

Clark R. Mollenhoff

Born 1922, Burnside, Iowa; died March 2, 1991, Lexington, Va.; Pulitzer Prize-winning author who in later years championed the cause of John Vincent Atanasoff and who claimed loudly that John Mauchly had perjured himself at the Honeywell vs. Sperry-Rand trial.



Education: BA, Webster City Junior College, 1941; LI-11, Drake University Law School, 1944.

Professional Experience: reporter, *Des Moines Register*, 1941-1978; professor, journalism, Washington and Lee University, 1976-1991.

Honors and Awards: Sigma Delta Chi Awards, 1952 and 1954; Pulitzer Prize for national reporting for “persistent inquiry into labor racketeering,” 1958; Raymond Clapper Award, 1955; Heywood Broun Memorial Award, 1955; National Headliner Award for Magazine Writing (*Atlantic*), 1960; Society for Professional Journalists' Washington Correspondents' Hall of Fame, 1979; fellow, Society for Professional Journalists, 1980; George Mason Award, Richmond, Virginia Society for Professional Journalists, 1987; University of Missouri's Honor Medal and Award for lifetime contributions in the field of journalism, 1989; six honorary degrees.

Clark R. Mollenhoff, 69, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, author, syndicated columnist, and professor of journalism at Washington and Lee University since 1976, died Saturday, March 2, 1991, in Lexington, Va.¹ Mollenhoff was considered by many journalists to be one of the first and best practitioners of investigative reporting. Among the stories he helped uncover were those involving Jimmy Hoffa and Bobby Baker.

A native of Burnside, Iowa, Mollenhoff graduated from Webster City Junior College in 1941. He received his LLB degree from Drake University Law School in 1944. He was also the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and fellowships.

Mollenhoff began his career in 1941 as a reporter for the *Des Moines Register*, where he covered the operations of city, county, and state governments and the operations of the field offices of federal agencies and courts. Except for service in the Navy, two brief leaves of absence, one of which was in 1949-1950 as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard, and a brief period early in the first Nixon administration when he was the deputy counsel to the president, or “presidential ombudsman,” Mollenhoff remained with the *Des Moines Register and Tribune* until 1978. He went to Washington and Lee as a professor of journalism in 1976, a position he held until his death.

In 1946, after two years in the naval reserve including service in the South Pacific as a boat group commander, Mollenhoff returned to the *Des Moines Register* as an investigative reporter and political writer. He continued to spearhead exposure of mismanagement and corruption in city, county, and state government operations.

From 1950 to 1960 Mollenhoff was Washington correspondent for Cowles Publications, covering the national government for the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*, *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, and *Look* magazine. His work included in-depth investigations of the operations of nearly every government department and agency.

¹ From Washington and Lee University Press Release, March 1991.

Mollenhoff took a year's leave of absence in 1960 as an Eisenhower Exchange Fellow. He traveled in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Russia on a study of the administration and organization of government and the relations of government and labor organizations in those areas.

Mollenhoff returned to Washington as bureau chief for the Des Moines papers, focusing much of his energy on in-depth investigations of the Defense, State, and Agriculture departments. He eventually became Washington bureau chief in 1970.

Mollenhoff was the author of 11 books, including *Tentacles of Power* (1965), a history of labor racket investigations with particular emphasis on the influence of Jimmy Hoffa's corrupt Teamsters on city, county, state, and federal governments; *The Man Who Pardoned Nixon* (1976), on Gerald Ford's presidency; the best-selling *The President Who Failed-Carter Out of Control* (1980), an analysis of scandals and failures of the Carter presidency; and his last work of investigative journalism, *Atanasoff: Forgotten Father of the Computer* (1988), about the Iowa State College professor who invented the digital computer and fought to earn patent rights. He completed work on a book of poetry, published by Iowa State University Press in fall 1991.

QUOTATION

After 30 years as an indefatigable investigative reporter, Mollenhoff began a second career as a professor of journalism at Washington and Lee. He said of his second career: "Teaching at the undergraduate level ... is enjoyable to me because of the opportunity for close personal contact with the younger students ... to have the opportunity to guide, encourage, and, I hope, inspire them as they mature intellectually."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Significant Publications

Mollenhoff, Clark R., *Atanasoff: The Forgotten Father of the Computer*, Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1988.

UPDATES