

Ron Kaye resigns post as editor of Daily News

Daily News
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Los Angeles Daily News Editor Ron Kaye resigned his position at the paper Friday, the newspaper's publisher announced.

Kaye joined the Daily News in 1985 as an assistant city editor. He became managing editor at the newspaper in 1993 and was named editor in 2005.

"All good things in life come to an end sooner or later, even my love affair with the Daily News," Kaye said in a message to the newsroom Friday afternoon.

"What will always be with me is my love and respect for all of you."

Prior to coming to the Daily News, Kaye worked as a reporter and editor at The Associated Press, Newsweek magazine, The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer, the National Enquirer and the now-defunct Los Angeles Herald-Examiner.

During his tenure at the Daily News, Kaye became the public face of the newspaper, and his bombastic personality and scathing criticism of Los Angeles City Hall shaped the editorial pages of the paper.

"A lot of political figures thought Ron was being unfair or hard on them," said Rick Orlov, longtime Daily News political reporter and columnist.

"What he was trying to do was make them look at what they're doing and how it was affecting the middle-class and working-class families of the San Fernando Valley."

David Fleming, an attorney and longtime San Fernando Valley activist, said Kaye will be hard to replace.

"If the Valley ever had a credible cheerleader, it was Ron Kaye," said Fleming, who led the

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8-9-05/LOS ANGELES/ Ron Kaye is seen Tuesday, August 9,... (Michael Owen Baker/Staff Photographer)

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effort for the Valley to secede from the city of Los Angeles.

"He had so much to do, politically,

Neighborhood Council
meetings
Events calendar

with the success of the Valley. So often he took on government, called a spade a spade ... because of that he caused a lot of change in City Hall and the Board of Supervisors."

Kaye's departure comes a month after the Daily News laid off 22 newsroom employees amid a national and statewide squeeze on the newspaper industry.

The layoffs of reporters, photographers, editors and library and clerical staffers at the 150,000-circulation newspaper trimmed newsroom staffing to 100.

The job eliminations occurred at the same time as other newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times and The Orange County Register, among many others, were reducing editorial and other staffers.

Daily News Publisher Douglas E. Hanes thanked Kaye for his service to the paper.

"Ron has made numerous contributions to this newspaper as well as to the many communities we serve," he said. "Ron inspired achievement in a challenging way in a news media environment."

Hanes said an announcement on a successor to Kaye will be made Monday.

Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-kaye5apr05,1,8401.story>

From the Los Angeles Times

Valley loses ardent defender, watchdog

Ron Kaye helped define the area's modern image as editor of the Daily News. He does not explain why he is resigning.

By Jennifer Oldham

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

April 5, 2008

The man whom admirers call the "Patrick Henry of the Valley" is stepping down from his bully pulpit.

The Los Angeles Daily News announced Friday that its editor, Ron Kaye, was resigning after a 23-year tenure that helped define the modern image of the San Fernando Valley.

To his supporters, Kaye was a passionate defender of the Valley and its residents, guiding aggressive coverage of the Valley's failed effort to secede from Los Angeles and holding City Hall accountable for what the paper saw as its neglect of the Valley.

To his critics, his crusading journalism sometimes crossed the line into advocacy, resulting in such headlines as "Hahn ploy foiled," "L.A. can't gouge Valley" and "Let the nasty political games begin."

Whatever the case, there is agreement that the Daily News -- and the Valley -- won't be quite the same without Kaye at the helm.

"He is the watchdog when it comes to the consciousness of the Valley and the political structure of Los Angeles," said City Councilman Dennis Zine. "While he's sometimes very gruff and confrontational, his heart is in the San Fernando Valley."

Kaye, 66, did not explain his reason for leaving. But several sources said he had been battling for months with the owners of the Daily News, MediaNews Group, over cutbacks in staffing. Like other newspapers, the Daily News has been hit hard by declining advertising and circulation.

By focusing considerable coverage on perceived slights to the Valley, Kaye helped set the political agenda there and became a thorn in the side of government bureaucrats.

"Over the last 20 years, he's been one of the most influential people in the San Fernando Valley, which is especially interesting because very few people know who he is," said Richard Close, president of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Assn. and former chairman of Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment, the group that led the Valley secession movement. "He's championed that for many years, that the Valley was being shortchanged."

