

[From The New York Times Obituaries  
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WILLIAM MAXWELL, 91, AUTHOR AND  
LEGENDARY EDITOR, DIES  
(By Wilborn Hampton)

William Maxwell, a small-town boy from Illinois who edited some of the century's literary lions in 40 years at *The New Yorker* while also writing novels and short stories that secured his own place in American letters, died yesterday at his home in Manhattan. He was 91.

John Updike, whose early stories for *The New Yorker* were edited by Mr. Maxwell, said in an interview several years ago: "They don't make too many Bill Maxwells. A good editor is one who encourages a writer to write his best, and that was Bill."

"A lot of nice touches in my stories belong to Bill Maxwell," Mr. Updike said. "And I've taken credit for them all."

In addition to Mr. Updike, Mr. Maxwell, in his career as a fiction editor at *The New Yorker*, worked with writers like John Cheever, John O'Hara, J.D. Salinger, Shirley Hazzard, Vladimir Nabokov, Mary McCarthy, Eudora Welty, Harold Brodkey, Mavis Gallant, Isaac Bashevis Singer and Frank O'Connor.

Polishing their manuscripts exerted an influence on his own writing, which included six novels, three collections of short stories, a memoir ("Ancestors," 1971), a volume of essays and fantasies for children. "I came, as a result of being an editor, to look for whatever was unnecessary in my own writing," he said in a 1995 interview. "After 40 years, what I came to care about most was not style, but the breath of life."

William Keepers Maxwell Jr. was born in Lincoln, Ill., on August 16, 1908, one of three sons of William Keepers Maxwell, an insurance executive, and the former Eva Blossom Blinn. When he was 10, his mother died in the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, a shattering experience that he would revisit in "They Came Like Swallows" (1937), his second novel and the one that established him as a writer. His 14 years in Lincoln (sometimes called Draperville or Logan in his books), would provide, as Mr. Maxwell later put it, "three-quarters of the material I would need for the rest of my writing life."

Lincoln was a postcard Midwestern town with tree-shaded streets and a courthouse square where an annual carnival was held and people paraded on patriotic holidays. In 1992 Mr. Maxwell wrote a reminiscence (in "Billy Dyer and Other Stories") of the "many marvels" of Lincoln:

"No house, inside or out, was like any other house, and neither were the people who lived in them. Incandescent carbon lamps, suspended high over the intersections, lighted the way home. The streets were paved with brick, and elm trees met over them to provide a canopy of shade. There were hanging baskets of ferns and geraniums, sometimes with American flags, suspended from porch ceilings. The big beautiful white horses in the firehouse had to be exercised, and so on my way to school now and then I got to see the fire engine when nobody's house was on fire."

After Mr. Maxwell's mother died, he went to live with an aunt and uncle in Bloomington, Ill., which, compared with Lincoln, was a metropolis and "where something was always going on, even if it was only the cat having kittens."

From his earliest years, he loved reading. As David Streitfeld put it in an article in *The Washington Post*, "Maxwell requires printed matter the way other people need oxygen." Mr. Maxwell said "Treasure Island" was the first work of literature he ever read. "At the last page, I turned back to the be-

ginning," he said. "I didn't stop until I had read it five times. I've been that way ever since."

Mr. Maxwell's father eventually remarried and moved to Chicago, taking his family with him. Mr. Maxwell earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Illinois and a master's at Harvard and taught in Illinois for two years. As a youth he wanted to be a poet, but realized early that he did not have that gift and so started writing stories. He had published one novel, "Bright Center of Heaven" (1934), and had a second in his typewriter when he moved to New York with the \$200 advance and applied for a job at *The New Yorker*.

There was a vacancy in the art department, and Mr. Maxwell was hired at \$35 a week to fill it. "I sat in on meetings and then told artists what changes were wanted," he said. He eventually moved to the fiction department, where he worked with Katharine White, with whom he formed a lifelong friendship, though one that was always circumscribed by their professional status. Long after both retired, they still wrote letters that began, "Dear Mrs. White," and "Dear Mr. Maxwell."

One day during World War II he interviewed a young woman who had applied for a job as poetry editor at *The New Yorker*. The magazine did not have a separate poetry editor in those days, and Mr. Maxwell had been doubling in that capacity. "She was very attractive," he would succinctly explain later, "and I pursued the matter."

The woman did not get the job, but on May 17, 1945, Emily Gilman Noyes and Mr. Maxwell were married. The couple had two daughters, Kate Maxwell and Brooke Maxwell, both of whom live in Manhattan. Mrs. Maxwell died on July 23, in Manhattan. Besides his daughters, Mr. Maxwell is survived by a grandson and a brother, Robert Blinn Maxwell, of Oxnard, Calif.

