

OBITUARIES

Washington Journalist Jeremiah O'Leary Dies

Jeremiah A. O'Leary, 74, a Washington Times columnist and award-winning journalist who was president of the White House Correspondents Association in 1988 and 1989, died Dec. 19 at Alexandria Hospital. He had circulatory ailments.

Mr. O'Leary began his career in 1937 with the Washington Star as a \$10-a-week copyboy (and the mandate to keep every paste pot in the newsroom filled) and worked for that newspaper until it ceased publication in 1981. Early in his career, he wrote obituaries, humorous features, tear-jerkers and police stories from Washington. He also served an eight-year tour as an assistant city editor.

Later in his Star career, he covered such national stories as civil rights marches in the South and the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination. He wrote from Latin America and was the paper's State Department correspondent. He was named its chief White House correspondent in 1979.

He joined the Times as its White House correspondent shortly after the paper began publication in May 1982. In June 1989, he began writing his column for the Times, "O'Leary's Washington," in which he shared memories and opinions with his readers. He also contributed articles to the paper's Commentary section.

Those may be the "facts" of his career, but Mr. O'Leary probably would have told them more colorfully. First, he was a member of the old school that disliked the term "journalist," preferring to be called a "newspaperman." In a 1989 piece he wrote, "Over the years, I have

known presidents and paupers, bartenders and cops, murderers, dictators, assassins, Hollywood stars and hundreds of newspaper people, who have always fascinated me."

In a memo, he also recalled that "I stood just 12 feet from Jack Ruby when he killed President Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. I danced the Big Apple with Eleanor Roosevelt."

He also wrote, "I was arrested in Cuba by Castro's police . . . I witnessed four executions . . . In 1933, I sipped the first legal beer in the District of Columbia when Prohibition ended. (President Roosevelt gave a case of Yuengling to the White House press corps.)" He also recalled seeing "the first Washington Redskins game in 1937, when season tickets went begging at \$11 each.

Along the way, Mr. O'Leary earned a pack of awards. He was the 1989 recipient of the Merriman Smith Award for Distinguished White House reporting. He received Columbia University's Maria Moors Cabot Gold Medal for distin-

guished Latin American reporting, and the 1963 national reporting first place prize from the Washington Newspaper Guild. In 1987, he was named to the Hall of Fame of Sigma Delta Chi, the professional journalism society.

Jeremiah Aloysius Patrick O'Leary Jr., a Washington native,

was born into a family with deep journalistic roots in the area. His father covered Congress for the Star for a half-century. An uncle, Mike Flynn, had edited the Washington Times-Herald, and a cousin, William McAndrew, served as president of NBC news.

Mr. O'Leary, who lived in Alexandria, was a graduate of St. John's College High School and attended George Washington University. During World War II, he saw combat in Pacific amphibious campaigns with the 1st Marine Division. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and served in Korea as an information officer. He retired from the reserves as a colonel in 1976. His decorations included the Bronze Star, Purple Heart and Legion of Merit.

One highlight of his career in the reserves was a weekend he spent on duty at Andrews Air Force Base. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, whom Mr. O'Leary often covered, arrived at the base from a diplomatic mission. He was greeted by the reporter, resplendent in his medals and colonel's uniform, who with a stern visage told Kissinger that "the coup was successful, and I am in charge here."

This may have impressed government officials more than was realized at the time. When the Star went out of business in 1981, Mr. O'Leary was asked to join the government. He spent eight months as a special assistant to William Clark, first when Clark was deputy secretary of State and then when he was the president's national security adviser.

Mr. O'Leary had been associated with Georgetown University Center for Strategic Studies. He had lectured to government groups and at area universities. He had been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous since 1963 and was a recruiter for the organization.

Survivors include his wife of 38 years, the former Maria Teresa Eneim, and three daughters, Caitlin Gage, Dierdre Stamper and Moira O'Leary, all of Alexandria; two sons, Timothy, of Dallas, and Brendan, of Alexandria; two brothers, Joseph, of Leonardtown, and William, of Highland, Md.; a sister, Mary Mutimer of Silver Spring; and five grandchildren.