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P.J. O'Rourke, political satirist and journalist, dies at 74

From his days at National Lampoon to books like 'How the Hell Did This Happen' in 2016, he was a fierce and funny observer of American politics.

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P.J. O'Rourke, a journalist and political satirist with a libertarian-conservative bent, died Tuesday morning of complications from lung cancer, his publisher confirmed. He was 74.

"P. J. was one of the major voices of his generation. He was also a close friend and partner for more than 40 years," said Morgan Entrekin, chief executive and publisher at Grove Atlantic.

"His insightful reporting, verbal acuity and gift at writing laugh-out-loud prose were unparalleled. From his classics *Modern Manners* and *Parliament of Whores* to *How the Hell Did This Happen*, a result of his dismay at the 2016 election — P. J. kept providing fierce, smart, always amusing reports on the American condition. His passing leaves a huge hole in my life both personal and professional," Entrekin said.

Patrick Jake O'Rourke was born in Toledo, Ohio, on Nov. 14, 1947. With a bachelor's degree from Miami University in Ohio and a masters from Johns Hopkins, he started out in journalism at small newspapers and became editor of the *National Lampoon* in the 1970s.

He was foreign affairs desk chief for *Rolling Stone* and a regular correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*. His work also appeared in *Esquire*, *Vanity Fair*, the *Daily Beast* and the *Weekly Standard*, to name a few.

He also helped sustain the small publishing house Entrekin spun off from the Atlantic in the 1980s. "P.J.'s loyalty and commitment to first Atlantic Monthly Press and then Grove Atlantic enabled me to keep the company independent," Entrekin said. "For that I will forever be in his debt."

In the 1990s, O'Rourke moved to New Hampshire and continued to write. He was also the Cato Institute's H.L. Mencken research fellow and appeared regularly on NPR's quiz show *Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me*.

O'Rourke's other books include *Republican Party Reptile* and *Give War a Chance*. Though his rightward ideological shift was well underway by the time he was at the *Lampoon* — followed late in life by his public endorsement of Hillary Clinton over Donald J. Trump — his humor and skepticism were the major constants in his life and work.

Having grown up in the 1960s, O'Rourke wrote for *The Times* in 2008 that he was a member of the “moron generation.”

“My generation spoiled everything for you,” he wrote. “It has always been the special prerogative of young people to look and act weird and shock grown-ups.

“But my generation exhausted the Earth's resources of the weird. Weird clothes — we wore them. Weird beards — we grew them. Weird words and phrases — we said them. So, when it came your turn to be original and look and act weird, all you had left was to tattoo your faces and pierce your tongues. Ouch. That must have hurt. I apologize.”

O'Rourke is survived by his wife, Tina, and children Olivia, Clifford and Elizabeth.