

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Ed Reinke didn't think of his job so much as taking photos, but rather as creating them. When the award-winning Associated Press photographer grabbed his camera and headed out to an assignment, he would tell his colleagues, "I am going to make a picture."

Whether it was Kentucky Derby horses training on a chilly spring morning, a bumblebee hovering near a flower on his beloved farm or a quarterback celebrating a Super Bowl touchdown, the AP photojournalist viewed the world as a series of pictures. His profession was journalism; his gift was telling a story in one frame.

"I saw a picture and went and got my camera," Reinke would often say.

The Associated Press photographer for Kentucky, who traveled the world shooting news and sports images, died late Tuesday, his family said. He had been hospitalized since Oct. 2, when he fell and suffered a head injury while covering the IndyCar race at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta.

In the weeks that followed, dozens of Reinke's colleagues around the United States rallied around him via a Facebook page where they shared photos and stories of the man remembered universally for his warm smile and twinkling eyes. The page, "To Ed Reinke," had been started several years ago, an online place where far-flung photographers shared photos of themselves toasting a man who had been a colleague, friend and mentor to many since he started his photojournalism career in 1972.

"Those he could trust to shoot decent pictures for freelance assignments became known as 'Reinke's kids,' a close-knit group of local newspaper photographers bent on validating his trust," said John Flavell, former photo editor at The Daily Independent in Ashland, Ky. "Actually, he built a network of trust among newspaper photographers and we help each other out within that network to this day. He was the hub of a very close-knit community."

At Kentucky Speedway on Oct. 2, Reinke was with freelance photographer James Crisp, who as a college student began working for Reinke in 1994. Crisp said as the two were headed out to shoot the race, Reinke glanced at his watch and said "I have time to smoke."

"I said, 'I thought you quit smoking.' And he kind of smiled and said, 'I did.'"

Crisp went to one end of the track, and Reinke headed to the other. That was the last time Crisp saw him, he said.

During more than 25 years with Kentucky AP, Reinke often was selected for assignments across the world: Super Bowls, World Series championships, Final Fours, Summer and Winter Olympics, Masters and PGA championships, the Indy 500, President Bill Clinton's first inauguration and Hurricane Andrew. He had not missed a Kentucky Derby since 1988.

Reinke was AP's lead photographer for virtually every major news event in Kentucky's modern history, including the Aug. 27, 2006, crash of Comair Flight 5191 that killed 49 at

Lexington's Blue Grass Airport and the 1988 Carrollton bus crash, which killed 24 children and three adults in the nation's deadliest drunken-driving collision.

His career spanned revolutionary changes in the way photos were produced and transmitted to AP members worldwide, from the days of black-and-white pictures produced in a darkroom to today's digital color images sent by the Internet minutes after being taken.

Edward J. Reinke was born in Indiana, graduated from Northwestern High School in Howard County, Ind., and attended Indiana University.

He began his photojournalism career at the Cincinnati Enquirer, starting as an intern in 1972 and becoming a full-time staffer in 1973. In 1979, he went to work for AP in Cincinnati and three years later transferred to the Washington, D.C., bureau.

He rejoined the Enquirer in 1983 and was named director of photography in 1984.

He returned to The Associated Press in Louisville on Aug. 31, 1987, becoming AP's first staff photographer in Kentucky in 25 years.

"More than any other person, Ed gets the credit for establishing a top-tier photo report for Kentucky," said Teresa Wasson, AP news editor for Tennessee and Kentucky. "When AP needed a picture in the state, Ed either shot it or he was on the phone, working his network of newspaper photographers and freelancers to get the photo."

In one week in September 1989, Reinke traveled to tiny Wheatcroft in western Kentucky to cover the nation's deadliest coal mine disaster in five years, back to Louisville to cover what was then the worst workplace shooting in U.S. history at the Standard Gravure printing plant and then to McKee in eastern Kentucky, where a high school student held 11 hostages during a standoff with police. "No one worked harder — nor drove farther — than you did," Ed Staats, then chief of bureau in Louisville, said in a letter of commendation to Reinke.

Reinke won numerous awards from the Associated Press Sports Editors, including the 1992 Thomas V. DiLustro award for excellence in sports photography. He received Best of Show in 2000 in the Baseball Hall of Fame photo contest for his picture of Hank Aaron and Willie Mays saluting Ted Williams at the All Century Team celebration during the World Series. AP named him Kentucky staffer of the year in 1996. In 1997, AP published a photo package and story by Reinke documenting the cycle of tobacco farming and its impact in Kentucky.

He was predeceased by his father, Ervin F. Reinke, and brother, Jerry L. Reinke. He is survived by his mother, Margaret L. Harmon Reinke; wife, Tori, and two sons, Wilson and Graham.