



PHOTO COURTESY NELSON'S BAY AREA MORTUARY

REMEMBERING FRED TAYLOR

Fierce defender of journalists and their craft

Fred Taylor finished Washington High School and left his native Portland in 1946 to major in journalism at the University of Oregon. He worked in the news bureau and wrote for the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, rising to be co-sports editor.

But the dean of the journalism school told him that he would never make it in the field of journalism. He should get out of it.

Fred ignored him. That harsh advice to a college kid may have been just what G. Frederick Taylor needed to drive him into becoming what many colleagues have called “the best newsman in America” in his time.

Fred Taylor died Aug. 10 in Coos Bay, where he and his wife of 63 years, Georga Bray Taylor, a playwright and intellectual partner, built their retirement home overlooking the Pacific. He leaves Georga, son Ross of McKinleyville, California, and daughter Amelia of Portland and four grandchildren. Fred Taylor was one of three owners of the *Eugene Weekly*.

Coos Bay was a long way from New York City and *The Wall Street Journal*, where his career spanned 33 years from copy editor to managing editor and executive editor. Some of those years were spent in bureaus in Detroit, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Although he had many opportunities to leave the *WSJ*, he never did, in spite of his profound differences with the editorial page. He managed 300 reporters at one time, greatly increased circulation, started in-depth coverage of labor and unions, the law and lawyers, and other areas, building his reputation for integrity and for “fiercely defending journalists and their craft,” as some obituaries have put it.

Early in retirement, Fred served on the Pulitzer Prize biography committee, evaluating as many as 80 biographies that were hauled to his door on the Oregon Coast. But he loved “newspapering,” as he put it, soon buying the *North Bend News* and *Coquille Valley Sentinel*, divesting of them, and then in 1991, finally buying into a different kind of newspaper: *What's Happening*, which became the *Eugene Weekly*.

He and Georga drove to Eugene for *EW* board meetings and staff parties, even hot dogs and beans at Eugene Emeralds games, first at Civic Stadium, which both Taylors, sophisticated baseball fans, appreciated.

At one memorable board meeting, after receiving a promotional piece, a condom emblazoned with *Eugene Weekly*, Fred wryly noted that this was a long way from the *Wall Street Journal*.

He read both the *Weekly* and *The Register-Guard*, probably more carefully than the staffers at either paper. One of his greatest disappointments was the drastic decline of *The Oregonian*, once the grand old paper of his beloved Oregon and where he spent two years as a sports reporter early in his career.

“Terrific” was his highest praise for either an article or an issue of *EW*. Probably his most constant instruction was “follow the money.” It was a frustration that *EW* did not have the resources to do that in the *WSJ* style.

When the present UO School of Journalism and Communication set up its Hall of Achievement in 1998, Fred Taylor was in the first class. His picture hangs in the hallway of the school.

A great newsman and a great citizen, Fred cared to his core about the importance of a free press in a democracy, large or small. One of his last directives was: “Don’t sell the *Weekly*. Eugene needs it.” ■



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- 9.10 Marcia Ball
- 9.18-10.4 MARY POPPINS!
- 9.29 Boz Scaggs (Hult Center)
- 10.9 Wayne Horvitz
- 10.16 Still Thinking - Good Dudes & The Rangers
- 10.20 Dar Williams
- 10.22-5 ECJK: Goody Goody
- 10.28 Chico Schwall: Lead Belly & Odetta
- 10.31 Moomba! To Beast or Not To Beast
- 11.19 Manis/Vick: That's Him!
- 12.4-20 WHITE CHRISTMAS
- 12.10-17 Christmas at The Shedd: Swinging...
- 1.7 John Pizzarelli

