

# HONORING ROB HIAASEN OF THE CAPITAL GAZETTE

## HON. JOHN P. SARBANES

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Mr. SARBANES. Madam Speaker, I include in the RECORD an obituary of Rob Hiaasen, an editor of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis Maryland.

[From the Baltimore Sun]

CAPITAL GAZETTE VICTIM ROB HIAASEN REMEMBERED AS A WRITER WITH A DEFT AND GENTLE TOUCH

(By Jacques Kelly)

Rob Hiaasen, a feature writer and editor recalled for the deft and understanding touch he applied to his off-center stories, will be remembered Monday at a private memorial service. He was one of the five staff members killed Thursday at the Annapolis Capital Gazette.

The Timonium man was 59.

"Rob was a terrific reporter because he had an innate curiosity," said the former Baltimore Sun columnist Kevin Cowherd, a close friend. "He was a master of asking questions of the people he wrote about. It was one of his strengths. He was also drawn to quirky characters. In all his writing he tried to bring out the humanity."

Mr. Hiaasen was born in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to Kermit Odel Hiaasen, an attorney, and Patricia Moran, a homemaker. He graduated from Plantation High School and earned a bachelor's degree in communications at the University of Florida.

He initially worked as an AM radio reporter and landed a job in Raleigh, N.C. There he met a competitor, Maria Mills.

"It was a small town and small radio market and everybody knew each other," she said. "We got married and moved around and landed in San Antonio."

"We both hated our jobs there."

Mr. Hiaasen reconsidered his radio work and decided instead to pursue newspaper writing and reporting. He got a reporting job at an afternoon paper, the Petersburg, Va., Progress Index. But first, he had to pass the paper's oral spelling test.

"He remembered to put the P in raspberry," Maria Hiaasen said. "He was always a good speller."

Within 18 months, he and his wife moved on to the Palm Beach Post. He worked in its downtown newsroom; she covered police in Palm Beach County.

Tom O'Hara, the retired managing editor of the Palm Beach Post, recognized the last name on Mr. Hiaasen's job application. He knew Mr. Hiaasen's brother, the novelist and longtime Miami Herald columnist Carl Hiaasen.

"Rob was just charming," Mr. O'Hara said. "It was a like a no-brainer to hire him. He was a Florida boy and that was a great attraction to me."

Mr. O'Hara assigned Mr. Hiaasen to cover county government, a beat overseen by a meticulous editor. Mr. Hiaasen often began his stories with colorful anecdotes, while his editor required numbers.

"For Rob, it was a baptism by fire," Mr. O'Hara said. "His editor would lop off the first three paragraphs. It was clear Rob belonged in features."

"He thrived there and was a delight. He was enthusiastic about his stories. Everybody loved him. I liked sitting by him and listening to his little asides."

In 1991, Mr. Hiaasen wrote a feature about five people who contracted AIDS from a

Palm Beach dentist. "Dr. Acer's Deadly Secret: How AIDS joined the lives of a dentist and his patients," won a national journalism writing award, and Mr. Hiaasen was hired by The Baltimore Sun as a features writer.

Colleagues recalled his daily routine. He took long walks, and became enamored of Baltimore's neighborhoods and their characters. He ambled through Bolton Hill, Mount Vernon and Fells Point in search of offbeat tales to tell.

Friends said Mr. Hiaasen steered clear of newsroom factions and social circles. One described him affectionately as "a tall, brooding Norwegian."

"Only two words in that phrase are true," Mr. Cowherd said. "Rob was never brooding. He needed to laugh the way he needed oxygen. He was the best colleague you could ever have. In a roomful of towering egos, he was the first guy to come up and say, 'You did a great job.'"

Mr. Hiaasen wrote about Mel Sherr, a veteran of D-Day familiar to Baltimoreans as a strolling violin player.

"Mr. Sherr knows what your favorite song is," Mr. Hiaasen wrote. "While he's asking guests where they're from, he'll be guessing their age and era. He'll then pluck a song from his play list and play. Guests nod their heads and smile. Some blush. They now remember what they had forgotten. . . . Mr. Sherr will not be stumped by requests."

