



Ronald Joe Sullivan

September 16, 1945 - February 27, 2025

The News: R. Joe Sullivan, 79, has died. The husband, father of two sons, career newsman and always congenial friend passed away Feb. 27 in Cape Girardeau, MO, after a short illness. A private service is planned. Born in St. Louis, MO, on Sept. 16, 1945, to Edna Miller Rose and Reuben Sullivan, he was reared on a picturesque farm in Kelo Valley near Piedmont, MO, where he graduated from high school. He had one sibling, David, who is deceased. He and Marge Nichols married in 1965 and were parents of two children, Jason and Brendan. Marge, whose work included education, mentoring, and volunteerism, passed away in 2021 after 56 years of marriage. In lieu of flowers and cards, the family asks that donations in Joe's memory be sent to the Humane Society of Southeast Missouri.

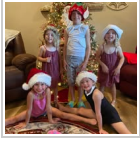
The Life: As a 17-year-old, Joe left the Ozark foothills to attend school at William Jewell College in Liberty, MO. In Liberty, he met his future wife, Marge Nichols, as well as a journalistic career, becoming an intern and later reporter for the Kansas City Star. He eventually signed on with the Wall Street Journal as a reporter in Dallas, TX. He and Marge transferred with the Journal to New York City, NY, where they lived on Staten Island, from which Joe commuted daily by ferry to Manhattan. Deciding that living in New York City didn't justify the cost of living there, Joe and Marge moved to Moscow, ID, where he became editor of the Moscow-Pullman Daily Mail.

After a few years in Idaho, they returned to Missouri, with Joe becoming editor of the Nevada Daily Mail in Nevada, MO. In following years, Joe took his

writing, editing and newsroom management skills to several other newspapers-including a few Stauffer Publications-all within Missouri. The exception was a few years spent in Topeka, KS. As the Publishing Editor of the Topeka Capital-Journal, the flagship paper of Stauffer. He spent his last 14 professional years as the Editor of the Southeast Missourian in Cape Girardeau, back home in a familiar corner of the state, where he helped Rust Communications develop a portfolio of newspapers across the tri-state area. Joe Sullivan's itinerant career was not unusual in the news industry, where moving up often meant moving, taking the wordsmith's portable skill set to a new place. Wherever Joe was sitting behind a desk, the characteristics of his work product were the same-tight editing, good news judgment, local engagement, love of language, able mentoring, and appreciation of community. His columns often were wry, his insights valid. When he wasn't working, he could be found at the piano, participating at a Rotary meeting, contributing to an Episcopalian service, petting a lap-seated family cat, or speaking proudly of his professional sons.

If you type "Joe Sullivan" into an internet browser, you will find many different people. Quite a few "R. Joe Sullivan" options are there, too. But Joe Sullivan, the big Ozark boy and self-made newsroom executive who, in the end, went home to southeast Missouri to parse sentences and help lead a community on the bank of the Mississippi River, was one-of-a-kind. He is missed.

Tribute Wall



“ *Worked with Joe at the Southeast Missourian. Loved reading his column weekly about his Kitty.*

Linda Davis - March 04, 2025 at 07:57 AM

JU

From being a flower girl at the age of 4 at Joe's wedding, to cherishing times shared on his family's visits to Oregon, both Margie and Joe have a special place in my trio's hearts. Particularly unique to Joe was his intelligence, dry wit and understated generous spirit. He will be missed, especially at 79 young. He and his wife, Margie, must be creating great artwork together in heaven. Missed and appreciated.

julie - March 04, 2025 at 05:02 PM