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June 8, 1993

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ROBERTS FEATURED SPEAKER

CHARLESTON, IL--Former president of the National Newspaper Association and 1946 Eastern Illinois University alumnus Jim Roberts of Fairbury will be the featured speaker at Eastern's 98th birthday celebration Saturday, June 19.

Roberts will speak during the university's Founder's Day awards luncheon at noon Saturday in the University Union Old Ballroom on campus. For reservations, call Jerrie Fisher at Brainard House, 581-3314.

His talk, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way Through College," will relate to the Founder's Day theme, "Students Serving Students," focusing on the history of student publications and student government.

The former editor of Eastern's student newspaper and retired owner of the 11-newspaper chain Cornbelt Press will reminisce about his experiences as a student at Eastern from 1942 to 1946 and discuss how modernization has changed the way the student newspaper is produced and designed. He will also share his special memories of the late Franklyn Andrews, Eastern's first full-time advisor to student publications.

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Roberts claims that his arrival at Eastern was more or less "by accident" and his subsequent involvement with journalism began in much the same way. He majored in speech and minored in English and social science and did attend a journalism class until he returned to Eastern in the '70s as an adjunct professor. Eastern did not offer journalism coursework until 1947, when a journalism minor was introduced. A journalism major did not become available until 1974.

After graduating from Eastern in 1946, Roberts became editor of the Times Record in Aledo. He left there in 1953 to become editor and publisher of the Shetland Journal, which he helped develop into the nation's second largest equine magazine.

In 1963, he and his wife, Lois, left Aledo when they purchased the Fairbury Blade and Forrest News in Livingston County. Ultimately incorporating as Cornbelt Press, their firm grew to 11 contiguous newspapers in five counties. Through the years, their publications have been consistently recognized for editorial, advertising and production excellence in regional, state and national competitions. They sold the group in 1990.

Roberts' honors include being named Eastern's Distinguished Alumnus in 1978 and Illinois Editor of the Year in 1977. He has served as president of both the Southern Illinois Editorial Association and Illinois Press Association.

He and his wife have a daughter and two sons. Their youngest son, Tom, and his wife, Robin, of Fairbury are 1980 Eastern journalism alumni.