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Voice owner, publisher and editor dies while delivering papers

Friends say journalist was 'one-man band'

By Marjorie Hernandez (Contact)
Tuesday, December 25, 2007



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The work of a journalist is often met with criticism, sometimes praise, and can mean long hours in the field and in the office.

No one knew this better than Jeffrey San Marchi, said friends of the Ojai/ Ventura Voice owner, publisher and editor.

For about 20 years, San Marchi ran the biweekly paper — a "one-man band," he not only wrote and designed editorial and advertorial content, but also delivered it to stands throughout Ventura County.

On Sunday night San Marchi, 57, died doing what he was most passionate about—delivering news to the local

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community.

San Marchi had a heart attack about 6:20 p.m. Sunday as he was stocking a newsstand at Ventura Harbor, said Ray Alpern, longtime friend and Ojai/ Ventura Voice photo and music editor. He was rushed to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 7:11 p.m.

News of San Marchi's death shocked friends who have contributed to the paper, which has a circulation of about 10,000.

"He collapsed and people tried to help him, but he, being Jeff, got up on his own, but he collapsed again," said Cathy Elliott Jones, who knew San Marchi for 11 years. "I talked to him on Thursday and he did not sound well. He was supposed to spend Christmas Eve at my house."

San Marchi was always a "champion of the underdog" and enjoyed investigating local politics, said contributing writer and San Marchi's friend of 15 years, Rellis Smith.

"If he thought politicians did something wrong, he was going to point it out," Smith said.

San Marchi started the paper from his house in Ojai and eventually expanded his coverage to Ventura. He had recently operated the paper out of his home office in Oak View, Smith said.

Friends who worked with San Marchi now must deal with trying to fill some very big shoes.

"In order for a single person to keep a small business open for 20 years is amazing ... and to do it in the business he was in, a small newspaper, is outstanding," Smith said. "No one else I know could do the job he was doing or would even want to do it."



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On Monday, San Marchi's daughters, Ana and Rosa, were on their way from Arizona to Ojai, where they will meet with Jones and Alpern. Rosa San Marchi lives in Glendale and Ana San Marchi lives in Phoenix, Jones said.

For now, the fate of the paper is unknown.

Alpern said he hopes people in the community will rally to keep the newspaper going.

"Jeff was a quirky character," Alpern said. "The newspaper was his life. Putting out a 32-plus-page paper every two weeks took over his life, and on top of that, he was an investigative reporter himself. I don't think one man could do it like he did."

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