

George Rothwell Brown

(29 Aug 1879 – 28 Jul 1960)

Brown, George Rothwell. On Thursday, July 28, 1960, in Chicago, Ill., George Rothwell Brown, beloved husband of Zenayde Hutton Brown, father of Mrs. Paula Brown Bell, Brig. Gen. Rothwell Henry Brown (ret.), and brother of Laura Jo Brown. Services will be held at Christ Church, 31st and O sts. nw., on Monday, Aug. 1 at 10 a.m. Interment Congressional Cemetery.

The Washington Post, June 13, 1917, p. 16

George R. Brown, Author

"My Country" Is From the Pen of a Former Washington Newspaper Man

"My Country, a Story of Today," is the title of a book which has made its appearance on the bookstalls and has the distinction of being the first novel to come out of our war with Germany. George Rothwell Brown, its author, is a well-known newspaper writer of Boston, formerly of this city, and a member of the Washington Post staff. While doing newspaper work in Washington he gathered intimate knowledge of the "inside" politics as practiced by the salons at the Capitol and the chiefs of the various executive departments. Mr. Brown also had a host of friends among "the owners that be," and the information and knowledge he gathered from his experience here he made clever use of in the building up of his story, which teems with adventure, excitement and a deep sense of patriotism.

"My Country" is well written and keeps the reader's interest alive throughout. There are no tiresome lapses. The plot is unusual and is cleverly conceived and carried out with consistency.. It contains the elements of love, intrigue, secret missions, spies and secret service men, interned German sailors, the submarine, the wireless, problems of allegiance and the dramatic powers of a fascinating woman. The book is from the press of Small, Maynard & Company, Boston and is illustrated by Chase Emerson and dedicated to Z.H.

The Evening Star, July 29, 1960, p. B5

George Rothwell Brown, Veteran Newsman, Dies

George Rothwell Brown's long career as a newspaperman ended in Chicago last night on the terms he had set for himself. The 80-year-old political writer died while still active, covering the Republican National Convention.

A stroke in his room at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, where he was preparing an article, ended a career that began more than 60 years ago.

Long one of the most respected members of the Washington press corps, Mr. Brown had been writing for the Hearst newspapers since 1929. He had covered every national political convention since 1908 except the 1932 Democratic convention.

A native Washingtonian, Mr. Brown was a member of a family that had been prominent in newspapering here since 1800 when a great-great-great-uncle, John Borrows, moved his family from Philadelphia to the new Capital to cover the political scene. He was also a descendant of Joseph Tate, founder of The Star.

The son of Dr. Andrew Rothwell Brown, a physician and patent attorney, and Sarah Thompson Brown, Mr. Brown was educated in the District public schools. He was graduated in the class of 1898

from Eastern High School, and in 1902 he married a classmate from Eastern, the former Zenayde Hutton.

Youthful Publisher

Mr. Brown embarked on his newspaper career even before entering high school. He published a weekly, the *Midnight Sun*, that came out every Saturday. The paper was later known as the *Middy Sun*.

After completing high school, Mr. Brown wandered into the city room of the old *Washington Times* and to his astonished delight was given an assignment by a near-sighted city editor. He had been mistaken for a member of the *Times* staff. But he attended to the assignment so well that he was offered a permanent job.

He left the *Times* after about a year and went to work for his cousin, Hugh Slater, publisher of the *El Paso (Tex.) Herald*, and covered the frontier until 1901.

Mr. Brown then returned to Washington and went to work again for the *Washington Times* as a reporter, and, in 1910, moved to the *Washington Post*.

From 1913 until 1917, Mr. Brown was Washington bureau chief for the *Boston (Mass.) Transcript*. When the United States entered World War I, he returned to the *Post* as a war correspondent with the AEF in France and Italy and stayed on as a European correspondent in 1919 to cover the Paris meetings.

On his return to Washington, the *Post* turned Page one, Column one over to him for any purpose he saw fit. He named that column "Postscripts," and it soon became the daily reading habit of Washingtonians from the White House on down.

Mr. Brown's items, thoughts and philosophy on government and his times were as up-to-the-minute as the news stories of the same front page, for it was said that he virtually wrote his column in the composing room at the last possible minute before his deadline.

Mr. Brown had avid readers outside Washington, too, and one was William Randolph Hearst, sr. He sent representatives to Mr. Brown on several occasions, and in 1929 induced him to join the staff of the *Washington Herald*, then a Hearst paper.

Mr. Brown continued as a political writer for the Hearst papers until the time of his death.

Aside from his daily column, Mr. Brown was also the author of many books. Among his most notable were "*Washington, A Not Too Serious History*," and "*The Speaker of the House*," the story of John Nance Garner.

Mr. Brown was a member of the National Press Club,, the Gridiron Club and the Fairfax Hunt Club.

Mr. Brown leaves his wife, of the home address, 1335 Thirtieth street N.W. and Browns mill road, near Vienna, Va., a son, Brig. Gen. Rothwell Hutton Brown, U.S.A. (retired) of Whitestone, Va.; a daughter, Mrs. George Allan Bell of Hong Kong, and a sister, Miss Laura Jo Brown of 504 Bashford Lane, Alexandria.

The Washington Post, July 29, 1960, p B7

George Rothwell Brown, Dean of Reporters Dies

Chicago, July 28 -- George Rothwell Brown, dean of Washington political correspondents, died today at the Republican convention while covering what he had predicted would be his last such newspaper assignment.

The 80-year-old patriarch of the Hearst newspapers and Hearst Headline Service succumbed from a stroke in his room at convention headquarters in the Conrad Hilton Hotel. On his desk lay the last scribbled notes of a newspaper career that reached back to the rough frontier days of El Paso before the turn of the century.

