

McKevlin, Anthony John ^[1]

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Anthony John McKevlin, newspaper writer and editor, was born in Charleston, S.C., the son of Thomas Joseph and Mary Cecilia Scharlock McKevlin. He was educated in Charleston, where he was graduated from the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist Parochial School in 1914 and the Bishop England High School in 1918 before attending the College of Charleston in the period 1918–20.

Having trained himself to be an exceptionally rapid typist, he became the private secretary to Mayor John Patrick Grace of Charleston. A frequent public speaker, Grace called upon his young secretary to accompany him and record his extemporaneous speeches. Often McKevlin did that directly on the typewriter without the intermediate step of shorthand. The mayor sometimes asked him to record other speeches as they were delivered. Once he was assigned to record the speech of a notable visiting from Ireland who surprised McKevlin by delivering his opening remarks in Gaelic. The speaker was Eamon De Valera, who later served Ireland as president and as prime minister.

In 1922 Mayor Grace, who was editor and publisher of the *Charleston American*, prevailed upon his secretary to join his news staff as a reporter—thus beginning a lifelong and distinguished career in journalism. McKevlin was a reporter for the Florence (S.C.) *News Review* in 1923–24 and a reporter and sports editor of the Rocky Mount (N.C.) *Evening Telegram* in 1924–26. He moved to Raleigh in 1926 to report city news and sports for the *News and Observer* ^[2]. A year later he became the newspaper's first full-time sports editor. During the fourteen years he served in that position, McKevlin introduced innovations in sports reporting and standards of accuracy and excellence that established a model for sports sections of newspapers throughout the South and stimulated circulation and newspaper revenue. His efforts also added to the stature and strength of collegiate and high school athletic programs.

His exceptional speed as a typist enabled him to record football games play-by-play on his portable typewriter, and slower reporters who missed plays often peered over his shoulder to read what his blazing typewriter had recorded before their own eyes could catch it. Regarded as an authority on sports, particularly football and baseball, he served as official scorer for Raleigh's professional baseball team in the old Piedmont League and worked closely with Judge W. H. Bramham, of Durham, then head of the minor league. To honor McKevlin's memory, the Southern Conference Sports Writers Association established the annual Anthony J. McKevlin Award for the conference's outstanding athlete. In March 1950 the first award was presented by his young daughter, Johanna, to Whitt Cobb of [Davidson College](#) ^[3]. Since a conference reorganization, the McKevlin Award has been given by the [Atlantic Coast Conference](#) ^[4] Sports Writers Association.

On 12 Oct. 1941 McKevlin was appointed managing editor of the Raleigh *News and Observer*, succeeding the late Frank Smethurst, who had held the post for seventeen years. Tony, as his friends called him, assumed the job just as World War II began draining his staff of manpower, and he worked overtime to recruit and train female replacements (a rarity then). During those lean years, he served in the dual capacity of both managing editor and city editor. His discipline demanded accuracy, objectivity, and clarity of style and transformed many a cub reporter into a true journalist. Women reporters who carried his training to higher positions included Marjorie Hunter, who later was a highly respected Washington correspondent for the *New York Times*.

One unmistakable casualty of the war was Tony McKevlin himself. Personal adversity, which dogged most of his life, cost him an eye, and robbed him of close kin, finally brought a terminal illness during the demanding months near the war's end. Neglecting much needed medical attention, he continued the complex task of publishing a daily newspaper even by telephone from his bed at Rex Hospital, where he died.

On 11 June 1933 McKevlin married Elizabeth Webster Forrest, of Raleigh, the daughter of Mortimer Elliott and Stella Gleaves Brightwell Forrest; they had one child, Johanna Forrest McKevlin Grimes, born on 22 July 1939. Mrs. McKevlin predeceased him on 23 June 1941.

McKevlin, a member of the Sacred Heart Cathedral of Raleigh, was buried in [Oakwood Cemetery](#) ^[5].

References:

Raleigh *News and Observer*, 12 June 1933, 23 July 1939, 24 June, 13 Oct. 1941, 24–25 Dec. 1949.

Subjects:

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