

Martin O. Waldron Is Dead at 56; Reporting Led to a Pulitzer Prize

Martin O. Waldron, chief of the Trenton bureau of The New York Times, whose reporting won a Pulitzer Prize for The St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times, died of heart disease yesterday at his home in Hightstown, N.J. He was 56 years old.

Mr. Waldron, a tumbled, gregarious Southerner with a gravelly voice who was known to his associates as Mo, had had a heart problem for several years and became seriously ill last year. In his last major assignment, he did extensive reporting for a series on the business relationships between local government and the Atlantic City gambling casinos.

In 1983, Mr. Waldron wrote 150,000 words for The St. Petersburg Times about extravaganzas and budgetary abuses in the building of the Sunshine State Parkway in Florida. He reported that the cost to the taxpayers rose to \$400 million, from \$100 million, because of what was described as "reckless, unchecked spending" by the state's Turnpike Authority.

The articles led to a series of new laws, the reorganization of the state road-construction program and the ouster of the authority's chairman. They also brought a Pulitzer Prize for public service to the paper. Mr. Waldron also received three Associated Press awards for public-service reporting in Alabama and Florida, Florida's Outstanding Newsmen Award and a Sigma Delta Chi Award.

The enthusiasm Mr. Waldron brought to his profession was matched by his zest for good food, good drink, good talk and good company.

Arthur Gelb, deputy managing editor of The New York Times, recalled that "no matter what town you were in, if Mo Waldron was in town, there would be a

party somewhere, and everybody from the mayor on down would be there, and how he got all those people together, no one knew."

Mr. Waldron was born in Calcasieu Parish, La., on Feb. 7, 1925. He spent much of his career as a newsman in Atlanta, Birmingham, Ala., and Tallahassee, Fla., before joining The Times in 1965. Assigned to Houston as a national correspondent and bureau chief, he did a number of major investigative reports in addition to his regular coverage. He returned to New York in 1975 and was assigned to Trenton as bureau chief in January 1976.

Mr. Waldron attended Birmingham Southern College, Middle Georgia College, Georgia Tech and Atlanta Law School, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree at Birmingham Southern. He also found time to work as a rewrite man for The Atlanta Constitution and to run a farm.

Alabama to Florida

His zeal as an investigative reporter was first demonstrated with The Birmingham Age-Herald and The Birmingham Post-Herald. Then he moved to Florida and became the correspondent in Tallahassee for The Tampa Tribune and then for The St. Petersburg Times.

Mr. Waldron is survived by his wife, Ann, a writer; three sons, Peter, of Olympia, Wash., Thomas, of Hightstown, and Martin 3d, a student at Rice University; a daughter, Laura, of Portland, Ore.; his parents, Martin and Nellie of Carnilla, Ga.; two brothers, Allan, of Tallahassee, and Lynn, of Walla Walla, Wash., and a sister, Beverly Pits of Tallahassee.

There will be a funeral service at 11 A.M. tomorrow at the Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, N.J.



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