



## John Painter

August 21, 1938 - November 18, 2016

John Painter, Jr., intrepid reporter, consummate raconteur, loyal friend, and adoring husband, took on his eternal assignment behind the pearly gates in the wee hours of Friday, November 18, 2016. Just six days earlier, he celebrated his life and his 37 year marriage at a joyous afternoon with family and friends who told stories, shared music and offered toasts at the Newport Performing Arts Center.

During his nearly 40 year career as a reporter at The Oregonian, he covered oil and gas in Alaska; Bruce Springsteen's first wedding in Lake Oswego; the entry and exit of the Baghwan Shree Rajneesh in Oregon; Katherine Anne Power's bank robbery in 1970 and her surrender 20 years later. With no help from anyone, he managed to interview President Gerald Ford on Air Force One, the only Oregonian reporter ever to manage such a feat.

John was the only child of Mary Kaeleen Preston Painter, an ardent volunteer for Catholic charities, and John Painter, who worked on building the Grand Coulee Dam and helped to reconstruct Pearl Harbor after the 1941 attack. Eventually, John's dad joined the Macwhyte Company, a wire rope contractor based in Wisconsin. Young John recalled his dad going into the woods in the hot summers with ice cream for the sweating lumberjacks. They would remember him later when it was time to buy their wire cable. John used the same talent years after: he brought boxes of candy on Valentine's Day to court

clerks who would remember to call him first when an important new case appeared in the files.

John was born in Portland on August 21, 1938. He attended Madeleine Grade School, Columbia Prep and [when it closed] Grant High School where he excelled at such endeavors as riding a motorcycle through the school corridors. He learned to do well in chess, was a scratch golfer, and won awards as a yo-yo champion.

For reasons he could never explain, John always wanted to be a reporter. He enrolled at the University of Oregon as a journalism major. Day after day, he borrowed a car, drove to Portland, and pestered Dick Nokes, then at the helm of The Oregonian, for a job. Finally, Nokes gave in, and John began as a copy boy during summer vacations. In 1960, he enlisted to avoid the draft and served three years in army intelligence stationed at Heidelberg, Germany.

He always wrote: for the Daily Emerald at the U of O; for Stars and Stripes; and for the Richmond Times Dispatch after returning to the States to complete his military obligations. At the latter paper, he covered President John F. Kennedy's funeral, an emotional event that made a lasting impression.

John also raced cars professionally. On March 1, 1964, while racing the Alpha-Romeo he brought back from Europe on a competitive track in Falls Church, Virginia, he lost a wheel and hit a wall at 70 mph. He sustained permanent damage: a paralyzed diaphragm, a paralyzed left arm, and chronic pain in his bad limb. But this never stopped him. He returned to work at The Oregonian. Over the next 40 years, he covered the famous, the forgotten and the forlorn at that paper, completing over 36,000 stories before retiring in 2002.

He often appeared at assignments in a three-piece suit, believing proper

dress essential for a representative of "the largest newspaper between San Francisco and the North Pole."

He was an insatiable reader: he favored history and biography [particularly everything Winston Churchill] but devoured pop fiction and political commentary as well. He read over a dozen magazines and newspapers on a regular basis. If nothing else was handy, he would read the telephone book in a new city.

His curiosity was boundless, and his interests unlimited. He received a Medill Fellowship to Northwestern University in 1967 and a Nieman Fellowship to study for a year at Harvard in 1976. The latter was an experience he cherished, leading to his enduring fondness for all things Boston. He loved sports, especially the Oregon Ducks, the Portland Trailblazers, the Seattle Seahawks and, of course, the Boston Celtics, Red Sox and Bruins.

On Friday, July 13, 1979, he met Susan Elizabeth Reese at the Goose Hollow Inn in Portland. Love at first sight became marriage three months later on the windswept Oregon coast in Yachats. They celebrated with a gala party, 13 days later, and continued with anniversary parties almost every five years of their 37 year passionate relationship. They traveled to the exotic [Portugal, Paris, Hong Kong, Alaska, South Africa], often combining John's writings with Susan's photos for travel stories. After John retired, he joined Susan in more mundane travel for her law practice: to Madras, Moro, Lakeview, Prineville.

In Newport for a meeting in autumn, 2000, they spotted a small cottage overlooking the ocean in Nye Beach. They bought it. With the help of local architect Dietmar Goebel [who became a dear friend] they demolished it to build their dream home in 2002. Although maintaining a Portland house, Susan and John quickly became part of Newport's small, welcoming

community. They energetically supported the Newport Symphony, the Oregon Coast Aquarium, the Lincoln County Historical Society and Maritime Museum, the Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses, Samaritan House and Atonement Lutheran Church.

John faithfully cared for Susan through her two battles with cancer; but when he received his own diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in August, their love was not enough to get him through. John declined the option of grueling treatment with an uncertain and temporary respite. He and Susan visited favorite places, spent time with friends and family, cherished each other and celebrated their love. Just three months and 13 days after his diagnosis, John died peacefully at home with Susan at his side.

John's survivors include his wife, Susan Elizabeth Painter and his extended family: Pamela and Mary Glaros of Portland; Frederick Reese of Phoenix, AZ; Rebecca Reese and Andrew Bonner of Portland; Cate and Andy Sulek of Atlanta; Tim Reese and Edie Chang of Sacramento; George, Debbie and Elizabeth Anne Reese of Champaign, Ill and Nambe Pueblo, NM; and Will, Samina and Liam Reese of Portland.

A private graveside burial with military honors occurred on November 29 at Eureka Cemetery in Newport. A memorial service will occur on December 16, 2016 at Atonement Lutheran Church, 2315 N Coast Highway, Newport at 2:00 p.m.

Memorial gifts might be made to Atonement Lutheran Church or Samaritan House in Newport or the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, 101 East 14th Ave., Eugene 97401.