Mr. Maxwell's last book was "All the Days and Nights," a collection of stories of fables. In a radio interview he said he began the book "because my wife liked to have me tell her stories when we were in bed in the dark before falling asleep."

As an editor, Mr. Maxwell was known for his tact in dealing with authors with reputations for being headstrong. He didn't always succeed. Brendan Gill wrote in his memoir, "Here at *The New Yorker*," that Mr. Maxwell once took the train to Ossining, N.Y., to tell John Cheever that the magazine was rejecting one of his stories. Cheever became furious, not so much at the rejection, but that his courtly editor felt it necessary to come tell him in person.

On another occasion, Mr. Maxwell again boarded a train, this time to go read three new stories by John O'Hara in the presence of the author. It was a command performance and he was nervous. The first two stories he read were not acceptable to *The New Yorker*, and Mr. Maxwell started reading the third with trepidation. Fortunately, the third turned out to be "Imagine Kissing Pete," one of O'Hara's best.

Some of Cheever's later stories caused consternation at *The New Yorker* because of the erotic content. When William Shawn, then the editor, objected to a reference to lust, "I was beside myself," Mr. Maxwell said, "It seems very old-fashioned now, but then it was unacceptable, and there was nothing I could do about it."

When John Updike has his own editorial battles at *The New Yorker*, he said he always found an ally in Mr. Maxwell. "There was always a lot of fiddling, and a lot of the fiddles came from Shawn. And Bill would assist me in ignoring them."

Sometimes it was the editor who benefited from the advice of the writer. Mr. Maxwell

has been working for eight years on a novel that was eventually titled "The Chateau" (1961), which he has set in France rather than in the familiar territory of the American Midwest. But it was not coming together. He showed the manuscript to Frank O'Connor, who read it and advised him that there were, in fact, two novels there. "My relief was immense," Mr. Maxwell said, "because it is a lot easier to make two novels into one than it is to make one out of nothing whatever. So I went ahead and finished the book."

The letters of Frank O'Connor and Mr. Maxwell from 1945 to 1996, the year of O'Connor's death, were published in 1968 under the title "The Happiness of Getting It Down Right." O'Connor, a prolific contributor to *The New Yorker*, revised endlessly, and after his death left 17 versions of one story that the magazine had eventually rejected.

Mr. Maxwell's lack of celebrity never disturbed him. "Why should I let best-seller lists spoil a happy life?" he said.

Among his novels are "Time Will Darken It" (1948) and "So Long, See You Tomorrow" (1980). His story collections included "The Old Man at the Railroad Crossing and Other Tales" (1966), "Over by the River, and Other Stories" (1977) and "Billy Dyer and Other Stories" (1992). A collection of essays was published as "The Outermost Dream" in 1989.

The 1995 Alfred A. Knopf published a collection of his stories under the title "All the Days and Nights," and Mr. Maxwell gained some long overdue public recognition. Jonathan Yardley, writing in *The Washington Post*, said the volume showed that "Maxwell has maintained not merely a high level of consistency but has, if anything, become over the years a deeper and more complex writer."

His honors included the American Book Award, the Brandeis Creative Arts Medal and the William Dean Howells Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. (He was elected to the academy in 1963.)

In March 1997 Mr. Maxwell wrote an article for *The New York Times Magazine* in which he talked about his life as a writer and the experiences of age:

"Out of the corner of my eye I see my 90th birthday approaching. I don't yet need a cane, but I have a feeling that my table manners have deteriorated. My posture is what you'd expect of someone addicted to sitting in front of a typewriter."

"Because I actively enjoy sleeping, dreams, the unexplainable dialogues that take place in my head as I am drifting off, all that, I tell myself that lying down to an afternoon nap that goes on and on through eternity is not something to be concerned about," he continued. "What spoils this pleasant fancy is the recollection that when people are dead, they don't read books. This I find unbearable. No Tolstoy, no Chekhov, no Elizabeth Bowen, no Keats, no Rilke."

"Before I am ready to call it quits I would like to reread every book I have ever deeply enjoyed, beginning with Jane Austen and going through shelf after shelf of the bookcases, until I arrive at the 'Autobiographies' of William Butler Yeats."

EASTER SEALS OF  
SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN

• Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise to honor Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan. On Saturday, September 9, 2000, Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan will celebrate 80 years of service to the residents of Southeastern Michigan.

Since June 21, 1920, Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan has been assisting individuals with disabilities and

their families. During this time, Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan has remained committed to treating every person it serves with equality, dignity and independence.

Guided by these principles, Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan seeks to provide creative solutions that assist the thousands of families it provides with therapy and support services each year. Nationwide, Easter Seals serves 1 million people annually.

For eight decades, Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan has served children and adults with disabilities. While September 9, 2000, commemorates these efforts, it is also a day of high hopes and expectations. September 9, 2000, marks the official unveiling of the new Easter Seals facility in Southfield, Michigan. I am confident that this facility will enable Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan to complete their mission for another 80 years and beyond.

