

Meersman remembered as top-notch reporter

◆Died unexpectedly:

Long-time Union Leader employee was also a world traveler, avid outdoorswoman.

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By **PAT GROSSMITH**
Union Leader Staff

MANCHESTER — Nancy Meersman, a veteran newspaper reporter who retired in December after 35 years with the state's largest newspapers, died Tuesday at her home.

Meersman, 63, of Manchester covered nearly every beat during her long career with the Union Leader including crime, courts, City Hall and Presidential primaries.

Perhaps her most memorable story came early in her career while working for the New Hampshire Sunday News. On Saturday, Feb. 26, 1972, Sen. Edmund Muskie — in the middle of a snowstorm — stood on a flatbed truck outside the Union Leader building and denounced then-Publisher William Loeb. Muskie was irate about a Union Leader editorial which he believed disparaged his wife.

The event became a defining moment in Presidential political history.

Muskie, then the Democratic frontrunner, lost the nomination after his emotional speech. Loeb became known as the man who made Muskie cry.

Meersman photographed Muskie standing on the flatbed truck and then went on to write the story. Meersman never said Muskie cried that day, although the national media did.

She wrote:

"Some said it was the most 'moving' statement Muskie had made to date and others claim they saw tears running down his face. Whether tears actually fell from the senator's eyes was impossible to verify as snow was falling heavily."



NANCY MEERSMAN
Union Leader reporter

An athletic woman, Meersman loved the outdoors and was an avid skier, hiker and bicyclist. She twice trekked the Himalayas in Nepal, hiked to Machu Picchu in Peru, and bicycled across China.

For the last decade, Meersman was the newspaper's court reporter, covering murder trials, civil suits, the Supreme Court, and probate court.

Al Nettel of Manchester, a reporter who worked with Meersman for 30 years, said he was shocked by her death. He said he was impressed by the way she covered superior court.

"It's something I couldn't do myself," he said. "She brought it to life."

Former Hillsborough County Attorney Peter McDonough said Meersman "understood the challenges of the office, the work and the court system. She understood the courts very well. It was like talking to another member of the bar."

Meersman, he said, always knew when a case had an unusual twist to it.

"It's a remarkable skill to be able to do that," he said. "She knew where to look, knew the community and knew what to cover."

Executive Editor Charles Perkins worked with Meersman for 27 years.

"Nancy was a gifted writer. Even her most complex stories were easy to read. But good writing isn't easy; it demands powerful concentration," he said. "The deeper Nancy got into a story, the greater her intensity. We cherished her for that devotion to good journalism, for her sharp wit, and because she always stood up for what she believed was right."

Her death was unexpected and came as a shock to her former newspaper colleagues as well as to her mother, Mary Meersman of Manchester, and sister, Jane Loeser of Kittery, Maine.

Loeser said she and her sister returned last week from a trip to California, including Yosemite National Park.

She said her sister was heading to Utah next week and had trips planned next year to Thailand and Tuscany.

Attorney David Nixon described her as a fine news reporter who was a credit to the Union Leader.

"She was very, very fair and I don't know anybody she ever wrote about who had anything to complain about her accuracy or objectivity. Apart from that, she was a very generous person and just a pleasure to be around," he said.

Meersman was a Manchester Central High School and University of New Hampshire graduate. She also attended Middlebury College in Vermont. She was fluent in German and lived in Germany for two years while attending the University of Marburg.

She taught German at UNH before becoming a reporter for Foster's Daily Democrat in Dover. She became a staff reporter for the Union Leader in 1970.

A memorial service is planned for 1:30 p.m. Tuesday at Goodwin Funeral Home.