



George Compton Weeks

August 1, 1932 - November 30, 2018

George Compton Weeks, an admired and well respected political journalist, public official and author, died November 30, 2018 at the age of 86, at Munson Hospice House, Traverse City, Michigan, with his family by his side.

George was born in Traverse City on August 1, 1932 to Donald C. Weeks and Juanita (Magdanz) Weeks. He grew up there and following his father's lead, took up an interest in civic engagement and journalism. He wrote a publication for the Elmwood Grade School patrol boys, and co-founded the Junior High Watchbird. When attending Traverse City High School, he was the editor of the school paper and the yearbook, and also played quarterback for the football team. George went on to earn a degree in Journalism from Michigan State University, where he met his future wife, Mollie, in a political science class. He was in the Army ROTC at MSU and served on active duty from 1955 through 1957, as 1st Lt, Public Information Officer, or as he liked to say, he was a 'paragraph trooper', writing speeches.

George married Mollie Rae (McKinley) Weeks, in Gaylord, on January 16, 1957. They enjoyed over fifty years of marriage and raised a daughter and son, Julie Rae Weeks and Donald Jay Weeks, first in Lansing, and then Washington, D.C. In the early 1970s the family moved to Glen Haven and settled into their home on Lake Michigan, next to Sleeping Bear Point. Mollie was the love of George's life. They enjoyed walking the beach, hiking and cross country skiing in the woods and dunes of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and could often be found shooting baskets together in their driveway or watching birds, wildlife, and passing ships through their window looking out to the lake. George would lure visitors out to the shore to toss a football or cruise the bay in a canoe or kayak. According to one of his great nephews, 'the man could skip a rock on Lake Michigan like nobody else'.

George started his writing career as Lansing Bureau Chief for the United Press International, writing the UPI's weekly "Michigan Politics" column as well as its weekly "Michigan Outdoors" column where he expressed an early interest in

conservation/environmental issues. He went on to serve as African Affairs correspondent and then foreign editor in the Washington Bureau of the UPI. When Governor William Milliken took office in January of 1969, he asked George to come back to Michigan and join his staff as Press Secretary, a position he happily accepted. George transitioned to Executive Secretary (Chief of Staff) in 1975, serving in that capacity through the remainder of the Governor's time in office. He shared with the Governor a deep love of Michigan; politics, people, and places as well as a deep concern for protecting our environment that was a basis for their friendship lasting 50 years.

Following his time as a key figure in state government, he turned once again to journalism and was political columnist for the Detroit News from 1984 through 2006. His columns were in the paper on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and in the combined News-Free Press Sunday edition. The Sunday column was syndicated for the Traverse City Record Eagle and four Upper Peninsula papers, reflecting George's interest in an Up North political spin. After retiring from the News and until last spring, he continued to write a weekly column on Michigan politics for the Traverse City Record Eagle. Friends knew not to try to schedule anything with George on Friday or Saturday because when he was on deadline for his column, nothing could come in its way. He was a member of the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame. A fellow member and CMU Journalism professor, Jim Wojcik, notes that George was "a wonderful person, a great writer and a perceptive journalist. His political common sense is a loss at a time we need it most".

His interest in and knowledge of politics, the environment, and Michigan history are exposed within several books he authored. Among those he considered most important were "Stewards of the State: The Governors of Michigan" as well as "Sleeping Bear: Yesterday and Today", "Sleeping Bear: Its Lore, Legends and First People", and "Mem-ka-weh: Dawning of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians". He had been working on two more books on local and Michigan history. His reference material and vast historical collection will be donated to the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University where he served as a member of the Board of Governors for several years.

His commitment to fair and accurate investigating and reporting was his hallmark. He cared deeply and laughed lightly. He embedded wisdom, intelligence, and trust in his process and writing. "George was a true journalist", notes Marc Oberschulte, a colleague from the early days in Lansing, and a long time friend. "His honesty and ability to present both sides of an issue were key to his success in his capacity of Chief of Staff for Governor Milliken as well in his syndicated column. I and many others will miss him as a professional and friend".

Detroit News Editorial Page editor Nolan Finley wrote that George “did his job the old-fashioned way. He built relationships and gained the trust of his sources by getting things right. George Weeks was a hell of a newspaperman”.

George is survived by his sisters, Susan Hester of Middletown, RI, Ellen Weeks of Traverse City, MI, Carol Moorman of Montpelier, VT, Janet Hethorn of Cedar, MI, and Debbie Brown of Lake Leelanau, MI; his son-in-law, Walter Hoegy of Empire, MI, and his daughter-in-law, Joan Weeks of Elk Rapids, MI.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Mollie, daughter, Julie, and son, Donald.

A memorial service will take place at 11 a.m. on Saturday, May 18, 2019, at the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home, 305 Sixth St., Traverse City.

The family invites memorial contributions in George’s honor to The Leelanau Conservancy, PO Box 1007, Leland, MI 49654, <https://leelanauconservancy.org/donate/> or FLOW (For Love of Water), 153 ½ E. Front Street, Suite 203C, Traverse City, MI 49684, <https://flowforwater.org/donate/>

Please share your thoughts, memories and photos of George with his family by visiting www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com.

The family is being served by Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Traverse City.

Cemetery

Maple Grove Cemetery

South Dune Highway at M-22

Empire, MI, 49630

Events

MAY **Memorial Service** 11:00AM

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Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home

305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home & Cremation Services - May 18, 2019 at 07:29 AM



“ My thoughts are with sisters Susan, Ellen, Carol, Janet and Debbie today. I have many fond memories of our childhood together. My sympathy to you and your families.

Your EL Gunson St neighbor, Eilers Beeskow

John Beeskow - May 18, 2019 at 12:04 AM



“ I never met George....but I did often read his columns/commentary in the Newspaper. I read his obituary in the newspaper this day...and just wanted to say THANK YOU for the years of information shared. His passing has been noticed and shared...thank you for allowing the "reader community" a chance to share in his passing ... a small inset in the Detroit OBITS, but a much GREATER MAN (in our memories) based on historical recollection...THANK YOU for all of your insightful sharing, George....we remember!.

jim Gallas - May 05, 2019 at 08:58 PM



“ AS HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW there are simply too many memories, stories, and lies to tell that no one could believe ... will miss him incredibly.

Harry McKinley

H. R. McKinley - December 11, 2018 at 08:12 AM



“ Goodbye to George, one of the finest people it was ever my pleasure to work with and know.
-Bill Kerans

Bill Kerans - December 09, 2018 at 08:46 AM



“ Former President Bush isn't the only admirable George who died on this date.

As a Detroit News colleague, I valued this one's vast knowledge, gentle wit, quiet lessons, and his passionate commitment to government, journalism and relationships.

George was a consistently reliable lodestar, professionally and as an example of gentlemanly, respectful behavior. Just as importantly, he was a delightful person.

Alan Stamm - December 03, 2018 at 10:15 AM



“ So sorry to hear of the passing of George Weeks. Spent many years working with George, not only as a columnist at The Detroit News but when he was working for Bill Milliken. George was a high class guy - a loyal PR guy, an excellent journalist and a good friend. He always had a smile and a kind word for everybody. May he rest in peace. Pete Waldmeir, retired former columnist.

Pete Waldmeir - December 02, 2018 at 04:33 PM