

KIMBALL, ROBERT B.

Born: March 18, 1915

Died: May 31, 1988

Berkshire Eagle - June 1, 1988

Robert B. Kimball, Eagle Editor For 30 Years, Dies at 73 of Stroke.

RICHMOND - Robert B. Kimball, 73, of Swamp Road, a retired editor of The Berkshire Eagle who worked for the newspaper for 30 years, died last night as the result of a stroke suffered some weeks ago.

Mr. Kimball was a versatile and meticulous newspaperman. His skill was known to provoke reporters to comment that his editing actually improved their stories - an observation that reporters seldom volunteer.

His versatility extended far beyond the newsroom. He was one of the few Eagle editors who could, and did, install plumbing and do carpentry.

He held strong convictions about a host of subjects and was ready at all times to engage in spirited debate with anyone he believed needed enlightenment. Indeed, he was inclined to argue at length and in minute detail even after friends agreed with him on the topic at issue.

Politically, Mr. Kimball was independent, often denouncing office holders of whatever party for knavery, incompetence or numerous other drastic shortcomings. He almost universally suspected the worst when it came to bureaucrats and high-ranking officers of organizations, whether they be governmental, business, cultural, fraternal or religious.

Born March 18, 1915, in Cleveland, son of Bernard M. and Edna Bartels Kimball, he grew up in Rocky River, a western suburb of Cleveland. He graduated from Rocky River High School and studied for a year at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, and for three years attended night classes at Cleveland College of Western Reserve University.

Began at Cleveland News

After minor jobs in Boston and Cleveland, he became a copy boy in 1936 at the Cleveland News at a salary of \$14. per week. The newspaper's radio and music editor found that the new copy boy was willing as well as capable to write reviews of concerts, ballets and operas.

Promoted to an apprentice police reporter, Mr. Kimball became active in unionism, joining the American Newspaper Guild. The Cleveland News transferred him to the night police beat and then fired him three months later. He told colleagues in later years

that he felt sure that his firing was a consequence of his union activities, but he didn't regret it.

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In the spring of 1940, he was hired as a general assignment reporter for the Chronicle in Muskegon, Mich. In 1942, with World War II under way, he went to work at an airplane parts factory in Detroit.

Ran News Service

Shortly afterward Mr. Kimball joined the editing staff of the Wall Street Journal in New York. He worked at the copy desk there

for six months, the features department for 18 months and spent another 18 months running an experimental news-ticker service.

In 1944 in Lexington, Mass., he married June E. Chelland, a free lance artist then living in New York.

The couple moved on St. Patrick's Day, 1947, to Pittsfield, where Mr. Kimball became The Eagle's assistant wire editor, or telegraph editor as it was then known. The job consisted of assisting with the handling of stories and pictures from Associated Press and United Press, which later became United Press International. He held the job for five years.

Having become interested in art while helping his wife write art reviews, he added the function of art editor to his Eagle duties.

Mr. Kimball also functioned at times as The Eagle's building page editor, assistant city and county editor and garden page editor, and handled news from the Berkshire Hills Conference and the Berkshire Art Association.

In 1954, he developed as experimental feature section for Saturday afternoon's Eagle. The section was initially a broadsheet supplement known as The Weekender, but it evolved into a tabloid known as Berkshires Week and is now a part of the Sunday Eagle.

Edited Richmond History

In 1961, Mr. Kimball became co-editor with The Eagle's William H. Tague of a book, "Berkshire: Two Hundred Years In Pictures," published by the newspaper in connection with the county's and Pittsfield's bicentennial. He also served as an editor of "Richmond, Massachusetts," a town history written by Catherine Annin and published in 1964.

Mr. Kimball ultimately became The Eagle's production manager, and finally editor of The Eagle's editorial page, where he served until his retirement in 1977.

His family moved in 1949 from Pittsfield to New Ashford, where he was elected town treasurer in February 1952, and a

selectman in February 1957. He also served two years as a member of that town's Fire Protection Planning Committee, resigning in November 1952.

Conservation Commissioner

The Kimballs subsequently moved to Richmond, where he became chairman of the Conservation Commission and Planning Board. He also served as a director of the Massachusetts Association of  
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Conservation Commissions. He was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Pittsfield and the Thursday Evening Club of Pittsfield.

Robert and June Kimball were divorced in 1971. He married Miss Miriam E. Alburn of Minneapolis in 1972.

Besides his wife, he leaves a daughter, Ms. Ricki B. Kimball of Oakland, Calif., and two sons, John D. Kimball of Berkeley, Calif., and George C. Kimball of Oakland.

Burial in Northeast Cemetery will follow cremation. A memorial service will be scheduled at a later date.

There are no calling hours. The Wellington Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, the family has suggested contributions be made to the Town of Richmond Conservation Fund.