



Mr. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr. President
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036-3959

Dear Mr. Sulzberger:

Throughout the year, the Times has been celebrating its patriarch, Adolph S. Ochs. I would like to suggest, in a serious manner, that you take the opportunity of your centennial to honor, in a significant way to your community family, the matriarch, and I quote from her obituary which appeared February 27, 1990, who "nurtured and bridged the generations of the family that has controlled the Times since 1896," Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger.

That Mrs. Sulzberger cared most about two things, her family and her paper, was obvious from the Times article. She cared also about Barnard, and it was while an undergraduate at the college that my daughter had the opportunity to meet her, and to take delight in such an extraordinary woman, a "life-force" my daughter said. My only comparison, I replied, was a similar reaction to having met Mrs. Roosevelt in the early sixties. In addition to Barnard, my daughter shared with Mrs. Sulzberger her status as an only child, which, as you might expect, promotes a strong bonding with adults who are close from early childhood. So you might imagine, then, how very painful was the incident that follows, and, in my opinion, what a departure from the guidance of a woman who strove, and I quote again from her obituary, "to preserve family ties," and who was dedicated "to progressive values."

When my life-partner of twenty-five years, a man who had helped raise my daughter in every way, died in 1994, your editorial policy did not allow for her to be listed as a surviving family member. Granted, my inclusion itself, though I find the designation, companion, unacceptable, is a major achievement. But, surely we can now move on to a more family-based policy, one which serves to re-inforce many families as they are, rather than as we imagine them, at the close of the century.

In the gay and lesbian community, we have had enough pain and exclusion from the plague that has stripped us to the bone. What has arisen in comfort for our losses has been, quite simply, love and family. We have seen caring heroes emerge from shy, quiet shadows; we have seen fortified families form among casual friends. Our artists have shown the world these transformations. And, yet, the "paper of record" encases us on microfilm as if our deaths occur only in isolated, unconnected lives, with "approved" survivors only listed, while those who share our daily lives - our joys - our holidays - our deaths, are excluded.

Please honor further the memory of Mrs. Sulzberger, and her maternal spirit at the Times, by changing your policy to allow non-traditional families, primarily gay and lesbian, to include their designated-family in obituaries.

Let us lose no more daughters. Iphigene, I think, would approve.

October 3, 1996

The New York Times

229 WEST 43 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036

ARTHUR O. SULZBERGER, JR.
Publisher

October 7, 1996

Dear Mr. Donoughe,

Thank you very much for your thoughtful letter.

The Times moves slowly, but it does move. It was but a few years ago that even "companion" would have been unthinkable. I believe, in time, we may move further.

Sincerely,



P.S. Your letter had only one substantive error. My grandmother, Iphigene, would be absolutely appalled.



October 10, 1996

Mr. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr. President
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036-3959

Dear Mr. Sulzberger:

I do apologize for being mistaken about your grandmother.

Sincerely,

Faber Donoughe

P.S. Apparently a lot of people were.



August 18, 2001

Mr. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.
Publisher
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036-3959

Dear Mr. Sulzberger:

Perhaps you may recall that I wrote to you in 1996 requesting that in your capacity as Publisher of *The New York Times* you could help people like me, a gay man whose family included his adult daughter and his lifepartner of twenty-five years, at the most painful and stressful times we encounter in life, when one of our family members dies. I sought a change in the paper's obituary policy of excluding from the survivor list those who are not related to the deceased through blood or law; a policy that I believe increases the pain of the loss to a non-traditional family. When my lifepartner died in 1994, the journalist from *The Times*, rejecting my pleas, insisted on excluding from the surviving family list my daughter, who for twenty-five years had been in essence a daughter with two fathers, my lifepartner and me. This exclusion, in addition to the obvious direct hurt, expands into larger pain because of the impact it can have on the mourning process: if one is not a "survivor" then one has had no loss, and one needs no comforting or consoling. That, in fact, was the experience that was troubling to my daughter.

You can imagine, then, with my past experience with this policy, my disbelief when I read the obituary of Mr. Robert S. Jones (*NYT August 14, 2001*) and came to the final paragraph:

Mr. Jones was also survived by his dog, Scout.

May we now assume, Mr. Sulzberger, that you indeed have changed the rigid policy of the paper regarding this issue of survivors and that the Lesbian and Gay Community and others can define their own families? Identify those they know as the survivors of the deceased? Surely, if there is room for Scout there is room for the rest of us.

Sincerely,

Faber Donoughe

Robert S. Jones, HarperCollins Editor, Is Dead at 47

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

Robert S. Jones, respected editor of books by several authors, including Russell Banks and Oscar Hijuelos, as well as the author of two novels of his own, died yesterday at New York University Medical Center. He was 47 and lived in New York.

The cause was cancer, his family said.

