



Signals

By John W. Lewis

T. J. is gone.

It doesn't seem possible, and we have to keep telling ourselves -- T. J. is gone.

We look up from the desk -- expecting to see him.

We walk through the shop -- expecting to meet him at every door.

We park -- expecting to see his white pickup behind the shop.

We hear conversations around the office -- and find ourselves expecting to pick out his voice.

But T. J. is gone.

We remember.

Things like when he first came to work with us from the old Courier across the street.

Things like one Wednesday night about midnight when our press broke down and we loaded up our forms of type and went to Livingston to print the paper.

Things like when he and Brewer and us went in debt up to our ears to buy the Courier for ourselves.

Things like working 70 and 80 or more hours a week -- sometimes 30 or 36 hours continuously -- falling asleep while standing on our feet feeding the folder -- setting type when fingers could hardly move or eyes focus -- sweat dripping off face and hands onto fine papers and leaving stains and smearing the printing inks . . . patching up obsolete equipment to keep it running just one more issue, one more month, one more year . . . pinching our pennies and watching the bank account...

You can't go through years like those with someone without them becoming something special to you. They become a part of your life. And when they are gone, there's an ache.

We see the old linotype -- his line gauge -- his handwriting on job tickets -- his name on mail addressed to him -- his ash tray -- the stool he stood on to reach the paste up table --

The place is full of him. And yet he isn't here.

T. J. is gone. And we miss



T. J. Welch Jr.