

National & world briefing

Famed historian Stephen Ambrose dies

Mark Feeney
The Boston Globe (U-WIRE)

Stephen E. Ambrose, whose stirring books on such heroic episodes in U.S. history as D-Day and the Lewis and Clark expedition made him one of America's best-selling historians and earned him a National Humanities Medal in 1998, died Sunday at a hospital in Bay St. Louis, Miss. He was 66.

A longtime smoker, he was diagnosed with lung cancer in April.

Ambrose, whose multivolume biographies of Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon first brought him to prominence in the 1980s, drew widespread attention earlier this year over revelations that he had plagiarized a number of brief passages in at least five of his books. In each case, Ambrose had cited the source in his end-

notes, but did not put quotation marks around the words.

"I always thought plagiarism meant using another people's words and ideas, pretending they were your own and profiting from it," Ambrose wrote in explanation of the incidents. "I do not do that, never have done that and never will."

The significance of his carelessness remains in dispute; the cause does not. Between 1996 and 2001, he published no fewer than nine books, as well as the revised edition of a textbook. In all, he wrote or edited 36 books. To maintain such relentless productivity, Ambrose would rise each morning at 4 to get in at least three hours of uninterrupted writing. "The art of writing," he liked to say, "is the art of applying the seat of your pants to the seat of

the chair."

So prolific was Ambrose that in 2001, The Wall Street Journal dubbed him and his various enterprises — writing, lecturing, even lending his name to historical tours — "History Inc."

Several things contributed to Ambrose's popularity. One was his unwavering emphasis on narrative. "As I sit at my computer," he once wrote, "I think of myself as sitting around the campfire after a day on the trail, telling stories that I hope will have ... readers leaning forward just a bit, wanting to know what happens next."

Such an attitude made Ambrose a throwback in an era when historians increasingly eschewed storytelling for more analytical or interpretative approaches, but it also made him a

favorite of millions of readers.

He "combined high standards of scholarship with the capacity to make history come alive for a lay audience," said Arthur Schlesinger, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and former aide to President Kennedy.

Ambrose was born in Decatur, Ill., the second of three brothers. His parents were Stephen, a physician, and Rosepha (Trippe), a housewife. Growing up in the small town of Whitewater, Wis., Ambrose was an Eagle scout and hoped to follow in his father's footsteps as a general practitioner.

At the University of Wisconsin, he played football and, captivated by a course on American history, abandoned the idea of medical school. After graduating, he earned a master's degree in history at Louisiana State

University, where he studied with T. Harry Williams. He returned to Wisconsin for his doctorate.

Dr. Ambrose taught at the New Orleans campus of Louisiana State University (which later became the University of New Orleans) from 1960 to 1966. He spent the next three years at Johns Hopkins University. While at Johns Hopkins, he first demonstrated his interest in the general reader, unsuccessfully seeking to become a columnist with The Baltimore Evening Sun.

Dr. Ambrose's first wife, Judith, died in 1967. He leaves his wife, Moira; and five children, Stephenie, Barry, Andrew, Grace, and Hugh.

His last book, "To America: Personal Reflections of an Historian," which he called his love song to his country, is set for release next month.

As death toll rises, Bush condemns Bali blast

Seth Mydans
New York Times

BALI, Indonesia — In the dark and the screaming chaos, said one survivor on Sunday, it was sometimes hard to know whether the man who appeared to be running toward him through the flames was alive or already dead.

"Like you look at their face and you can't make anything out; there's nothing left," said Jared Kays, 23, a vacationer from London. "People were missing ears, people were missing limbs, their skin was peeling off."

On the morning after what may have been the deadliest terrorist attack since Sept. 11 last year, what

remained of two discos on this sunny tourist island looked as if they had been bombed from the air instead of from the roadside.

The car bombing just before midnight on Saturday sent fire raging through a dozen buildings at Kuta Beach, with its bars and dance clubs. It is one of the world's most popular vacation spots for surfers, backpackers and college students.

The death toll continued to climb on Sunday, to at least 182, most of the dead being foreigners on vacation. A dozen of the 300 injured survivors were reported to be in critical condition, and another 30 bodies were estimated still to be buried in the rubble.

On Sunday, the survivors described what seemed to be two explosions, the first small one sounding perhaps like fireworks; the next, seconds later, like an apocalypse.

"There was a noise," said Hanabeth Luke, 22, of Britain, whose Australian boyfriend was killed in the fire.

"We were all dancing away, some cheesy pop song," she said. "We stopped and looked at each other. 'What was that sound?' We sort of laughed nervously and carried on dancing. And within five or ten seconds, vroom! Your feet were just sucked out from under you. I was lying on the floor. Everything was black.

"It was crackling with flames."

Though investigators have only begun their work, diplomats — and President Bush as well — made no secret of their belief that this was the latest of a recent series of attacks linked to al-Qaeda.

"On behalf of the people of the United States, I condemn this heinous act," Bush said on Sunday in a statement. "The world must confront this global menace, terrorism."

"We must together challenge and defeat the idea that the wanton killing of innocents advances any cause or supports any aspirations. And we must call this despicable act by its rightful name: murder."

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, In-

donesia's capital, denounced the attack as "a despicable act of terror."

The explosion at the nightclubs came almost at the same moment as a smaller blast near the U.S. consulate here that caused no injuries. Earlier Saturday, a suspected homemade bomb shattered windows but caused no injuries at the Philippine consulate in the Indonesian city of Manado.

The day's attacks followed a half dozen other bombings in Southeast Asia in the past three weeks. These included two in the southern Philippines that killed one American soldier and at least 11 Filipinos and a grenade explosion near a U.S. Embassy residence in Jakarta.

Police know more than they will say about sniper

Bob Dart
Cox News Service (U-WIRE)

WASHINGTON — Urging a fearful community to "keep the faith," investigators indicated Sunday that they know more than they're saying about the serial sniper who shot 10 people in 10 days.

"We don't want to release anything that may cause the media or anyone to think they're a suspect,"

federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent Mike Bouchard told reporters. "We don't want them to fear they are going to be labeled as a suspect."

"Please rest assured, when we have something we are confident media can help us with, we will use that," echoed Montgomery County police Chief Charles Moose.

"It is a fine balance" in deciding

what to tell the public without tipping off the killer, Moose explained at a morning briefing. "We want people to keep the faith."

Moose and other investigators have refused to say whether they have eyewitness descriptions of the sniper or pictures from surveillance cameras that show him. Firing 10 bullets, the sniper left eight people dead and two wounded between Oct. 2 and Oct. 11, when the

latest killing occurred.

Investigators are checking Pentagon files about soldiers who have been recently discharged and have had sniper training, Time Magazine is reporting in the issue to hit newsstands on Monday.

A Georgia man has also told the New York Post that police showed him a picture of a suspected sniper taken from a video surveillance tape

at one of the shooting scenes.

Hobert Epps, 36, said he was questioned by police near the site of the latest killing — a gas station off an I-95 exit near Massaponax, Va. He said the investigators compared his face to the picture on the tape.

"They thought I was the sniper," Epps told the newspaper. He was later released.

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