Mr. Jones was named editor in chief of HarperCollins Publishers four months ago. He worked at HarperCollins for 16 years, through a time of tumult in the book business marked by consolidation, the increasing movement of authors and editors among houses and an attendant increase in competition among editors jockeying to promote their books within each house.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Jones distinguished himself by his selfless dedication both to his fellow editors at the house and to a list of authors that also including Clive Barker, John Colapinto, Denis Johnson and Armistead Maupin. He became a pillar at HarperCollins through many changes of management, including its acquisition by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Last Tuesday Mr. Jones asked to be included in a HarperCollins edito-



Andrea Renault

Robert S. Jones

rial meeting by speaker phone from his hospital room, actively debating the merits of several proposals. Several months ago, after one of his first sessions of chemotherapy, he stepped out of the hospital to take part by mobile phone in the auction of "Bel Canto" by Ann Patchett.

Mr. Jones was born in Santa Monica, Calif., graduated from Hobart and William Smith College and attended graduate school in literature and religion at the University of Chicago. He began working at HarperCollins in 1985, in the marketing department, and became an editor after about five years. While working as an editor, he also wrote the well-received novels "Force of Gravity" (Viking, 1991) and "Walking on Air" (Houghton Mifflin, 1995).

Mr. Maupin, whose most recent novel "The Night Listener" Mr. Jones edited, said he often picked up one of Mr. Jones's novels for inspiration. "He didn't believe me when I told him," Mr. Maupin said.

"He would make marginal notations in my manuscripts that made my heart soar for days," Mr. Maupin recalled, "'I Wish I had written that,' 'You are absolutely brilliant,' 'There is nobody like you.'"

Mr. Jones was known to leave messages for agents at 4 a.m., telling them he was obsessed with an author's new manuscript.

Susan Weinberg, senior vice president and editorial director at HarperCollins, said Mr. Jones built a reputation at the company for training younger editors, explaining how

to handle agents, request blurbs from authors and plan paperback reprintings of previously published books, for example. In a competitive business, his rare willingness to share his expertise with potential rivals was rare and made him a natural choice to become editor in chief, she said.

For a time, Mr. Jones was also the media coordinator for the AIDS advocacy group Act-UP. His brother, Stephen, said Mr. Jones found similarities between his work at Act-UP and editing, like persuading journalists to think twice before applying the term "victim" to someone who was living with AIDS.

Mr. Jones is survived by his partner, Lewis C. Brindle, his brother Stephen Jones, and his father, Roger, all in New York. His brother Michael, and his mother, Patricia, live in Carmel Valley, Calif.

Mr. Jones was also survived by his dog, Scout. Scout suffered from emotional problems and was prone to biting, Mr. Jones's family said. But Mr. Jones stuck with him nonetheless, even paying for behavioral therapy for the dog. "He once told me he was writing magazine articles so that he could afford to send his dog to the shrink," Stephen Jones said.

The New York Times

229 WEST 43 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036

WILLIAM BORDERS
News Editor

September 11, 2001

Dear Mr. Donoughe:

Arthur Sulzberger has asked me to reply to your letter about our offensive obituary reference to the man who was "survived by his dog, Scout." The general view around here is that including the dog in that obituary was a foolish feature-writing excess, and we wish we had not done it. It tended to demean real survivors in other obituaries.

But the larger point, of course, relates to the kind of situation you describe that occurred with the death of your companion in 1994. I apologize, all these years later, for the pain we caused then to you and your daughter.

Newspaper policies change along with the changes in the society they cover, and we have certainly changed in this one. I don't know if it is any consolation to you, but I am certain that if we were faced today with the situation we were faced with seven years ago when Mr. Velis died we would handle it differently, and I hope we would include your daughter in the obituary.

The New York Times stylebook, which we adopted in 1999, includes this directive, in its passage on how we should handle obituaries:

"The Times should not be the arbiter of what makes up a family: if the survivors regard a more distant relative or even a friend as a member of the subject's immediate household, mention the relationship."

F. Donough^e
September 11, 2001
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If that had been our practice in 1994, I am sure we would have handled the question of Mr. Velis's survivors more sensitively than we did. I am also sure that the thoughtful arguments you made at the time, and subsequently, helped us to change our policy in the right direction, and I thank you for that, even though it did not help in your daughter's case.

I stress that none of this supports or defends our including Mr. Jones's dog, which we should not have done. And I thank you for helping us once again with your thoughtful and sensitive letter.

Best regards,

William Borders

The New York Times

229 WEST 43RD STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036

WILLIAM BORDERS
News Editor

September 5, 2002

Dear Mr. Donoughe:

It was good of you to write, and I deeply appreciate your sentiments. I am very gratified to learn that that letter a year ago was a comfort. Thanks very much for telling me so, and for the rest of your kind words.

Best regards,

William Borders