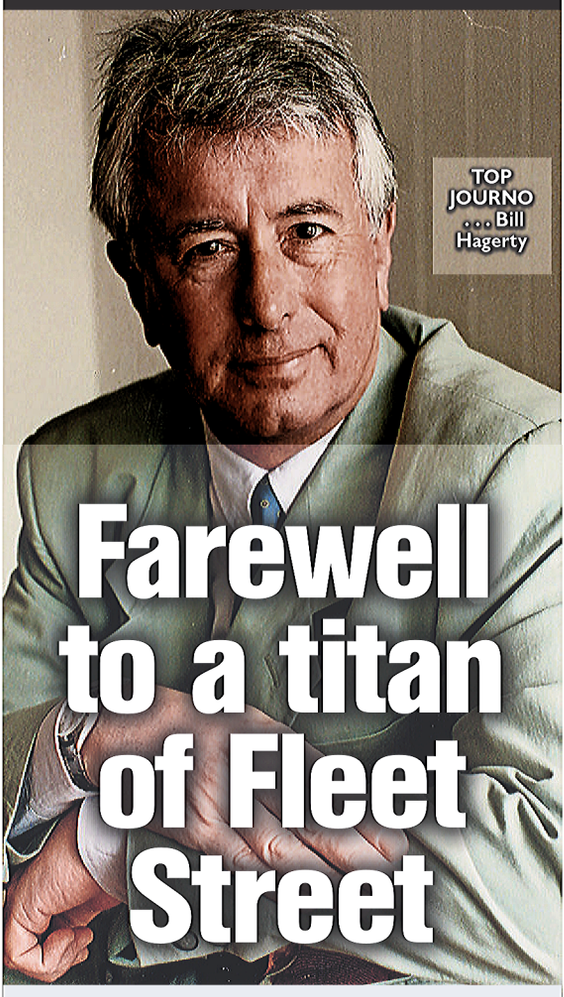
BILL HAGERTY, 1939-2025



TOP JOURNO ... Bill Hagerty

Farewell to a titan of Fleet Street

By MIKE RIDLEY

FLEET Street titan and Press freedom campaigner Bill Hagerty has died aged 86.

In his 70-year career as a journalist, father-of-four Bill was editor of two national Sunday papers before later becoming The Sun's theatre reviewer.

His family, including son Will, 55, a senior executive on The Sun, confirmed Bill's death on Boxing Day at a hospice in Ealing, West London.

Born in Ilford, Essex, on St George's Day 1939, Bill left school at 16, ignoring his headmaster, who thought becoming a journalist was not a good idea, and joined the Walthamstow Post.

Soon Bill was on Fleet Street, which he nicknamed The Street of Adventure.

As a sports reporter he covered the 1966 World Cup and later, on the Daily Mirror, flew with a planeload of readers to Brazil to meet Pele along with Bobby Moore, who became a friend. He was also ringside for three of Muhammad Ali's fights.

Bill flew all over the world as the Mirror's showbiz editor. He interviewed his hero John Wayne, and stars such as Richard Burton, Michael Caine, Roger Moore and Joan Collins.

He was once wrongly arrested for drink-driving in Hollywood after volunteering to leave a party to buy cigarette papers for actor Robert Mitchum.

In 1977, Bill was bundled into a limo with Led Zeppelin in Tampa, Florida, when their show was cancelled after 15 minutes because of an electrical storm, much to the ire of the 70,000 fans. The band sped off with Bill to avoid the riot that broke out.



STAR REPORTER ... Bill interviews Michael Caine

Back in London, Bill edited the Sunday Today newspaper before returning to the Mirror, where he was acting editor, before taking over as editor of the People.

The death of crooked proprietor Robert Maxwell in 1991 led to Bill being made redundant, and for 17 years he became a critic. In his first theatre review for The Sun, in 2004, he panned Ricky Gervais' live stand-up show, Politics, and in one of his last columns in 2017, he was left unmoved by a stage version of The Exorcist starring Ian McKellen and Jenny Seagrove.

Bill, married to second wife Liz, could have retired but dedicated himself to Press freedom, editing the British Journalism Review. He also worked tirelessly for the Journalists' Charity.

A fan of Brentford FC, he wrote match reports for a local news website and the supporters' trust until he became ill.

The Sun's Editor-in-Chief Victoria Newton described Bill as "a titan of our industry". He also edited the diaries of ex-PM Tony Blair's Press secretary Alastair Campbell, who said: "Bill had a zest for life, a real interest in people, and a love of storytelling. These are the qualities that made him a terrific journalist, a newspaper executive it was always a joy to work for, and in my own case a diligent, detail-obsessed editor of my diaries, for which I will always be grateful."

Royal author Robert Jobson said: "Bill Hagerty was a man of The People in every sense. His passion for journalism, Press freedom and charity work was unmatched. A huge loss. RIP Bill."