

'Last journalism professor' dies: Colleagues of Bert Cross discuss his contributions

By Kelli Hadley Daily News Staff Writer

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Bert Cross, known by many as the "last journalism professor" died Monday morning at the age of 92 from age-related causes.

The former professor taught at the University of Idaho for 24 years, where he was chairman of the journalism department before it became a part of the School of Communication in 1973. Despite the change, Cross wanted to remain a "professor of journalism" instead of one of "communication" like the rest of his colleagues.

"He was an institution," said Roy Atwood, one of Cross' former UI colleagues. "He represents the end of an era - of the old inky-print newspaper tradition."

Atwood worked with Cross in the UI School of Communication for a few years before Cross retired. In 1992 Atwood wrote a textbook, "Mass Communication Law in Idaho" and dedicated it to Cross for being the last journalism professor.

"For all the years he taught at UI, I think he had every journalism student for 20-30 years or more," Atwood said. "He had a pretty impressive influence on many of the journalists who are still working in the state of Idaho. ... he was a good guy, overall an interesting character."

Cross' legacy at UI will live on through monetary awards given to students in his name - the Bert Cross Scholarship goes to an outstanding junior in journalism and the Bert Cross Award is given at the JAMM senior awards reception for the most outstanding senior in print journalism.

Before beginning his longtime role as journalism professor at UI, Cross taught at Central Washington University, Kansas State University, Stanford and Michigan State. Kenton Bird, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Media, said after retirement, Cross involved himself in many local community groups and associations.

"He's sort of a textbook example of somebody who really created a second career as an active retiree," Bird said. "I know he was in the Moscow League of Women Voters, as one of the few male voters, the Latah County Democrats, Latah County Historical Society ... those are the top three that come to mind."

Bird said Cross continued to influence his students even after retirement.

"He's now been retired for 25 years but former students ... have continued to seek him out for friendship and advice, and I think that's really significant," Bird said. "He's had almost as much influence in retirement as he did when he was a faculty member."

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