

Longtime Register editor Randy Brubaker dies

The Register 12:35 p.m. CDT May 4, 2014



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Des Moines Register senior news director Randy Brubaker, a longtime editor who held several leadership roles in the newsroom, died on Saturday from an apparent heart failure.

Brubaker, 55, was an essential mainstay and high-performer in the newsroom for more than 30 years, joining the Register in September 1983. He held numerous posts – from sports editor and news editor to assistant managing editor for digital, managing editor and senior news director. In his most recent position, he oversaw the investigative team and sports department.

"He was an invaluable leader, partner and mentor to so many former and current staffers, including myself," Register President and Publisher Rick Green said. "Obviously, for so many reasons, this is a painful, painful loss. But it is even more sorrowful because it comes on the heels of the sudden Jan. 8 death of his wife, Jan. She had been a longtime guidance counselor at Dowling High School."

Brubaker suffered a heart attack at home less than two weeks ago and underwent surgery, where doctors inserted a stent. He was expected to return to the newsroom on Monday.

Brubaker was born in Des Moines, but lived in Waterloo as a young child. He graduated from Wartburg College in Waverly in 1980. As a student, he edited the Wartburg Trumpet.

"A passionate and skilled journalist, Randy loved the Register and all that it represented across Iowa," Green said. "Outside of his family – and maybe the Minnesota Twins and Hawkeye football team – nothing brought him greater delight than seeing Register journalists do great things for our readers."

A few years ago, Robert Gremmels, in nominating Brubaker for a Wartburg alumni award, wrote, "Through the years, Randy Brubaker has been one of Wartburg's most active and supportive alumni. Even before his graduation, he assisted with important recruiting publications. On numerous occasions he has returned to the campus to assist with programs and to speak at classes and convocations. ... He is always available when we need him."

More recently, Brubaker spearheaded an effort to digitize much of the photo and story archives displaced when the Register moved to Capital Square.

Brubaker was the editor on numerous award-winning projects, including ones last year that exposed problems at the Iowa Juvenile home – leading to its closure – and lapses in the state's emergency medical services.

"Randy was a highly skilled editor who was a champion for investigative, public service journalism," Register Editor Amalie Nash said. "He was a beloved member of our staff for his skills, his attitude and leadership. His loss will be felt throughout the Register and the wider community."

Brubaker is survived by his two sons, Christopher and Patrick, along with his parents and other relatives. Funeral arrangements are pending.

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