

Vanguard Award — Louise F. Roote



The Vanguard Award is presented in memory of past chapter member Louise Roote, a former editor at Capper's Weekly and AWC member, and recognizes a member with more than two years chapter membership for outstanding involvement in the organization.

From Topeka Room file Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.

Louise F. Roote helped shape the direction and destiny of Capper's weekly for 50 of its 100 years, serving 20 years as women's editor and 30 years as editor.

When Capper's Weekly editor Albert G. Kittell died unexpectedly July 28, 1943, women's editor Louise Fowler Roote found herself getting out the paper, for in the publishing world, like the theater, the show must go on. Two weeks later when a Topeka Daily Capital reporter was sent to interview her as the new editor, Louise pointed out she had not officially been named the editor. That management oversight was immediately corrected, and as Mrs. Roote recalls the incident, she refers to it as the manner in which she became "a woman before her time." As "the editor" of a weekly paper with national circulation (450,000), she had been thrust into a work area that yet today, 36 years later, is still dominated by men.

Louise F. Roote was born December 25, 1898 in Topeka, Kan. Her parents were Edgar Clark and Althea Otilia (Bair) Fowler. Her father had come from Pennsylvania in 1877 to settle on a farm near Holton, Kan. The following year her mother's family, also from Pennsylvania, settled on a nearby farm. Resuming an acquaintance that had started in that old famed-in-literature seminary at Sewickley, Pa., the young couple married three years later. In 1890, Edgar Fowlers moved to Topeka.

After completing grade and high school in Topeka, Louise entered Washburn College. In June 1918, while attending Washburn, she began part-time work as an editorial secretary for Capper Publications. In 1920 she became an editorial assistant for Capper's Weekly and Household Magazine. Two years later she was made the women's editor of the Weekly, writing under the pen name of Kate Marchbanks, feeling she could express herself more openly and freely than if she used her own name. For years she also "talked as Kate" on a weekly broadcast program for women in the early days of WIBW radio station. She started a Quilt Block Service on Capper's Weekly, hunting out the designs and drafting the patterns with mathematical precision – patterns still in demand today, some 50 years later.

In 1927 she asked for a holiday vacation, and on Christmas day that year she was married to Paul M. Roote – a marriage that lasted past their golden anniversary.

From 1923 to 1943 she was women's editor of Capper's Weekly, working first with editor A. L. Nichols and later with editor A. G. Kittell. During the Depression years from 1931 to 1943 she also served as home editor for Kansas Farmer magazine (writing under the name "Ruth Goodall") and for Missouri Ruralist magazine (writing under the name "Mary Lou Williams"). But as Louise speaks of that time in her life, "Only when I wrote checks did I sign my own name."

As a young girl, Louise Fowler wanted to go to South America as a foreign missionary. But life patterns don't always follow dreams, and from necessity her missionary work was done from an editor's desk in her hometown, Topeka. As "Kate Marchbanks" she conducted the "Heart of the Home" pages of Capper's Weekly. Thru those pages, thousands of women on farms, in small and not-so-small towns, shared joys, sorrows, household hints, patterns, and recipes with Kate. Together they laughed and cried, cooked and sewed, their way thru the everydayness of Depression years when making a living and rearing families weren't easy.

After Mrs. Roote became Capper's Weekly editor in 1943, there were other Kates, but she had established the popularity and warmth of "Heart of the Home." Reaching out to edit all of Capper's Weekly, she continued unchanged its aim of serving, informing, entertaining the readers. While she carried on all the old traditions, with her deft Kate touch and her woman's instinct for something new, she searched out and added human interest features, always told briefly for quick, easy reading.

In 1947 Louise was elected the first president of the National Farm Home Editors' Association, an organization representing 20 million farm families. She was a charter member and three-time board member of the Women's Division of Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce. She was also active in Altrusa International, National League of American Pen Women, the Topeka Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Topeka Home Economics Association. She is a member of Central Congregational Church, Delta Gamma, Theta Sigma Phi (now Women in Communications, Inc.) and Nomoso (Washburn honorary society). In 1976 she received a Distinguished Service Award from Washburn University.

Her hobbies include collecting antiques, especially glassware; collecting cookbooks and cooking; collecting and wearing hats; and in spite of years of breakfast-to-bedtime job-related reading, at the ripe, round age of 80 she still enjoys reading.

When she retired December 31, 1973, after serving 30 years as editor, preceded by 20 years as women's editor, Louise reflected that she thought, just maybe, she had touched more lives thru Capper's Weekly than she might have as a missionary, had her girlhood dream been fulfilled.

Her husband, Paul, passed away in July 1978.

Louise Roote Obituary **Topeka Capital-Journal, Sunday, June 21, 1987**

Mrs. Louise F. Roote, 88, Topeka, died Friday, June 19, 1987, at her home.

Mrs. Roote had worked for Capper's Weekly for more than 50 years, retiring in December 1973. She was the first woman editor-in-chief in the national, regional or state farm paper field. She was women's editor of Capper's Weekly from 1923 to 1943, writing under the pen name of "Kate Marchbanks." From

1931 to 1943 she was editor of the home departments of the Kansas Farmer and Missouri Ruralist, using the name of "Ruth Goodall" in Kansas and "Mary Lou Williams" in Missouri. She became editor of Capper's Weekly in August 1943.

She was born Dec. 25, 1898, at Topeka, the daughter of Edgar Clark and Althea Otilia Bair Fowler. She lived her entire life in Topeka and began part-time work as an editorial secretary for Capper Publications in 1918. She graduated from Washburn College in 1920 and became an editorial assistant on Capper's Weekly and Household magazine.

Mrs. Roote was a member and past president of Altrusa International and a member of the Topeka Home Economics Association. She was on the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce (women's division), the League of American Pen Women, Nonoso and Theta Sigma Phi honorary sororities. She was the organizer in 1947 and first president of the National Farm Home Editors Association. She married Paul M. Roote Dec. 25, 1927. He preceded her in death.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Mount Hope Mausoleum Chapel. Burial will be in Mount Hope Cemetery. Mrs. Roote will lie in state from 10 a.m. Monday to 9 a.m. Tuesday at Parker-Price Mortuary. Memorial contributions may be made to the Capper Foundation for Crippled Children, 3500 W. 10th, 666604.