

OBITUARY • LOU LALONDE

Former Journal publisher 'one of the world's gentlemen'

Lou Lalonde was calm
at helm of newspaper,
sharp at poker table

BY DAVE MULLINGTON

Lou Lalonde, president and publisher of the *Ottawa Journal* in the 1970s, was described yesterday as a caring, family-oriented man who always remained calm in a crisis. Close friends also remembered him as a great poker player.

Mr. Lalonde, 79, died Tuesday at the Civic site of the Ottawa Hospital after an irregular heartbeat led to cardiac arrest, his son Bernie said.

John Grace, former editor-in-chief of the *Journal*, as well as a former federal information and privacy commissioner, worked closely with Mr. Lalonde during the 1970s.

Mr. Lalonde "was a completely self-made man," Mr. Grace said.

"He steered the *Journal* through good times and bad with equanimity," especially during the *Journal's* fight for survival during the 1970s.

The *Journal* folded in August 1980, a few years after Mr. Lalonde had been replaced as publisher.

"He was always steady, a very low-key person," Mr. Grace said.

"It's a cliché to say he was one of the world's gentlemen, but in a profession that has its share of hard-edged characters, he was a gentle person."

Mr. Grace recalled that I. Norman Smith, the long-time editor of the *Journal*, told him: "From the first day Lou Lalonde came to the *Journal*, he continued to do each job better than we thought it could be done."

Mr. Lalonde also was involved in community affairs through membership in the Rotary Club of Ottawa, the Laurentian Club and various community organizations.

Mr. Grace, who was editor-in-chief of the *Journal* between 1975 and 1980 and associate editor "for many years" before that, said Mr. Lalonde was essentially a businessman.

"He was the best boss you could possibly have ... he never interfered with editorial policy and he deferred to the professional journalists as publisher.

"He did not try to be a writer or a pundit; he never challenged the professionalism of his working reporters and editors."

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Former editor-in chief at the *Journal*

Gisèle Lalonde-Barrat, one of Mr. Lalonde's seven children, said her father was born and raised in Fournier, 80 kilometres east of Ottawa, and worked for the Royal Bank between 1937 and 1941.

During the Second World War, he trained fighter pilots at the Armed Forces base at St-Hubert, Quebec, and retired as a first lieutenant.

He joined the *Journal* in 1945 as a clerk in the accounting department and worked his way up the ranks to become president and general manag-

er in 1972. Four years later he was named publisher, replacing the late Gratton O'Leary.

In 1974, he also was president of the Ottawa Board of Trade.

After leaving the *Journal*, he worked in semi-retirement as a real estate broker for Royal LePage for a few years.

Beside his keen interest in his family, Mr. Lalonde's main passion was poker. Other interests included skiing and raising Charolais cattle with his son Claude on a farm they operated on River Road.

For the past 30 years he was a regular at a monthly poker game with six others and the occasional spare, one of the players recalled yesterday.

Retired real estate broker Harvey Fenton said Mr. Lalonde was "an excellent poker player, very sharp. He was one of the sharpest players we had."

Most of the players were members of the Rotary Club of Ottawa and had served in the Air Force during the war, Mr. Fenton said.

Mr. Lalonde's daughter remembered her father as very devoted to his family.

"He just loved kids. He just loved being surrounded by his family. He loved family reunions, he loved people, he was constantly surrounded by people."

Mr. Lalonde is survived by his second wife, Lorraine Gratton, two sons and three daughters, as well as four stepchildren and 13 grandchildren and step-grandchildren. His first wife, Yvette Binette, died in 1979.

A funeral mass for Mr. Lalonde is scheduled for today at 10 a.m. at Saint-Remi Catholic church on Dumaaurier Avenue.

Dec. 24, 1998