



George Thomas Eblen

November 1, 1936 - June 10, 2017

TOM EBLEN

Tom Eblen, longtime journalist, mentor and educator, died June 10, 2017, at Brighton Gardens in Prairie Village, Kan., after a long illness. He was 80. A celebration of Tom's life will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 6, 2017, at Union Station's Sprint Festival Plaza, 30 W. Pershing Road, Kansas City, Mo. His career spanned six decades, including news leadership roles at The Kansas City Star and Fort Scott (Kan.) Tribune before joining the University Daily Kansan as general manager and news adviser to hundreds of students. He focused on community journalism in work with the Kansas Press Association member newspapers. George Thomas Eblen was born Nov. 1, 1936, to George Clarence and Mary Irene (McLain) Eblen in St. Joseph, Mo., where he graduated in 1954 from Central High School. He was an Eagle Scout. Experience and awards as a high school newspaper photographer spurred an interest in journalism, and he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1958 from the University of Missouri. He was a member of Delta Upsilon fraternity, president of MU's Sigma Delta Chi journalism fraternity and a member of the Kappa Tau Alpha scholastic journalism honorary. During graduate school, he was sports editor of the Columbia Missourian. His first job after leaving MU was as copy editor at the Amarillo (Texas) Daily News. In 1960, he joined The Kansas City Star as a reporter and copy editor, later becoming city editor and managing editor. While at The Star, he met reporting intern Jeannie Kygar, of Hewins, Kan., whom he married June 5, 1966, in

Cedar Vale, Kan. Tom left The Star in 1979 to become Gannett Foundation Professional-In-Residence at the KU's William Allen White School of Journalism. From 1980 until 1986, Tom was editor and general manager of the Fort Scott Tribune. He was a member and president of Fort Scott Rotary Club and active in promoting the community's history. He returned to KU in 1986 as general manager-news adviser at the University Daily Kansan, KU's student-run newspaper, and also taught advanced reporting and editing. During his 15-year tenure at KU, Tom produced cover-to-cover, red-pen critiques of each Kansan newspaper issue posted on the newsroom bulletin board. This formative practice was honored in 2015 with "The Tom Eblen In Honor of the Glorious Red Pen Scholarship", awarded annually to KU journalism students. He was program officer for U.S. Information Agency-sponsored programs for international journalists visiting KU. Tom and Jeannie also prepared barbecue dinners and chili feeds at their Lawrence home each semester for dozens of Kansan student staff members. Tom retired from KU in 2001 and became editorial consultant for the Kansas Press Association. A KPA member since 1980, he was its president in 1988 and Kansas Newspaper Foundation president in 1989. He conducted dozens of on-site "tune-up" workshops for Kansas newspapers, in addition to seminar and speaking engagements across the United States. In 2004, he wrote Kansas Press Association: 140 years of Kansas newspapers and newspaper families. In 2007, Tom won the Clyde M. Reed Jr. Master Editor Award, recognizing a lifetime of achievement in Kansas journalism. He was named to the Kansas Newspaper Hall of Fame in 2010. Through the Kansas Humanities Council Speakers' Bureau, Tom gave journalism-related programs statewide. He became a trustee of the William Allen White Foundation at KU in 1987 and later its board chairman. He also was board member and past president of the Emporia, Kan., community partnership supporting Red Rocks, the legendary editor's home, a Kansas State Historic Site. Tom was a longtime member of Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), serving on its board of directors and editor of APME News; a Pulitzer Prize juror and Best of Gannett judge. A

member of the Inland Daily Press Association from 1980 to 2001, he won the IDPA's national award for a 1983 editorial written for the Fort Scott Tribune. Tom was a lifetime member of both MU and KU Alumni Associations, and had served on the board of directors for both. He was a member of the MU's Communications Committee from 1975 to 1991, was a Columbia Missourian board member from 1981 to 1986 and was winter commencement speaker for MU's School of Journalism in 1978. A member and past president of KU Alumni Association's Endacott Society for retirees, he also assisted with its Oral History Project and chaired its potluck dinner evening lecture programs. He is survived by his wife Jeannie, of the home in Lawrence, Kan.; son Matt Eblen of Roeland Park, Kan.; daughter Courtney McCain, her husband Ken, and granddaughters Megan and Mary McCain, all of Overland Park, Kan. Tom's family suggests memorial donations to the Kansas Newspaper Foundation (c/o Kansas Press Association, 5473 SW Seventh St., Topeka, KS 66066); or to KU Endowment Association, P.O. Box 928, Lawrence, KS 66044-0928, designated for the Tom Eblen Red Pen Scholarship, KU Endacott Society or the William Allen White documentary film project. In gratitude for his excellent care there and to support future research, Tom donated his body to the University of Kansas Medical Center and School of Medicine. Arrangements: Reflections 816-561-0101