Some critics wondered how much shortchanging was really going on.

Some former employees alleged that Kaye crossed the line by slanting news coverage toward secession when the drive to break the Valley away from the city gained steam in the late 1990s.

Some said they were uncomfortable with edgy headlines blasting bureaucrats on the other side of the hills, including "Another LAUSD mess," "DWP slush funds probed," "Building boondoggle" and "Abused kids ignored."

In 2002, The Times published a series on how the local media covered the secession movement, which included claims from some observers that the Daily News coverage had a strong pro-secession spin. Kaye and others at the Daily News strongly denied their coverage was unbalanced.

In a memo to his staff Friday announcing his departure, Kaye wrote: "You have made this into a real newspaper with a soul and passion and creativity and shown your commitment to discover how this newspaper, any newspaper, can survive in the digital age."

Kaye could not be reached for comment about his departure. But in an interview earlier this week, he declined to talk about his future with a reporter from a paper he's spent decades competing against.

Saying he had spent most of three decades battling The Times, he dismissed a request for comment. "Do you really think I want to engage in this conversation in a serious way?" he asked. "It wouldn't be honorable or true to who I am and what I stood for."

Kaye became managing editor of the Daily News in 1993 and editor in 2005. He also worked at the Associated Press, Newsweek, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, National Enquirer and the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, now defunct.

The Daily News, based in Woodland Hills, circulates mostly to readers in the San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas. Under Kaye, it took on a decidedly muckraking, tabloid-like feel. And it gained influence. Even though the secession effort failed, some backers said the paper's coverage had made a difference.

As far as secession is concerned, "we lost the battle, but we won the war," said David Fleming, an attorney with Latham & Watkins and a leader of the City Charter reform effort in the late 1990s. "The Valley is getting a lot of things today that we wouldn't have otherwise, and a lot of it goes directly back to Ron Kaye and what he did."

Fleming said city officials in downtown Los Angeles learned to take notice of what the Daily News reported. "They are always aware of what Ron is writing about them," he said. "They don't like it, and they don't agree with it, but they all read it and they all react. That's a mark of someone that is truly an important voice."

Former staffers, including some who left recently during a round of job cuts at the paper that pared the newsroom staff by 20 down to 100, recalled Kaye as a boisterous, dedicated journalist who took the paper's corporate owners to task.

"In his first speech when he was made editor, he gave a lecture on his favorite topic of how corporate monopoly journalism was ruining this country," said Brent Hopkins, who left the paper in

February after a seven-year stint as a reporter. "He was an incredibly crazy guy to work for. He would sing in the middle of the newsroom; he could be very profane at times. . . . He was always waxing nostalgic about the good old days when people used to drink at their desks and how you could punch each other."

Reporters agreed that Kaye took his employees' interests to heart during the recent downturn in the newspaper industry, which has been hit hard by a drop in advertising, the crash in the housing market and rise of free information online. Staffers say he was sensitive about delivering news of cutbacks, laying staff members off personally and timing bad news so it wouldn't interfere with things like weddings.

"For the last few months I saw him there, he took everything incredibly personally, incredibly hard. He looked like a mess," recalled Hopkins, who was a union steward for six of his seven years at the paper. "He didn't sleep; he went back to smoking very heavily. We weren't just numbers to him; we were people to him, and then we were employees."

Daily News "Bargain Hunter" blogger Julie Scott posted an online tribute to Kaye on Friday, saying: "He finally got canned by the powers that be."

Then-editor Bob Burdick, who hired Kaye in 1985 as assistant city editor, said Kaye immediately brought energy and vigor to the paper, which started as the Van Nuys Call in 1911, became the Valley News and Green Sheet in 1953 and was a free community shopper for much of its life. It changed its name to the Daily News in 1981 and converted to paid circulation a year later.

"I thought he was particularly talented at taking a story and recognizing where [its] strengths could be," Burdick said. "He was very witty and very smart, and very up to date on what was going on. And that wit could run from gentle to biting."

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Times staff writer Jack Leonard contributed to this report.

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