

# Doug Smith, 81, colorful newsman, sportswriter and TV personality

- By [Dale Anderson](#), Published Thu, Apr 20, 2017



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Doug Smith, the colorful Buffalo newspaper editor, sportswriter, humorist and TV personality, died Thursday at his home in Cortland after a brief illness. He was 81.

Known best as “The Cheap Gourmet” and “The Fun Ranger” in his reviews and features on WIVB-TV, Channel 4, in the 1980s and 1990s, he became a journalist through his passion for baseball. His devotion to the sport earned him a place in the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame, which inducted him last September.

“They put him in for his love of the game,” his wife, Polly, said. “Anybody who was playing a baseball game, he would watch.”

Tributes and anecdotes from fans and former colleagues poured in Thursday night on Facebook and other websites.

Born in Glen Ridge, N.J., he moved to Jamestown with his family as a boy and, as a teenage baseball scorekeeper in Roseland Park, was offered a job writing stories for the Jamestown Sun. Soon the rival paper, the Post-Journal, hired him to write sports for 75 cents an hour.

Mr. Smith went on to work as a sportswriter and editor at a newspaper in Maryland and papers in Bloomsburg, Pa., Warren, Pa., and Erie, Pa. In the Bloomsburg newsroom, he met his wife, Polly Young, who was a typesetter. They were married in 1959.

While living in Erie, the Smiths often took in shows at Melody Fair in North Tonawanda and decided to move to Grand Island in 1967. Mr. Smith became a copy editor at The Buffalo Evening News, then was night city editor for three years, coordinating the coverage of the Attica Prison Uprising in 1971. The following year he took a job as Sunday arts editor at the Courier-Express.

He began a busy freelance career after the Courier closed in 1982. He and Polly teamed for Cheap Gourmet reviews of restaurants, which were compiled in two books. He appeared regularly on WIVB-TV newscasts. For the North Buffalo Rocket, he was The Rocket Man, contributing pun-filled columns and reviews.

For the Niagara Gazette, he wrote a weekly baseball column, “Base Paths.” He and Polly also authored a regular “Letters From the Island” column with news and anecdotes about Grand Island.

Mr. Smith had a lengthy career as a softball pitcher. He hit his first home run at the age of 43 in a winning game against a squad from radio station WEBR. He was the last pitcher to win a game in War Memorial Stadium, a media league contest in 1987 that followed the final Buffalo Bisons game in the Rockpile.

The following year, he won four games in a single day and pitched in Pilot Field against The King and His Court, a barnstorming team.

He was a public address announcer for baseball games at Sal Maglie Stadium in Niagara Falls. After moving to Cortland last year to be closer to his daughter, he was announcer for SUNY Cortland State basketball games and reported on games for the Cortland Crush of New York Collegiate Baseball League.

In addition to his wife, survivors include a daughter, Holly Smith Jaquith; a son, Joe; a brother, Robert; and four grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements in Cortland will be announced.