

Former publisher Russell dies

By BARRY HOCH

COB SEPT 26/84

Foster Meharry Russell, the often outspoken former editor and publisher of the Cobourg Sentinel-Star, died of cancer yesterday afternoon at Cobourg hospital.

Russell, 77, who lived at Creighton Heights in Hamilton township, was also a politician and school trustee, the founder of CHUC radio station, author, poet, athlete and historian during his life-time, spent mostly in this area.

He owned, edited and published the Sentinel-Star from September 1946 to October 1969, when he sold it to James Johnston. He won numerous awards for his editorials.

His son Robin said yesterday his father was most proud of the Elijah Parish Lovejoy award he received in 1965 for courage in journalism. The award was given by Southern Illinois University.

His editorials were often reprinted in other publications including the Boston Christian Science Monitor, the Toronto Telegram and the Toronto Star.

Russell was born July 4, 1907, into a printing family. His late father, Levi C. Russell, was a printer with a Millbrook newspaper at that time. His mother was Adeline Donnelly.

His father worked for him at the Sentinel-Star up until the sale to Johnston in 1969.

Prior to coming to Cobourg in 1946, Russell owned and edited the weekly Coldwater News for about nine years.

Even after he sold the Sentinel-Star, Russell continued to be

associated with newspapers. He was a columnist with the Trenton Trentonian from 1971-76 and also was a columnist with the Peterborough Examiner from 1977-80.

In 1956, after considerable effort and lobbying, Russell was granted the licence to start up this area's first radio station, CHUC. He sold it several months after starting it up.

Russell was quite committed to the Cobourg area. He was deputy reeve of Hamilton township from 1971 to 1974. He was also a trustee for nine years in the early '60s with the Cobourg high school board.

He was the publicity director for the first world plowing match, which took place in Cobourg in 1953.

History was always a keen interest for Russell. He was chairman of the Northumberland Historical Society in 1958 and recently has been active in the Cobourg and District Historical Society. He was the first chairman of the board of trustees of Barnum House museum in Grafton.

Russell was an active member of the Willow Beach Field Naturalists.

Russell was quite an athlete in his youth and helped pitch a Port Hope baseball team to two Ontario championships in the 1920s.

Russell was an accomplished writer outside the newspaper world. He wrote about eight books, including one of poetry. His latest book came out earlier this year, called Ink in Our Souls, but his most widely known book was What a Friend We Have in Jesus, a biography of Joseph M. Scriven.

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Scriven, a Port Hope resident, wrote the hymn, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, in the 19th century.

Russell's autobiography was recently completed and ready to go to the publisher, his son said, but a decision will have to be made on what to do with it.

Russell was also on the panel of prospective tribunal members for the Canadian Human Rights Commission. He has been on the panel since 1978.

His son said Russell was the chairman of Canadian Brotherhood Week at one time.

Cobourg Coun. Lloyd Williams, who served on Hamilton township council with Russell and defeated him three times for the reeve's seat in the '70s, said he "greatly respected Russell's efforts" for the township.

Dr. Fred Robertson, the Liberal MP for Northumberland from 1949 to 1957, said Russell "played a very important part in the life of Cobourg. He ran a good newspaper. He was always interested in Cobourg and took an active role. Cobourg has lost a prominent and fine citizen."

Russell is survived by his wife of 46 years, the former R.W. Jean Dickinson, a Port Hope native, and one son, Robin, of Ottawa.

His body is resting at the Wayne Milroy funeral home on Division Street. A memorial service will be held on Thursday at 2 p.m. Interment will take place at a later date in one of two family cemeteries in Cavan township.



Foster Meharry Russell