

obit 1

THE DEATH of a newspaper, like the death of a friend, is more readily accepted if the end comes naturally.

Perhaps the bereaved can more easily come to terms with death as the conclusion of an illness than they can with a sudden or violent end.

No one can say the death of the Saturday Evening Mercury was sudden; it was announced many issue^s/₁ ago in its sister, or should that be mother, publication.

Perhaps, if newspapers have feelings, that was the part that hurt S.E.M. most - being scooped on the story that revealed its own demise.

Then, as if to prove there's no sentiment in circulation, came the funeral director.

"We have come to bury S.E.M., not to praise it," one of the newspaper's own executives was quoted as telling a group of businessmen.

So there it was. A newspaper that had given pleasure as well as anguish to readers and staff alike for more than ³⁰ years was to be killed off.

No natural death, not even an accidental tragedy. If premeditated murder sounds too extravagant, then how about euthanasia?

obit 2

Perhaps S.E.M., like a tired old aunt whose happy times were too long ago, might have chosen this way out.

The hard-noses no doubt will claim that it's the bottom line that counts; that a newspaper is a product not a person and cannot feel any pain.

Maybe, but those who have spent most of their lives creating such products rather than merely managing them can see further than the dollars and cents.

The superficial payments for their efforts may be in cold, hard currency, but the real reward is when the press starts rolling.

For if all newspapers inevitably must die, they also offer the joys of birth more frequently than a mere mortal.

Every issue of a newspaper, like a baby, is conceived, nurtured and born.

So every newspaperman with more than .05 of printers ink in his blood will feel a touch of sadness at the loss of the newspaper you are reading.

The Saturday Evening Mercury may have been unsophisticated and unprofitable. Certainly it was no Saturday Evening Post.

But when the press stopped running at Macquarie Street this evening, Hobart lost an old identity.

The wake has begun.

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