

Eugene Patterson  
FNP 17

Eugene Patterson was the Pulitzer Prize-winning chairman and chief executive officer of the *St. Petersburg Times* and president of its Washington publication, *Congressional Quarterly*. In 1971 Mr Patterson moved from his position as Managing Editor of the *Washington Post* to serve an academic year at Duke University, then assumed the editorship of the *St. Petersburg Times* and *Congressional Quarterly*, succeeding the late Nelson Poynter as chief executive officer in 1978.

Mr. Patterson received his A.B. degree in journalism from the University of Georgia in 1943. During World War II he served as platoon leader with the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division of Patton's Third Army and was decorated three times—Silver Star, Bronze Star and Oak Leaf Cluster. Thereafter he won his wings as an army aircraft pilot. He resigned the Regular Army as a captain in 1947 to enter newspapering as a cub reporter with the *Temple (Texas) Daily Telegram*, then the *Macon (Georgia) Telegraph*. Mr. Patterson joined the old *United Press* in Atlanta in 1948, became New York night bureau manager for *UP* in 1949, and moved to England in 1953 to serve three years as *UP*'s London bureau chief. He returned to his native Georgia in 1956 as executive editor of the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* and became editor of *The Constitution* in 1960 succeeding the late Ralph McGill. He joined the *Washington Post* in 1968 and served three years as its managing editor.

Mr. Patterson won the 1966 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing. He has received honorary degrees from twelve institutions, including Harvard, Duke, and Emory Universities. In 1980 he was awarded the William Allen White National Award for journalistic merit. He was a member of the Pulitzer Prize Board at Columbia University from 1973-1984 and of the American Press Institute Board at Reston, Virginia from 1983-1988. In 1980 he became chairman of the board of *Florida Trend* magazine and served for eight years. He was also chairman of the board of The Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg from 1978-1988. From 1977-1978 he served as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Mr. Patterson retired in 1988 and was inducted into the Florida Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1997.

### Summary

Eugene Patterson begins by discussing his beginnings in journalism and his relationships with Ralph McGill and Nelson Poynter. He talks of their views on segregation and civil rights and their personalities. He describes a trip to Vietnam and his own views on the Vietnam War as well as those of President Lyndon Johnson. He talks about the publication of the Pentagon Papers and Nelson Poynter's close relationship with the *Washington Post*. He describes Poynter's views of other newspapers and newspaper chains. He tells of the purpose and formation of the Poynter Institute. Patterson tells of receiving a job offer to work for the *St. Petersburg*

*Times* from Nelson Poynter and lists some of Poynter's Standards of Ownership. The standards list ideal aims in running a newspaper, including service to the community, profit sharing, treatment of staff and control of publication. Patterson discusses ethics in the newspaper business. He talks of taking over the operation of the *St. Petersburg Times* and the standards of the paper. He discusses Richard Nixon's presidency along with that of Carter and Reagan. Patterson describes Poynter's opinions on education. He tells of Nelson Poynter's death and what he believes his legacy will be.