

Local journalist remembered for his humour and integrity

Written By MIKE PICKFORD

The sudden passing of veteran newsman Bill Rea has sent shockwaves across Caledon and much of Dufferin County. Serving as editor of the Caledon Citizen for more than 30 years, Mr. Rea was a true journalistic pillar of the community. "Bill was one of the last true gentleman journalists," noted Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson, who has spent many a moment on the other end of a phone line over the years with a man many have declared, posthumously, as "Mr. Caledon". News first broke of Mr. Rea's death on Sunday (April 8) morning. His wife, Beth, found him unresponsive at their Bolton-area home. It was suspected he had suffered a fatal heart attack in his sleep. Tributes flooded in from across the community as locals remembered the man behind the camera.

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones was one of many politicians to pay homage to Bill's legacy. "The community of Caledon lost a friend this week. By today's standards, Bill would probably be called a workaholic, but I'm pretty sure he was doing exactly what he wanted to do. What he loved," Ms. Jones said. She added, "We were lucky that Bill chose Caledon as the place he worked and eventually called his home." David Tilson, our federal representative in Ottawa, noted Mr. Rea's longevity, stating Bill had been at the centre of journalism in the Caledon area for as long as he could remember. "His fairness and objectivity were always a hallmark of his reporting, giving his readers the news with balance and insight," Mr. Tilson said. "Bill's great sense of humour was infectious. He always made such an outstanding effort to be at everything taking place in the community, which was easy to see in his reporting." Former MP for Halton and, more recently, Halton-Peel, Garth Turner, remembered Mr. Rea's tenacity as he took him to task on several issues throughout the late 90s. "Bill was a thoroughly professional journalist who shadowed me for much of my career - always cheerful, always accurate and always fair," Mr. Turner said. "He embodied what local journalism is all about - probing and uncovering without subjective filter or prejudice." He added, "In an age where social media has distorted so much, a guy like Bill Rea stood out as a pillar of common sense, ethical conduct and dogged perseverance. It is hard to imagine Caledon without this man in his rumpled vest, camera slung over his neck and creased notebook in hand. What a profound loss." Having worked alongside Bill for much of his 35 year career in the business, Mark Pavilons paid respect to the reporter and, later, editor, who quickly became a friend. The current editor of the King Weekly Sentinel shared an office with Mr. Rea in Bolton five days a week. "Bill was meticulous, incredibly intelligent, dedicated and committed to a fault. He would do anything for you," Mr. Pavilons remarked. "The office is not the same at all and I don't know if it ever will be 'business as usual'." He continued, "Bill Rea was one of a kind in many ways. He made the world a more interesting place and for that alone, I will miss him dearly." Having also worked closely with Bill for much of his tenure in Caledon, Orangeville Citizen editor Tom Claridge lauded his continued commitment to the community. "Bill Rea took over the Caledon Citizen not long after the paper opened its first office in Bolton. From that time on, Bill became the Caledon Citizen in every way imaginable," Mr. Claridge said. "He will be sorely missed." Friends are invited to attend Egan Funeral Home on Friday (April 13) afternoon between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., and in the evening from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. to pay their respects. A funeral service will be held in the chapel on Saturday (April 14) at 11 a.m. Following a reception at the funeral home, burial will take place at Brampton Cemetery. Bill's family listed the Toronto Daily Food Bank and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario as the two charities locals can donate to if they wish to make a contribution in Bill's name. From all of us here at the Orangeville Citizen, it is with great sadness that we bid a final farewell to a friend. To a member of our family. Rest easy, Bill Rea.