a small-town newspaper.

“From the start I realized Lancaster was a very closely knit community, he said during a 2014 interview that preceded his position as editor. “It didn’t take long before I felt at home coming from another small town . . . The staff, in a very short time, made me feel like one of the family. . . “

Although his original ambition was to become a pharmacist, largely due to his late grandmother’s (Evelyn Osborne) position as a pharmacy tech in his hometown drug store, where old-fashioned shakes and burgers were all part of the atmosphere, Ted found out fairly quickly that his talent was in words and not mathematics. He changed his major to English and shortly thereafter he was asked to join the staff of the Eastern Progress, first as a contributing writer and then as a full-time reporter.

Still not envisioning the possibility of becoming a business owner, Ted solidified his place in the local community when he purchased his first home in Lancaster in 2015. So when Jimmy opened the door even wider with a first-shot opportunity to purchase the business in early October 2016, Ted knew immediately that he wanted to give it a try. Negotiations began and continued over a six-month period before all the details were worked out and papers were signed on March 31, 2017.

Ted Cox is the son of Karen Cox and Teddy Cox Sr. He has one sister, Stacy Haines, who lives in Ohio with her husband and two boys. He remains extremely close to his grandfather, Joe Osborne, also in Harlan, who supports him wholeheartedly in his new venture as owner and publisher of the Garrard Central Record.

### **A summary of the newspaper’s history**

Records do not indicate exactly when the first newspaper was published in Garrard County however research done by the late James R. Whittaker (Jimmy Cox’s uncle), a former managing editor and co-owner of The Central Record found “The Recorder” mentioned as yearly as 1849. The years between are vague until 1883 when The Central Kentucky News, was edited and owned by M.D. Hughes. Its connection to The Central Record was established when it was purchased by J.R. Marrs of Danville who was assisted by R.E. Hughes as editor. On April 1, 1889, Lewis Landrum and Henry Cartwright purchased the paper and renamed it The Central Record in May of the same year. R.E. Hughes remained until 1910 when he sold his interest to Mr. Green Clay Walker. Walker sold to J.E. Robinson in Dec. 1912 to enter politics leaving Robinson as the sole owner until his death on January 9, 1942. Robinson’s death put The Central Record on the auction block to settle the Robinson Estate and that’s when Jimmy Cox’s father, Henry Clay Cox, then county attorney, bought the business with Paul Morrow, John McRoberts and Clayton Morrow. Henry Clay Cox bought out Paul Morrow and McRoberts in 1950 and in 1951, James R. Whittaker bought Clayton Morrow’s stock. When Whittaker passed away in the late 1970s, his wife Marguerite Whittaker became the editor and with her sister Lucy Cox’s (Jimmy’s mother), help, the women managed the paper until Lucy Cox died in 1990. It was then that, Jimmy Cox, working in banking at the time, decided it to delve into the newspaper business full time and share the leadership responsibilities with his aunt Marguerite Whittaker. Not only was their joint endeavor very successful, they purchased the other newspaper publication in Lancaster, the Garrard County News, merged the names into one, The Garrard Central Record, and hired on the former owners, Jack and Karen Penchoff. Then, just a year later in 2001, Jimmy’s aunt passed away leaving the business to Jimmy and his siblings, Bradley Cox, David Cox and Patsy (Cox) Robinson. Jack Penchoff, the managing editor working under

Jimmy accepted a position with a national magazine in February 2002 and Jimmy asked his wife Pattie Cox, a 20-year employee of the Advocate Messenger in Danville, to work by his side. Jimmy eventually took over sole ownership in 2003, remaining active in the Garrard Central Record along with his wife until the sale of the business to Ted Cox on March 31, 2017.