

L.L. Engelking, Ex-City Editor Of Herald Tribune, Is Dead at 77

By **PETER KIHSS**

L. L. Engelking, former city editor and editorial writer in 39 years of service with The New York Herald Tribune, died late yesterday at his home in Cooperstown, N.Y. He had been suffering from cancer, and was 77 years old.

The New York Herald Tribune has been gone for 14 years, but its reporters and editors still come together periodically to proclaim that it was once the newspaperman's newspaper — and to hail Lessing Lanham Engelking as one of the great city editors.

One of the scores of top reporters he trained, Margaret Parton, remembers him as "my terrifying godlike teacher — he scared me to death and I loved him deeply."

Another, Homer Bigart, twice a Pulitzer Prize winner, affectionately recalls: "If you made any mistakes that were due to carelessness, he would land on you heavily. But his praise was just as embarrassing, because he would bellow out for the whole city room."

Truman Biographer's Tribute

Robert Donovan, who dedicated the first volume of his biography of President Harry S. Truman to Mr. Engelking, says, "He was the greatest school of journalism ever invented." He recalls Mr. Engelking after hours calming down his staff members at the Artist and Writers Restaurant, engendering "warmth and camaraderie."

Mr. Engelking was exacting, competitive and meticulous. But he allowed latitude in writing, and under him The Herald Tribune had flair. He was city editor from 1939 to 1946 and for 10 years before that, assistant city editor, assistant night editor and night city editor.

He was born in Peters, Tex., Nov. 4, 1902. He was graduated from the University of Texas in 1925. He was a reporter for The Austin (Tex.) American, and then in New York with The Bronx Home News.

He joined The Herald Tribune in 1927, and almost at once became a night rewrite man. Maron J. Simon, later his day city editor until joining the Air Force in World War II, recalls this was considered the prize job — with Stanley Walker as night city editor and the battery of writers, who took and got news reports by telephone, made up of Robert B. Peck, Herbert Asbury, Bert MacDonald and Mr. Engelking.

Mr. Engelking was a towering man, 6 feet 4 inches tall, a demanding and challenging editor. He thought up ideas, scrutinized every line of articles and pressed to avoid gaps and errors.

When a Mitchell bomber crashed into the Empire State Building July 28, 1945,

Mr. Engelking deleted from the lead article a harrowing description of one of the dead. No use to bring more sorrow to the victim's family, he ruled.

Set Up Staff at U.N.

When the United Nations started at Hunter College in the Bronx in 1946, Mr. Engelking deemed it so important that he personally went there to supervise a staff for the first week or so.

Later, he wanted to know what country would get the first seat in the front row of the first General Assembly at Flushing Meadow. His reporter, who thought at first that there were better things to do, found that there had been a drawing of lots several days before. "United Kingdom" came out first. This would have put the United States second — and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics alphabetically in the last row. Only days before, the Soviet Foreign Minister had walked out of a Paris ceremony because he had been seated in only the second row.

A United Nations genius offered a solution. The Assembly's alphabet was revised, and the Soviet Union was renamed by initials "U.S.S.R." So it got into the front row right after Uruguay — and it was a news story.

In 1946, Mr. Engelking was moved out of the flow of news he loved and into editorial writing. He learned an entirely new craft.

Writing the editorials on New York City affairs, he won a 1953 Citizens Budget Commission medal for "timely and forceful" contributions to understanding.

The Herald Tribune died in the midst of strike-beset efforts to merge it in 1966 with the old New York World-Telegram and The New York Evening Journal. Mr. Engelking moved over to the Port Authority of New York as its publications editor.

"The Trib left Engel; he didn't leave The Trib," Leon Katz, an authority colleague, said. He retired in October 1972.

Mr. Engelking had been a governor of the Society of Silurians, made up of old-time newsmen, for six years. He lived in Forest Hills, Queens, and then Plainfield, N.J., before moving to Cooperstown, in 1978.

Surviving are his wife, the former Hess Houghton, and three children — Elizabeth Teitler of Mount Kisco, N.Y., a daughter of his first wife, Eleanor Hindman, who died in 1929; Mary Motte Hall, a New York advertising market researcher, and Peter H. Engelking, assistant vice president of the French-American Bank.

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