A man of erect and almost austere bearing, Mr. Brown was nevertheless a beloved as well as respected figure in Capital journalism. Two or three generations of newsmen had benefited from his

friendship, encouragement, and his encyclopedic knowledge of national politics – gathered through years of research and study and active participation in national conventions dating back to the 1908 GOP gathering that nominated William Howard Taft.

This Is My Last One

When he arrived in Chicago last Monday, after having covered the democratic Convention in Los Angeles, Mr. Brown made one of his rare references to his state of health. He had been a sufferer from bronchitis for years.

“I shouldn't have made this trip,” he said as he sat down at a typewriter and began a lead, “but I just couldn't miss this one.” Later he told a friend, “this is my last one. But I want to stay in this business until I just drop in my tracks.”

He did just that.

Mr. Brown was born in Washington, D.C., August 29, 1879, son of Dr. Andrew Rothwell Brown, a physician and prominent patent attorney. He was raised literally on Capitol Hill and there, in the basement of the family home, entered newspaper work. He wrote and published a one sheet journal which he first called “The Midnight Sun” and later, when he realized that it was distributed at noon each Saturday, “The Mid-Day Sun.” Neighbors subscribed to it and were amused by the precocious young man's industry.

His formal education was confined to Eastern High school. He was too restless to go to college. One day before the turn of the century, he wandered into the city room of the old Washington Times and, to his astonished delight, was given an assignment by a near-sighted editor. He had been mistaken for a member of the Times staff. But he attended to the assignment so well that he was offered a permanent job.

Takes Job in Texas

Young Brown worked for the Times for about a year, then journeyed to El Paso, Tex., where a cousin, Hugh Slater, owned a weekly paper.

It was there he developed a crusading and, to a degree, “lone wolf” approach which was to bring him scores of notable exclusive stories through the remainder of his career. His campaigns against the lawlessness of the frontier area did much to bring about abiding reforms.

He wanted to expand his horizon. He returned to Washington and worked briefly for the Washington Times, but soon moved on for a brief tour of duty with the New York Commercial.

Mr. Brown returned to the Washington Times in 1901 and while covering the State, war and Navy Departments simultaneously was given the assignment of writing the story of the funeral of assassinated President William McKinley. Of that story The Washington Post was later to say, editorially, “. . . A piece of reporting deeper in pathos than the burial story of the dead of the battleship Maine.”

Hired by Post

The nation-wide attention that the news story aroused, launched Mr. Brown to a peak within the profession that he maintained until his death. As a direct result of it, The Washington Post hired him from the Times in 1902 and put him to work on an exciting and, at the time bizarre, story; the intention of Prof. Samuel Langley, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to fly a heavier-than-air machine.

Mr. Brown covered the unmanned flights of the steam-driven model of Langley's craft, launched from a barge platform in the Potomac off Widewater, Va. He was present, too, when the full-scale model failed to leave the launching pad with enough speed and plunged its pilot into the river. Months later he was able to write comprehensively about the successful efforts of the Wright Brothers.

The political writing career of Mr. Brown began at the Washington Post. The career continued with scant interruption until his death today. In the course of it he came to know on intimate terms each President from Theodore Roosevelt to Dwight D. Eisenhower, as well as countless Cabinet members and members of Congress.

Mr. Brown left the Post in 1905 and for the next five years headed the Washington Bureau of the Boston Herald. In 1910 he returned to the Post again as editorial paragrapher, and his pithy and always blunt and clearly understood words soon made him the most discussed writer in Washington.

Assigned Abroad

In 1918 the Post sent him to France and Italy as a war correspondent. He was nearly killed in a mountain slide in the Alps and was shot in the hand during front line observation near St. Hillaire, France. He remained abroad through 1919, for the Post, as European correspondent, covering the Armistice and the Paris Peace Conference.

On his return to Washington, the Post turned Column One, Page One over to him for any purpose which he saw fit. He named that front-paged column "Post-Scripts" and it soon became the daily reading habit of Washingtonians from the White House to the hovels of Anacostia. Mr. Brown's items, thoughts and philosophy on government and his times were as up-to-the-minute as the news stories on the same front page, for it was said that he virtually wrote his column in the composing room at the last possible minute before his deadline.

Mr. Brown had avid readers outside of Washington too, and one was William Randolph Hearst, Sr. He sent representatives to Mr. Brown on several occasions and in time induced him to join the staff of the Washington Herald.

In the course of the heated 1932 Democratic Convention, the only one he was destined to miss between 1908 and 1960, Mr. Brown played an important backstage role. He was asked to remain in Washington by Mr. Hearst and to persuade his friend John Nance Garner to yield his closely-held convention votes to Franklin Delano Roosevelt – who was 80-odd votes short of the two-thirds majority that then was the rule. Garner delivered his ballots to the New York Governor, and Roosevelt was on his way.

Mr. Brown later regretted his role in this vignette of history. He came to regard President Roosevelt as a menace and the New Deal as "creeping socialism" In the last story he was destined to write, dated Chicago, July 28, Mr. Brown called for the creation of a third party, made up of conservatives from both major parties.

"The times are ripe for it," he wrote, "the present Democratic and Republican parties have drawn so closely together that today their philosophies are scarcely distinguishable. Both are farther to the left than the Roosevelt New Deal platform of 1936 and 1940."

Mr. Brown is survived by his wife, Zenayde Hutton Brown, whom he met while attending Eastern High School; his sister, Laura Jo Brown, of Alexandria, Va.; a son, Brig. Gen. Rothwell Henry Brown (Ret.); a daughter, Mrs. George A. Bell of Hong Kong, six grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

The body is to be sent to Washington Friday for burial there.

When informed of the death of her brother, Miss Brown told a reporter, "Let us feel that he competed what he always wanted to do."