

PATRICK KARL LYNN

1936-2011



Lifelong newsman Patrick Karl Lynn died at 8:04 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 5. He was 75 years old. Jean, his wife of 50 years, son Richard and daughter in-law Amanda were at his side.

He was born in Quebec on Jan. 18, 1936. He migrated to the US in 1958 and began his journalism career 1962 with the Pacifica Tribune under distinguished publisher Bill Drake.

As a reporter at the Pacifica Tribune, he broke the story of the married priest Rev. Robert Duryea.

One day the phone rang with an anonymous voice telling him that the local priest, Rev. Robert Duryea, was married. "No way", replied Lynn. "Catholic priests cannot be married." But, on sheer speculation, he called the local parish house. Father Duryea answered the phone and Lynn asked one question. "Father, are you married?" Where upon Father Duryea gasped, "No I am not... Yes I am." After a decade or more of marriage, Father Duryea fessed up.

The story created a sensation in the Catholic community and led to Rev. Duryea's defrocking by the Catholic Bishop of San Francisco.

As editor of the St. Augustine Record (Florida) in the late 1960's he became targeted as a newsman in a dispute between Sheriff Dudley Garrett and Hoss Munucy. Munucy had been removed as Sheriff by then Governor Reuben Askew for corruption.

At one point during the re-election campaign Sheriff Garrett gave Pat a gun and encouraged him to carry it for his personal safety, "I hear they're out to git' you" Garret told Pat. In the end the tumultuous campaign passed without violence.

In a half century in the news business Lynn's most notable accomplishment was the integration of the news pages of what was believed to be the last segregationist newspaper in the US.

In the early 1970s he became executive editor of the Columbus, Mississippi Commercial Dispatch and was startled to find the paper shot through with racism: white women were referred to as Miss, Mrs., or Ms while African American women were referred to by their first names; black and white obituaries and wedding announcements were segregated; no person of color had ever appeared on the front page, except in a criminal context. Over several months Pat abolished those practices in the newspaper.

Later Robert Shaw, the Associated Press Bureau Chief of Mississippi remarked, "Pat I believe you have integrated the news pages of the last remaining segregationist newspaper in America."

Pat and Jean spent an additional 6 years in Columbus, Mississippi, where he also served as Anchorman and News Director for WCBI Television.

Lynn's term as editor lasted until 1978 when he took over as news director for WCBI-TV in Columbus, Miss., and eventually becoming an anchorman for the station.

In 1981 Lynn became News Director and Anchorman at KTVA Channel 11 in Anchorage, where he worked side by side with the legendary Alaskan news pioneer Norma Goodman.

He was briefly an anchorman for Bismarck's KXMB located in North Dakota before returning to Alaska and moving to Valdez. He became owner of the local radio station, KVAK, in 1988 dubbing himself the "Voice of Prince William Sound".

A milestone in Lynn's career took place during the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in March 1989. KVAK was ABC's closest affiliate to the scene. Lynn provided ABC listeners with daily, sometimes hourly, reports on the clean-up efforts. Lynn maintained the nonstop schedule for months giving the nation a clear view on the oil spill effort.

After the oil spill, the couple launched the Valdez Pioneer in partnership with John Lindauer's chain of newspapers. When Lindauer sold the chain, Lynn was able to secure sole ownership of the Pioneer, killed the publication, and started a new weekly, the Valdez Star. In 1993 Lynn sold KVAK in order to focus his energies on the Star, where Lynn gained a reputation in Valdez for championing the underdog.

"Pat was closer to the people dealing with issues that affected them directly," said John Devens, who was Valdez' mayor during the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. "Pat would take on anybody if he thought they had been dealt wrongly-city, state or federal-Pat just wasn't afraid."

In 2004 he bought out his rival, the Vanguard, from Alaska Newspapers Inc. and shortly thereafter sold the Valdez Star and entered retirement.

In addition to wife Jean and son Richard (Amanda) Lynn, he is survived by his sister Dorothy and brothers Donald and Wayne of Ontario and brother John Dale of Vancouver.

His ashes will be spread in the Talamoda Cemetary in St. Augustine, Florida to rest among the descendants of the Minorcans and the Conquistadors.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Pat Lynn Memorial Fund at Wells Fargo Bank.

A memorial is scheduled for this Monday, Feb. 14 at 4:00 p.m. at the Valdez Civic Center.