

'Bifocals' columnist Delano dead at 72

An optimist, a lover of life and an adventurer.

"I can't imagine a finer epitaph," wrote Fred Delano in December, after receiving a letter from one of his many readers describing him so.

Delano, 72, longtime columnist for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers died Friday of a heart attack while recuperating from surgery in Huntington Beach, Calif.

Delano was visiting family and friends in Nevada and the West Coast when he was admitted to the hospital. He died in the Care West Huntington Valley Nursing Center.

Author for more than two decades of the column "Through Bifocals," Delano charmed and entertained readers with his anecdotes about themselves, their neighbors, himself, his coterie of friends and his wife, Olga, who he affectionately referred to as Mother Goose in his column. She died on Feb. 11, 1988.

Never a pretentious person, Delano left political and social analysis to other columnists at the newspaper.

"I PREFER to compose paragraphs that entertain, that tell of people and things, now and then re-

obituaries

lating something you didn't know," he wrote about his column in 1988.

Delano had a large following through the years, particularly in the Plymouth area where he could be seen often walking up and down mainstreet always in search of new material for his column. He also spent time working as a columnist for the Plymouth Community Center.

He also was one of the original members of the journalistic staff which helped to develop the community journalism philosophy along with Observer & Eccentric owner Philip H. Power.

"He was one of those who chose to devote themselves to community journalism. He was able to do anything he chose. And he was one of the early people who found community journalism highly rewarding," said Power.

"Delano had a special emotional warmth and involvement," said Power. "That quality allowed him to

put himself in the other guy's position."

"Fred Delano was very simply an inspiration, one of the best journalists I've ever known," said Steve Barnaby, managing editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

"In his days here as a working editor, he helped to mold many careers. He would gently scold young reporters who were reluctant to get the entire story. But he also would reassuringly help those same young reporters who needed help in developing an angle.

"And although he expected a lot out of others, nobody ever worked harder than Fred."

Glenna Merrilatt, of Plymouth, who worked as women's editor of the Plymouth Observer under Delano, described him as "the consummate newsmen."

After his son David was killed in an accident, Delano came to the office and wrote his obituary, said Merrilatt.

In typical Delano journalistic fashion, before leaving for California in January, he left his family with a complete biography so that "we would be prepared in case anything happened," said son-in-law John Smith.

Born in Dowagiac, MI, he was a devoted Wolverine fan. Delano graduated from the University of Michigan in 1937 with a bachelor of arts degree. He majored in journalism and history.

While at the U-M, Delano was associate sports editor at the Michigan

Daily. He was a member of the U-M Marching Band, class treasurer and a member of the Druids, a senior honorary society. He also was a member of Sigma Delta Chi, a journalism society, and Sigma Nu, a social fraternity.

DELANO worked as an Ann Arbor correspondent for the Chicago Tribune while a student.

After graduating, Delano worked as Detroit Free Press Flint bureau chief. In those days, the Free Press published a special Flint edition.

He was a general assignment reporter at the twice-weekly News-Advertiser in Flint and a daily sports columnist for the Long Beach Press and Telegram in Long Beach, California. He also was a member of the sports staff of the Chicago Tribune.

He worked full-time at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers from 1967 to 1979. During that time he was a reporter, editor of the Plymouth Observer, Wayne County editor, acting managing editor and administrative assistant to the executive editor.

From 1979 to 1982, Delano worked as a free-lance writer in public relations and promotion. He clients included the National Open Putting Championships, Bloomfield Hunt Club Horse Shows and Buesser, Buesser, Snyder and Blank, attorneys in Bloomfield Hills.

Delano was well-known among sports publicists. He was an associate member of the public relations staff of the Los Angeles Rams Football Club. In 1951-52 he was presi-

dent of the Southern California Football Writers Association.

In the late '60s and '70s, Delano worked as a free-lance writer in public relations for the Detroit Olympic Committee, serving twice as coordinator for the U.S. Olympic Swimming and Diving Finals when it was in Detroit.

DELANO WAS general manager of the Detroit Pistons from 1957-58, the year the franchise moved from Fort Wayne to Detroit.

From 1955-57, he worked as sports publicity director and director of community relations at the University of Detroit.

In the '40s, he worked as publicity director for the Detroit Lions and was executive secretary of the Michigan section of the PGA (Professional Golfers Association). He also worked as sports publicity director at U-M and at Northville Downs. In 1948, he was operations and promotion coordinator of a nine-day train tour for the U-M's first return to the Rose Bowl since 1902.

Delano is survived by his son, Rob-



Fred Delano

ert of Reno, Nev.; daughter, Betty, of Plymouth Township, the girls volleyball coach at Plymouth-Salem High School; three grandchildren and three sisters, Martha Davis of Ann Arbor, Mary Bizzardi of Kalamazoo and Florence Gray of Florida.

Funeral arrangements are being made by Shrader Funeral Home, 453-3333.

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Businessmen and women are invited to meet and mingle at the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce member mixer beginning at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 8, in Kings Court, 2505 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford.

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres and cash bar will be available.

For Oakland County Chamber members, there is no charge. Non-members pay \$10. For reservations, call 644-1229.

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