

Earl Nolan and 'adopted son'

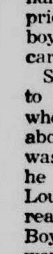
Earl Nolan, a veteran member of The Herald - Whig staff was buried this morning.

Nolan, widely known because of his long association with Quincy newspapers, died unexpectedly Sunday morning in St. Boniface Church.

We could write a flowery eulogy concerning this man with whom we were associated in news work for more than 40 years, but we're not going to do it. He wouldn't have liked it, and it's not exactly in our line.

Instead we're going to tell you a true story about Earl Nolan and his "adopted son."

First of all we'll repeat a paragraph that appeared in Nolan's obituary published Monday. It read: "Nolan had no immediate survivors, his closest ties being with Howard Kirkpatrick whom he helped to rear."



Now we'll backtrack a bit:

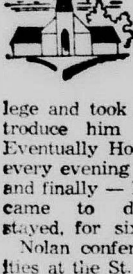
'Way back in 1934 or 1935—we're not certain about the year — a furniture delivery van rolled into Quincy from St. Louis and was parked for three days until it could be unloaded.

When the driver opened the rear door, he was astonished to find an 11 - year - old boy waiting to get out. When the driver had recovered sufficiently he took the youngster — at the boy's request — to the sheriff's office.

Friendly officers learning that the boy had had nothing to eat but three candy bars during his long imprisonment, bought him food and questioned him. But he wouldn't tell where he came from or give any name.

However, he did tell Earl Nolan — a reporter on the court house beat, — that his middle name was "Stanislaus," a saint's name. Nolan doubted it was a saint's name and telephoned Quincy College to find out. "Of course it's a saint's name, you dumb bunny," a priest told Nolan. "Bring the boy out here and we'll take care of him."

So "Stanislaus" was taken to the Franciscan Fathers where he willingly told all about himself. His right name was Howard Kirkpatrick and he had been living at a St. Louis orphanage. He had not really run away, he insisted. Boys 10 and over, he related, were given considerable freedom. He was taking a walk, he said, when he saw the furniture van. A davenport toward the rear looked so inviting, he hopped in and took a nap. When he woke up the truck was rumbling along a highway. He had no idea where he was going. He had always been told that if he got into trouble he should ask for the sheriff. And the advice was pretty good, he thought, since he was turned over to the Franciscans.



Earl Nolan somehow couldn't get that chubby little boy with the big eyes and appealing smile out of his thoughts. He visited Howard at Quincy College and took him home to introduce him to his mother. Eventually Howard had supper every evening with the Nolans, and finally — like the man who came to dinner — Howard stayed, for six years.

Nolan conferred with authorities at the St. Louis orphanage and assumed responsibility for the rearing of Howard Kirkpatrick.

After six years with the Nolans, Howard entered army service. Following his discharge he embarked on his own career, married and is now living in O'Fallon, Mo. He has four children.

Nolan spent nearly every holiday with the Kirkpatricks and they visited him often here. He never wanted Howard to call him "Dad," but he was happy to have Howard's children call him "Grandpa."

Howard Kirkpatrick was driving a truck on a long haul assignment when Nolan died. State police along the route he was scheduled to follow were asked to watch for him, and he was finally spotted at the Mississippi state line. With a police escort, he sped to Birmingham where he boarded a plane to Atlanta, Ga., and flew from there to St. Louis to pick up his family and come to Quincy.

"Earl was a real father to me," said Kirkpatrick Wednesday, "and certainly has been a wonderful grandfather to my children."

So — that is our "eulogy" to Earl Nolan.

It speaks for itself.