



Above, a collage of iconic Dorchester images hand-painted by Andrew Houle includes the original page one “flag” of The Reporter. The inaugural edition was published on this week in Sept. 1983. The artwork seen here is also featured on a limited edition Dorchester Brewing Company beer that was produced this month. See page 36.

'83: THE BIRTH OF THE REPORTER

BY BILL FORRY
EDITOR

September 1983. Ronald Reagan was in his first term as president and the denizens of the Eire Pub already had a portrait of the Gipper – who popped in for a beer in '82 – framed on their Adams Street wall. The USSR shot down a civilian Korean 747 over Siberia and the US House of Representatives voted unanimously to condemn the Russian atrocity. The Eurythmics “Sweet Dreams” bumped The Police’s “Every Breath You Take” from the top spot on the Billboard charts. The Baby Boomer college reunion flick “The Big Chill” was number one at the box office. “It’s Like That,” the debut single from rap pioneers Run DMC, dropped that summer. Kids across Boston could at least hum along to Ralph Tresvant’s high notes in the New Edition classic, “Candy Girl.” The first Apple Macintosh home computer, which

would revolutionize “desktop publishing,” was set to hit the market in a few months. In Dorchester, there were still ominous signs of a persistent recession. The Hillside Market in Lower Mills – now a CVS – closed over the summer due to “financial problems.” Purity Supreme, one of Dorchester’s only supermarkets, soon followed suit, laying off 65 people. The twin cinemas that screened films in Puritan Mall on Morrissey Boulevard turn off the lights that fall. But there were also signs of progress and potential. A new city council and mayor would be seated in fall elections and Dorchester was buzzing with canvassers hitting doors and strapping signs for their chosen candidates. The first 30 or so tenants were hauling furniture and belongings into the old Baker Chocolate factory, which had been rehabbed into apartments that started at \$375 for a studio, a cool \$430 for a one-bedroom.

Customers at the Swiss House restaurant inside Boston Bowl could get a full bacon-and-egg breakfast, with a side of toast or English muffin, for \$2.99. (That included juice and coffee.) The meal would cost you a buck less if you happened to be in possession of a copy of the first edition of The Reporter, a “new monthly newspaper” that hit the front porches and newsstands in select portions of the neighborhood that month. The entrepreneurs behind the start-up tabloid – my parents, Ed Forry and Mary Casey Forry – estimated their readership would be roughly 40,000, a number extrapolated from an industry “standard” that four sets of eyes were likely to get a glance at each of the 10,000 or so copies that actually rolled off the press. That first edition ran 20 pages and led with a story that proclaimed “Cable TV Almost Ready In Dorchester— Could Begin This Month” next to a photo of a construction crew



The Sept. 1983 edition of The Reporter. See the full cover in detail on page 3 of this special section.

laying cable down the middle of Richmond Street near the corner of Dot Ave. There’s no byline or photo credit, but the author and photographer could only have been my dad, whose fixation with getting cable tele-

vision installed at his home and the surrounding neighborhood approached obsessive levels at times during this era. The man wanted his Red Sox games. His son, 10, and daughter, 5, wanted
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Notes from the year The Reporter first hit the streets of Dorchester

BY BILL WALCZAK
REPORTER COLUMNIST

Celebrating the 40th birthday of the *Dorchester Reporter* has transported me back to 1983, when Ed and Mary Forry began publishing their newspaper. I was still early in my tenure as executive director of the Codman Square Health Center, which took several years to start up operations after being organized in 1974. In those days, we had appointment books that we kept for telling us what we needed to do on a daily basis, and I was recently able to find my 1983 book for the purpose of revisiting that year. The following is a reflection on the notes in that book. The year 1983 was one of a string of several years during which both Boston and Dorchester started

reviving economically. The exodus of residents by some 10,000 per year on average since the city’s peak population of 801,444 in 1950 had ended, and the numbers were beginning to increase, much of that due to immigration largely into Dorchester and Roxbury of Vietnamese, West Indians, Latin Americans, Cape Verdeans, Africans, gays, and what we called “young urban professionals.” This effectively abated the effect of the arson fires in the 1970s, which was the product of loss of population making much of the housing stock unnecessary. In short, the increase in population started expanding the housing market. The dedication of new housing at Norfolk Terrace near Codman Square was a harbinger of things to come. The fallout from the desegregation order of 1974

and resultant boycotts had also abated, though the school population had dropped by 40,000. Unfortunately, neighborhood violence did not ease off. With racial violence continuing, several efforts to stem the violence were convened, including one called the Dorchester Task Force, which sent teens of color and their white counterparts to Hurricane Island in Maine to participate in month-long Outward Bound programs together. My appointment book has dozens of entries for Task Force and youth council meetings, and other public safety sessions. It was in 1983 that Kevin H. White stepped down after sixteen years as mayor, resulting in nine
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