

Gordon Sinclair, editor, dies at 61

SANTA CRUZ — Gordon R. Sinclair, editor emeritus of The Sentinel, died early this morning at Dominican Hospital. He was 61.

The longtime newspaperman and community leader had been hospitalized since June 25, when he suffered a heart attack.

Mr. Sinclair, known to most as "Scotchy," had worked for The Sentinel since 1939, the year he graduated from Santa Cruz High School.

A native of San Francisco, he came to Santa Cruz in 1926 and lived in Paradise Park. He attended the old Mission Hill Elementary School, Mission Hill Junior High School and Santa Cruz High.

His first byline in The Sentinel appeared in February of 1939, when he was a high-school senior. He wrote sports and general-news stories until 1941, when he became sports editor.

In 1943, Mr. Sinclair was named news editor, and in 1955 became managing editor. He was appointed Sentinel editor in 1970 and became editor emeritus in May 1982.

Mr. Sinclair was well-known in California newspaper circles and held numerous professional positions.

He was involved in countless community projects and had been honored by numerous groups for his dedication to the community.

He was perhaps the person most responsible for bringing the University of California to Santa Cruz. In

1957, he became chairman of a Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce committee which eventually would persuade UC Regents to build on the Cowell Ranch property.

The Cowell property had been one of 80 possible campus sites. Largely because of Mr. Sinclair's relentless drive to land the campus for Santa Cruz, the Regents agreed to build the campus here.

In 1961 after the Regents had selected Santa Cruz, the City Council recognized Mr. Sinclair's contributions. A council resolution cited "selfless dedication and service to the community." It described Mr. Sinclair's "leadership, perseverance and cooperation which contributed materially to the selection of Santa Cruz" for the campus.

That year, the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce honored Mr. Sinclair as its man of the year. In 1947, he had been named the chamber's young man of the year.

In 1968, UC's centennial year, then-Chancellor Dean McHenry honored Mr. Sinclair for "distinguished achievements and notable service to the university."

McHenry said this morning: "Scotchy has been a pillar of this community for all the years I've known him and I'm sure many more. I first met him when he was chairman of the (campus site) committee. He

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Gordon R. Sinclair

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was magnificent in that role. He persuaded the Regents to give up the idea of going to San Jose . . . and brought the university here.

"Personally, I found Scotchy a remarkable man. I've lived my life in a world of academics and yet I think Scotchy may have been the best-read person I ever knew."

Last year, Mr. Sinclair received a similar commendation from Cabrillo College President John Petersen, who at the time called Mr. Sinclair "a true friend of Cabrillo College."

He was considered the county's election expert and had been an astute political observer for more than 40 years.

Former Santa Cruz City Manager Dave Koester remembers Mr. Sinclair as a "great friend of city government who had a tremendous influence on the development and betterment of Santa Cruz.

"In my experience as city manager, I never met a better-informed person on local and state governmental affairs. He was literally a walking encyclopedia and he was always supportive of anything for the betterment of Santa Cruz," said Koester.

It was in 1965 that a small group of men decided air pollution had to be monitored in the Monterey Bay Area. Mr. Sinclair was one of those men, and at the time of his death was a member and former chairman of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District's Air Pollution Control Advisory Board, which he helped form.

During the 1940s, Mr. Sinclair was involved in numerous athletic activities.

He had been a charter member and secretary of the Santa Cruz City Recreation Commission, and had been president of the Santa Cruz County Servicemen's Baseball League and Softball League.

He officiated in baseball, softball, basketball and swimming competition for many years, and was the longtime announcer in the old City League basketball program.

In 1942, he was instrumental in moving the Santa Cruz Boys' Club to the Elks gymnasium, and was a long-

time volunteer and supporter of the old Boys' Club.

In 1952, Mr. Sinclair, then The Sentinel's managing editor, was named chairman of the Northern California Associated Press News Executive Council. He was elected its chairman again in 1974.

He became vice chairman of the statewide APNEC group in 1962 and served as chairman in 1963.

In 1966, he was chairman of the editors conference of the California Newspaper Publishers Association.

Said Sentinel Publisher Fred McPherson III, "Scotch took a keen interest in his community, unlike any other Santa Cruz resident. The wealth of facts and figures he had at his fingertips actually was unbelievable. He was a tremendous source of local information and will be greatly missed by The Sentinel and the community in general."

Former Sentinel Publisher Fred McPherson Jr. called Mr. Sinclair "one of our oldest and most trusted employees. He came to us right out of high school and was a self-educated man. He had the faith and confidence

of all those who knew him. His passing is a great loss to all of us."

Sentinel Editor Bruce McPherson echoed those sentiments in saying, "It can be accurately stated that Scotchy for years and years was the most highly-respected individual in Santa Cruz County in journalism, business and educational circles. He really loved this community and wanted the people in it to live as comfortably as possible. His ability to retain factual information was simply amazing, and he had a sense of humor to go along with it. This newspaper and this county are going to miss him. We extend our sympathies to his family."

Mr. Sinclair is survived by his wife, Florence Sinclair; a son, Scott Sinclair; and a daughter, Laurie Sinclair, all of Santa Cruz. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Cassie Sinclair, in 1978.

Visitation will be Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m. at White's-Wessendorf chapel, 138 Walnut Ave.

Private services will be at the chapel Friday at 3 p.m. Cremation and private inurnment will be at the Soquel Crematory.