

Hotle, Charles "Chuck" (1915-2007)

Charles (Chuck) Hotle (1915-2007) attended Washington Junior College and the University of Iowa. He owned Hotle Feed and Grain Company. His column Thoughts of a Woodchopper ran in The Shopper for thirty years. He wrote several self-published booklets including: Thoughts of a Wood Chopper (no date), Slaughter County (1981), Forks in the River (1983), Skunk River War (1984), Hired Hand (1985), Frontier Mailman (1987), Story of Uncle Pete (1989), The Stallions (1990), Mormons, Quakers and the Plank Road (1995), Our Local Heroes and their Bits of Fame (1999), Dutch Creek (no date), Towns of Washington County (2005), Crimes in Slaughter County (2002), Let the Chips Fall (1991).

Chuck was born June 9, 1915 in Dutch Creek Township to C.C. and Ethel (Augustine) Hotle. He graduated from West Chester High School in 1933, attended Washington Jr. College and the University of Iowa where he studied Journalism. He joined the Army in the summer of 1941 and was posted to guard the California coast after Pearl Harbor. While in California, he married Mabel (Sally) Wiley of Washington, Iowa on June 14, 1942. After graduation from Officer Cadet School he was assigned to the 173rd Field Artillery and sent to North Africa and then Italy. Over the course of the next three years, Lt. Hotle saw action at places like Monte Cassino, Rome and the Gustav Line, as the Fifth Army battled its way up the boot of Italy.



After the war, like others of his generation, Chuck returned to Washington, Iowa determined to prosper and serve his community. He began business as owner and manager of the successful Hotle Feed and Grain Company. His enthusiasm for history made him a founding member and president of the Washington County Historical Society. With his remarkable knowledge of local history, Chuck became a valued member of the Washington County Geological Society. His love of nature and trees drew him to the office of first president of the Washington County Conservation Board. In this capacity, he spearheaded the establishment of Sockum Ridge, Marr and Fern Cliff Parks for the county. Chuck regularly supported the Washington County Fair and served as President of the Fair Board. He played a key role in setting up Green Field as a place for athletic events in Washington. He served as commander of the American Legion, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Optimist Society and the board of Directors of Washington Federal Bank. He was critical in the preservation and maintenance of two of Washington's great buildings, Blair house and Conger house. Chuck read voraciously and served on the Washington County Library Board for many years. The pleasure he gained from owning and riding horses led him to the role of long-time member and President of the Washington Saddle Club. The saddle shop that he added to his business also made Hotle Feed and Grain a center for horsemen in the county. Chuck loved adventure. As a result, for over a decade he rode as the American Forestry Association representative on yearly trail rides into many of the nation's great wilderness parks. In addition, he crossed the Atlantic eleven times in order to tour Britain, Western Europe and Turkey. Ever the explorer and good citizen, in his final years, he and his friend Jim Marsh restored or improved many abandoned or decayed cemeteries while exploring over 400 of them in southeast Iowa.

Chuck retired in 1979 only to start a second career as author and columnist. His 'Thoughts of a Woodchopper' column ran for thirty years in "The Shopper" before his retirement from writing at the age of 92. In addition to his column, Chuck authored twelve books ranging from local history to fiction.