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## A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

In many ways, the nerve center of TIME's editorial operations is an oblong counter stretching along the east side of the Time & Life Building's 25th floor. We call it the copy desk. Day and night, its staff oversees the movement of TIME stories from writers to senior editors to the managing editor to researchers, logging, typing, reading and routing stories. At week's end a TIME story may have been re-typed as many as eight times. Copy- and proofreaders check for errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax.

For the past 29 years, the disciplinarian of the complex process of moving copy and the autocrat of TIME style has been the quiet, tough-minded chief of the copy desk, Harriet Bachman. This month she decided to retire from policing abbreviations, hyphens, capitals, captions, etc., to tend to her antique collection and study Russian. In announcing Bachman's retirement, Managing Editor Henry Grunwald wrote: "We will miss her as the supreme arbiter of grammar and defender of TIME's English prose against many enemies, ranging from outright barbarism to simple negligence."

Bachman, a discerning student of English with an M.A. from the University of Chicago, approached her work with firm opinions. "My assumption," she once said, "is that the standard of literate English still goes back to Victorian English, and that people who haven't read Darwin, Ruskin, Dickens and Thackeray don't have quite the right idiom." To make sure that TIME stories have that idiom, Bachman wrote a 180-page style handbook that we rely on to protect our usage against what she labeled "substandard word fusions (someplace, noplac), folksy expressions (likely used for probably) and bureaucratic (implement used as a verb)."

Anne Davis, the new chief of the copy desk, has been crafting words since her graduation from Smith College in 1948, working as a writer, reporter and movie reviewer before joining TIME in 1956. For the past four years she has been studying our computer printing processes and hopes to introduce the editorial staff to more of their advantages. "I'm both a word person and a machine person," says Davis. The larger task, adds Deputy Susan Hahn, "is to maintain the high linguistic standards that we are inheriting."

*Ralph P. Davidson*

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