

PICTURES FROM DECEMBER AUCTION & HOLIDAY SOCIAL

December 7, 2023 at The Knights Hall



Meeting & Announcements



Members eager for the auction



Auction Tabulation



The Food Delivered



Enjoying the Food & Camaraderie



OCT. 21, 1931 – NOV. 30, 2023

George Gates, 92, tough but fair newsman who covered City Hall

DAN HERBECK
News Staff Reporter

George H. Gates was one of those news reporters who always kept people on their toes.

The journalist who spent more than 26 years covering Buffalo's city government for The Buffalo News was a tough but affable newsman who sometimes tangled with mayors and other city officials, but earned their respect.

Mr. Gates died in Hospice Buffalo after a long fight with Parkinson's disease. The Williamsville resident was 92.

A devoted family man who raised three children after his wife died in 1979, Mr. Gates served as a mentor to many fellow reporters and editors during his 37 years at The News.

Honest and hard-working, Mr. Gates earned tremendous respect – not only from fellow journalists but from the many government officials he covered for The News.

"George was a giant of Buffalo journalism," said former Mayor Anthony Masiello, one of the six mayors whom Gates wrote about for the newspaper. "He was tough, thorough and very direct with his questions, but George was pursuing the news. He was never on a witch hunt or looking to glorify himself. A very nice man and a consummate professional."

Masiello, who left office in 2005, added that Mr. Gates had so much institutional knowledge about Buffalo's government and its history that his questions sometimes helped to educate the people he was interviewing.

"When George came to inter-

view you, you knew that he had done his homework, and you had to be prepared for that," Masiello said.

Mr. Gates joined The News in 1961 as a general assignment reporter. He covered Buffalo city government from 1963 until 1989 and after that, served as an editorial writer until his retirement in October 1998.

The late Buffalo News Editor, Murray B. Light – who rarely spoke in superlatives – once remarked that Gates was in "Tier 1" among all the employees who worked under him at The News.

"His coverage was marked by thoroughness, impartiality and the ability to tell the stories of government in language all could comprehend," Light wrote after Mr. Gates retired.

Light said he considered Mr. Gates to be "the most knowledgeable person in all of Western New York on the workings of Buffalo's government, past and present."

Former News reporters Robert J. McCarthy and Gene Warner remembered their colleague as one of the best reporters they ever worked with.

"He had universal respect, in the newsroom and in the community, because he was so good at what he did, and he had no agenda," said McCarthy, the former News political reporter who now works for Channel 7. "He was a master of his craft, both as a writer and as a reporter. Anybody who met George could see he was a fundamentally decent man, devoted to his faith and his family."

His death triggered fond mem-



ories among other former News journalists.

Retired reporter Lee Coppola called Gates "the fastest one-finger typist I ever saw."

Another retired reporter, Michael Beebe, recalled that it was important to Gates that citizens vote and pay close attention to what their government leaders were doing.

"George always said that Buffalo got the lawmakers it deserved," Beebe said.

"He really believed in journalism and its importance in our society," McCarthy added.

Aside from his talents as a newsman, Mr. Gates was admired by his colleagues for his sly sense of humor and his uncanny knowledge of history and current events.

He also was a deeply devoted sports fan who helped to organize outings with fellow journalists to Buffalo Bisons games and college basketball contests. He especially enjoyed watching games at St. Bonaventure University and Canisius College.

"George was one of the most passionate college basketball fans I've ever known," said Masiello, a former basketball star with Canisius.

Mr. Gates loved joining his News friends at more obscure sporting events, including Batavia Muckdogs baseball games, both Warner and McCarthy recalled.

"George kept a collection of game programs from almost every sporting event he ever attended, going back to when he was a kid," McCarthy said. "And he was proud of the fact that he and Mickey Mantle were born on the same day."

And Mr. Gates delighted in watching Little League baseball and youth hockey games, especially when his grandchildren were playing.

He was an avid reader and stamp collector, and a longtime volunteer at the Westminster Presbyterian Church.

He enjoyed taking long walks and traveling to NCAA basketball games, horse races and to Lake George.

A native of Connecticut, where his father managed a dairy farm, Mr. Gates was an Army veteran and a graduate of Amherst College in Massachusetts.

From 1953 until 1956, he worked in Army Intelligence, serving in the Pentagon. He wrote reports for his superiors, and one of his jobs was to check that all the office doors in his section were securely locked at the end of the day.

Mr. Gates moved to Western New York in 1956 when the Niagara Falls Gazette hired him to his

first job in journalism. He spent the rest of his life in the region, including many years in the Town of Tonawanda.

He married the former Marilyn Robson in 1958. When she died in 1979, Mr. Gates devoted himself to raising his son and two daughters.

"He totally dedicated himself to his family. He was our rock," said one of his daughters, Martha Kiebal.

Mr. Gates covered the mayoral administrations of Masiello, Chester Kowal, Frank Sedita, Stanley Makowski and Jimmy Griffin.

The fiery Griffin sometimes barked at him, but Mr. Gates told colleagues that he was proud of the fact that he never backed down from questioning the mayor and always worked hard to get Griffin's side of any story.

Mr. Gates maintained his strong interest in journalism to the last day of his life, recalled another daughter, Margaret "Meg" News-wanger.

"He and I both read the New York Times every morning, and right up until the end, he would call me and say, 'Did you read that article today?'" she said. "He lived his life right up to the very end, and when he died, he died peacefully."

In addition to his daughters, Mr. Gates is survived by a son, Fred R., six grandchildren; and a special friend, Louise Davidson.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday in Westminster Presbyterian Church, 724 Delaware Ave.