

Gene Wesley Swinstead 1944-2022

Born in Adelaide on December 12, 1944, the middle brother of five boys, Gene Swinstead was a student at Pulteney Grammar from Grade 5 until the completion of his education in 1961, leaving his mark academically and on the sports field.

Gene was awarded the Headmaster's Bursary Scholarship in Form 1 and left with Leaving Honours, as well as being a college prefect and house captain. In sport, he earned School Blues in Australian Rules Football and athletics, holding every Pulteney Grammar athletics record with the exception of the high jump. Gene's school record for the 100 metres in even time remained unbroken for 24 years.

After leaving school, he accepted a cadetship at the Adelaide Advertiser group, which was the commencement of an illustrious career as a journalist and media executive that took him across the globe. Beginning on the *Chronicle Agricultural*, Gene travelled extensively throughout South Australia talking to farmers and gaining an in-depth knowledge of the land, fuelling a lifelong interest in the pioneering history of South Australia. From 1967 to 1969, he was with the *Adelaide News* as a Trades Hall reporter before joining the Melbourne *Herald* as a police rounds-man, covering stories such as the Black Hand Mafia murders and the collapse of the West Gate bridge.

In 1971, Gene went to Singapore to launch and run the *New Nations* daily newspaper until returning to the Melbourne *Herald* in 1974, holding editorial positions across the paper before becoming editor of *The Sporting Globe* in 1975.

Entering management, Gene introduced a computerised newspaper production system at the Herald & Weekly Times (HWT) in 1979 and worked in management roles across the group before being appointed editor-in-chief and general manager of the Messenger Suburban Newspaper group in Adelaide in 1983.

Returning to Melbourne in 1987 as general manager of Leader Suburban Newspaper group, he was moved to HWT in 1989 as general manager to launch two Sunday newspapers and to resolve ongoing union disputes.

In January 1991, Gene was appointed managing director of the *Fiji Times* and by October 1991 he was sent to Hong Kong as managing director of the *South China Morning Post*. In 1995, Gene was relocated to India to develop, plan and launch Star TV and where he secured the television rights for the World Master's Cricket Cup in 1995.

Gene returned to Melbourne in 1997 as managing director of News Limited Community Newspapers – a position he held until ill-health and the amputation of his right leg forced his retirement in 2008.

Fourteen years earlier, Gene had been diagnosed with scleroderma, an autoimmune disease that causes chronic hardening and tightening of the skin and connective tissue. Treatment can help, but this condition cannot be cured.

After months of hospitalisation and rehabilitation, Gene learned how to drive using his left leg, and went back to playing golf. He travelled out into the South Australian bush doing route surveys, interviewing station owners and locals for the SA Variety Club, sleeping in swags, and driving hundreds of miles through the outback. He and his wife Anne visited family and friends interstate and overseas, and travelled together to many parts of the world. Gene attended Pulteney reunions all over the world.

Gene joined the Scleroderma Victorian committee in 2011 offering his assistance to produce their newsletter. He also served as president on both the Victorian and Australian Scleroderma Committees, raising tens of thousands of dollars through his iconic lunches and dinners, and generous contributions as he fought his own health battles with determination and dignity.

Gene died of complications from scleroderma in Melbourne on June 30, 2022, at the age of 77. He is survived by his wife, Anne; children, Jane, Lorna, Angela, and Megan; eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.