He also wrote about Kirk Bloodworth, the ex-Marine and Eastern Shore waterman who was the first person to be sentenced to death and then exonerated by DNA evidence.

Mr. Hiaasen spent a year from 2003 to 2004 as a John Knight Fellow in Journalism at Stanford University. While there, he acted in a play and studied singing.

Mr. Hiaasen accepted a newsroom buyout offer in 2008 and left The Sun. By 2010 he joined the Annapolis Capital. He mentored reporters as an editor and wrote a Sunday column.

"He did an amazing pivot to become an editor," Mr. Cowherd said. "He became everything you want of a good editor—gently pushing them to do their best work and to not accept mediocrity."

He also taught a news writing class at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism.

And he kept telling his stories in his gentle tone.

"When there's no hiding from news, it's time for a haircut," he advised in a column late last year. "Getting a haircut—once a horrific, spirit-crushing event during the teenage years—is a safe haven for the news beleaguered. There, in the wrapped confines of your barber's or stylist's chair, you can sink away to a news-free zone. There, on your temporary throne, you are clipped and pampered by intimate hands." In addition to his wife of 33 years, an English teacher at Dulaney High School, he leaves a son, Ben Hiaasen, a Towson attorney; two daughters, Samantha Hiaasen, an assistant manager of the Pratt Street Barnes & Noble store in Baltimore, and Hannah Hiaasen, a craft associate at Apparatus in New York who lives in Brooklyn, NY; his brother, Carl, in Vero Beach, Fla.; two sisters, Judy Hiaasen of Plantation, Fla., and Barb Hiaasen of Davie, Fla.; and many nieces and nephews.

## HONORING ALYCE GRIFFIN CLARKE

### HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable

public servant from the Backwoods of Deovelente (a few miles northeast of Belzoni), to the Mississippi State Capital—Alyce Griffin Clarke, 1st African American female elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives in 1985.

In the backwoods of Deovelente, in the last house near the Yazoo River, a beautiful baby girl was born to the late Mr. Henry Griffin and Mrs. Fannie Alice Merriweather Griffin. They named this beautiful precious baby girl, Alyce Myrtle Griffin.

This young lady walked the dusty roads of Deovelente to Deovelente Elementary School, to Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, where she was baptized, to Mt. Arratt Methodist Church, and to the one store in the community. As a matter of fact, she walked everywhere she went. The family did not own a car as they were sharecroppers. She chopped and picked cotton as so many of us did. She still boasts about being able to pick 300 pounds before quitting time and teasing others still in the field.

As the years passed, Ms. Griffin graduated from McNair High School, Belzoni, Mississippi in 1957. She went on to graduate from Alcorn College and other universities. She later became Mrs. Alyce Griffin Clarke when she married the late Mr. L.W. Clarke. They became the proud parents of one son, Demarquis Clarke.

In 1985, Mrs. Alyce Griffin Clarke became the first African American female elected to the Mississippi Legislature.

Currently, Representative Alyce Griffin Clarke is still active in the same post where she first made history, and we are all very proud of her accomplishments.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Representative Alyce Griffin Clarke.

## SALUTING COLONEL DAVID R. GIBSON

### HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Speaker, I proudly salute Colonel David R. Gibson as he retires after 33 years of honorable service. Throughout his extraordinary military career, COL Gibson embodied the duty, honor, and loyalty that makes the U.S. Army the world's premier fighting force.

COL Gibson's commitment to investing his gifts, talents, and abilities in service of his nation is a deeply held creed that speaks to the generosity and activism of a true and devoted patriot. Throughout his career, he earned numerous academic and military accolades that garnered the respect and admiration of his peers. His resume tells the story of a man unafraid to embrace the challenges that forge the leaders our nation needs.

Retirement is meant to be celebrated and enjoyed. It is not the end of a career, but the beginning of a new adventure. I thank Colonel David R. Gibson for his service and dedication to our great nation. I proudly join his family, friends, and colleagues in wishing him nothing but the best for his richly-deserved retirement.