Mr. President, I know my colleagues join me in offering congratulations and best wishes for continuing success to the Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan, as they celebrate 80 years of service to disabled individuals and their families. •

#### TRIBUTE TO DOLORES HUERTA

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President. I come here to pay tribute to the remarkable career of one of our nation's most influential labor and civil rights leaders, Dolores Huerta, who has retired as Secretary-Treasurer of the United Farm Workers of America.

Dolores Huerta is a true national treasure. For half a century, the great victories for farm workers, the advances for these hardworking and proud families, would not have been possible without the able leadership and vision of Dolores Huerta. When farm workers marched, Dolores led the way. When farm workers struck for better wages and working conditions, Dolores was at the front of the line. In all of the great boycotts for better jobs for farm workers and their families, it was Dolores who pulled it all together.

Farm workers are her family. And all of us in public life soon learned that if something was wrong with her brother and sisters in the field, Dolores would be knocking on doors to set things right. Her activism was ignited when as a teacher, many of her students came to school suffering from hunger and without adequate clothing. Frustrated by the plight of these children, Dolores decided that she could best serve her community by working as a grass roots advocate and refocused her life to the economic empowerment of the parents of her students—the farm workers.

In 1955, she founded the Stockton, California chapter of the Community Service Organization. There, she began to develop her leadership skills through the organization's advocacy work to end segregation and police bru-

tality, promoting voter registration, and improving public services for the disenfranchised.

The plight of migrant farm workers always remained a central part of her public service. She soon met her kindred spirit in the cause for farm worker rights, Cesar Chavez. Dolores and Cesar embarked on a new path to bring the plight of farm workers in our national consciousness. In 1962, they founded the National Farm Workers Association, the predecessor to the United Farm Workers. Never before did farm workers have a voice in the political process. Under her leadership as Political Director, farm workers began to understand that they could achieve social justice by organizing strikes, boycotts, and voter registration drives. Through Dolores' leadership, once invisible farm workers were now given a human face and became an integral part of the struggle to gain civil rights and equal justice for people of all colors and economic backgrounds.

Dolores will always hold a special place in the hearts of the Kennedy family. Dolores and Cesar Chavez developed a special relationship with my brother Bobby for John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign. Together, they established the "Viva Kennedy" voter registration drive for Hispanic voters in California. That effort was revived in 1968 for Bobby's presidential campaign. I will always remember how her dedication and hard work were instrumental to my brother's California primary victory. Dolores made it possible for Bobby to reach out to Mexican-Americans and convey the message of a common vision for equal justice. She encouraged those who believed that they were disenfranchised to come to the polls for the first time to join in the fight for civil rights and human dignity. My family will always remember and respect Dolores for her strong and skillful efforts as well as her commitment to the great goals that we share.

1973 was yet another turning point for the farm worker movement. When grape growers decided to discontinue the collective bargaining agreements with the United Farm Workers, Dolores organized a national boycott and public education campaign to inform consumers of the poor working conditions and unfair wages that farm workers endured from the agricultural industry. The striking farm workers were subjected to severe harassment and violence. Many of them lost their lives in the struggle. But they would not give up until justice was won. In the end, the California legislature enacted the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. For the first time, farm workers were granted the right to collectively organize and bargain for better wages and working conditions.

Cesar Chavez passed on seven years ago, but the struggle of the farm workers continues. At a time in which most people settle into the slower pace of their golden years, Dolores keeps on

fighting the battles that have not yet been won. I am delighted to hear that she will still be on the ramparts and in the trenches for workers in need of her help. Dolores continues to do all she can to empower future generations of Americans to carry the torch that she let so brightly shine over these challenging years. She will also continue her efforts to increase Latino voter participation and develop strong leadership opportunities for Hispanic women around the country, and advocate for the rights of immigrants and working people, speak on behalf of working people across America.

Millions of Americans enjoy a higher quality of life because of her skillful efforts. No one has fought harder for civil rights of people of color, for worker's rights, for environmental rights, for women's and children's rights, for quality education and health care, and for economic empowerment for the poor. The Kennedy family is proud to consider Dolores a friend.

Dolores Huerta is a living legend and a true American hero. Her vision, compassion, and tireless commitment to all Americans is never ending. Nothing we can say or do can truly repay her for all she has done to make our country the strong and more just nation that it is today. From all of us who love and respect her, we say, "Job well done!" •

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

##### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting five treaties which were referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE RECEIVED DURING THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of January 6, 1999, the Secretary of the Senate, on July 28, 2000, during the adjournment of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the House has passed the following bill:

S. 2869. An act to protect religious liberty, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution:

S. Con. Res. 132. A concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate and conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3519) to provide for negotiations for the creation of a trust fund to be administered by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the