



Mr. C. Fraser Smith

February 1, 1938 - April 25, 2021

SMITH, C. Fraser, of Baltimore passed away peacefully on April 25 surrounded by his family. He is survived by his devoted partner, Carole Hamlin of Baltimore; five children, Jennifer Thorpe of Severna Park, Alexandra Avedisian of Norton, Mass., Jacob Smith of Mandeville, La., Anna C. Smith and Emily C. Smith, both of New York City; seven grandchildren; and former wives Martha H. Smith of Cranston, RI, and Eileen Canzian of Baltimore.

The family is planning a memorial service in late May. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his name to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Orchkids program at <https://orchkids.org/> or Vehicles for Change at <http://www.vehiclesforchange.org>.

Comments



“ I met Fraser when I marched up to him at the Maryland Film Festival to tell him how much his book Here Lies Jim Crow had taught me and moved me. That began a firm friendship - so firm that in time I inveigled him into joining the Megaphone Project's board of directors for a while -- and so firm that, most recently, he would brave the woes of parking downtown and lunch with me regularly at the University of Maryland hospital cafeteria until the pandemic began. As much of a raconteur and expert on most things Maryland and politics as he was, he was eager to hear my stories and wanted to know my thoughts. That must be the essence of the reporter's reporter, that unlimited interest in and concern for his fellow man and woman. His generosity of mind and spirit was without peer. I shall miss him dearly.

Abigail Breiseth - May 21 at 03:17 PM



“ Abigail Breiseth is following this tribute.

Abigail Breiseth - May 21 at 03:10 PM



“ Fraser excelled in his profession and in his life. What a joy and privilege it was to know him when we both worked at the Providence Journal. I am so sad to hear of his passing and send my condolences to his family over their great loss.

Bob Chiappinelli

Bob Chiappinelli - April 28 at 01:52 PM



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Carole Hamlin - April 27 at 10:18 PM



“ Shortly before he died [on Sunday, April 25] I went to say goodbye to C. Fraser Smith, a reporter of the old school who worked with me at newspapers in Providence and Baltimore.

Fraser had suffered a major stroke the morning after returning from a rousing two week vacation in Key West with his partner Carole Hamlin.

He was lying in the sunroom at his daughter Jennifer’s home in Severna Park, Maryland, surrounded by his five children and more grandchildren than I could count. They were all running in and out of the room in a scene of unparalleled love.

Fraser could not talk, but when he saw me he opened his eyes wide, his expressive eyebrows shot up, and his lips started moving as he tried to say something. He was clearly glad to see me. I took his hand, and he faintly squeezed mine.

It was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life, to be able to connect with someone I cared so much for in his last moments.

I was lucky to have had lunch with Fraser in Baltimore just before his trip to Key West. Less than a year after publishing his fourth book, a lyrical memoir of his newspaper days and an elegy to newspapers, Fraser informed me that he was already hard at work on his next book. Fraser was 83, but his energy and his intellectual curiosity were undiminished.

This book, true to its times, would be about the racial history of the development of the Pinehurst Golf Club and village in North Carolina.

Fraser and his still-loving second wife, Eileen Canzian, another Sun reporter and editor, got together while living in my house in Baltimore, which Fraser rented for a year and where Eileen sublet a room with more than boarding in mind.

With Martha and Eileen, Fraser had five children, Jen, Ali, Jake, Anna and Emily, all of whom claim that “I am his favorite.”

As he recounted in his nearly-best-selling memoir of newspapering, “The Daily Miracle,” Fraser got his first newspaper job by marching into The New York Times after a three-year stint in the Air Force and saying he wanted a newspaper job. That gumption failed to get him into the Times, but led to a reporter’s job at the Jersey Journal, in New Jersey, and then a big step up to the city staff of The Providence Journal-Bulletin, in Rhode Island.

At The Journal Fraser created a new beat for himself, covering poverty, becoming, as he wrote, “a one-man news service for the downtrodden.”

He was not content to cover that scene from the comfort of an eight-hour day. In 1968 he moved his wife Martha and three-year-old daughter Jennifer into an 11-story public housing project. Some of Fraser’s colleagues went on to cover wars overseas, but none that I know of had the guts to do anything as committed as that.

In 1977 Smith became a reporter for The Baltimore Sun, in Maryland, where he was hired to cover “neighborhoods,” but was immediately promoted to cover city and state government.

After a short time covering Baltimore City Hall, he discovered, during a five-month investigation, that the city under Mayor William Donald Schaefer had a \$100 million slush fund - he did not use that term - to fund projects in secret through so-called “quasi-governmental” corporations.

It was one of the most substantial investigative works in Baltimore newspaper history.

I first worked with Fraser at the Journal in 1968 & 1969, but I was an intern and probationary reporter, whereas he was already a bigshot. I hardly knew him.

At the Sun Fraser and I covered the Maryland General Assembly together, and later as State Editor I attempted to be his editor. That was a Sisyphean task. My real function was more that of an assistant, reminding him of things and, in the days before Google Maps, helping him out with directions when he got lost and called from a pay phone.

As friends, we didn't need to say much when we were together, it was enough just to be with each other. And so it was at the end.

Tim Phelps - April 27 at 09:02 PM