

# Dear Heather...

Former Eastern Graphic staff share their stories of working with Heather Moore

## Tick-tock, Mr Charlton

It's 8:02 pm on September 1 as I finally sit down to write this.

When Paul MacNeill contacted a few of us former Graphic writers just over two weeks ago, it seemed like I had eons to complete the assignment; but my new job as an assignment editor and nine-and-a-half month old son have conspired to suck up my spare time like a black hole.

So, taking into account the time difference between Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island, I have just a few minutes to explain the profound influence Heather Moore has had on my career.

It's a fitting conundrum, to use one of Heather's favourite words. I still remember a Tuesday afternoon — the day of the week we went to press — and it was getting late. I think around 4 pm.

I was hammering out a story at my desk. I forget what it was about, but I had all the information I needed and it was just a matter of getting the words on the page.

Heather walked by my desk, looked at me and tapped the back of her wrist with her finger.

"Tick-tock, Mr Charlton," she said, with a hint of a smile at the corner of her mouth.

It was a small moment, but it shows her leadership style.

I learned a lot from Heather: "go for the jugular" when crafting



Staff from East and West Graphics, circa 2012. From left, Heather Moore, Cindy Hierlihy, Jonathan Charlton, Zack Metcalfe, Nicole Feriancek and Heather Jordan Ross.

a lede; "don't make me think" when explaining the finer details of a topic; treat a high school graduation ceremony with the same importance as a thousand-word feature.

More than that, I learned to keep an even keel. The newsroom can be a stressful place

and other editors might have raised their voice or been critical about me not having that story written already. Not Heather. Just a simple "tick-tock."

She also taught me that any story can be written in 300 words, so I'm already running long. But I hope she'll indulge

me a few extra lines just to say: thank you.

Thanks for taking a chance on me as a wide-eyed cub reporter fresh out of journalism school. Thanks for handing me such a wide range of stories to broaden my horizons. Thanks for being patient. And thanks for all the

lessons that I'm now passing on to other young reporters I work with.

You're a legend. Congratulations on 50 years at The Eastern Graphic.

**Jonathan Charlton**

## Moore News just waiting to be written

I once told Heather Moore that I often wrote the lede to my story on the way home from an interview.

She considered that for a moment, then said: "That's fine, Mary. Just don't write it on the way to an interview."

That one sentence captured so much of the essence of good journalism, I've never forgotten it. But then, there's not much I've forgotten about Heather Moore.

As anyone who had the good fortune to learn from her will tell you, she is a natural teacher. She knows exactly how much to tell you and how much to let you figure out by yourself. I arrived at the Graphic in 1988, a greenhorn reporter from Cape Breton who'd never before set foot in PEI. In Heather's place, I could not have fought the urge to explain everything to me about, well, everything, but she didn't even seem to feel that urge. She would answer my questions about places and people, but encouraged me to do my own research and draw my own conclusions; in other words, she encouraged me to be a reporter. And she did this for so



Mary Campbell landed at the Eastern Graphic in 1988.

many reporters over the years that were we all to join forces we could probably rival the CBC as a news organization. (We really should consider it— "Moore News" is a great idea just waiting to happen.)

If I had to guess the secret to her longevity at the Graphic I would say it comes down to two, apparently contradictory, things. First, although she is a very good editor, one who corrects your facts without altering your style, she is at heart a reporter who will never stop being curious about the world around her.

And second, she's got a life outside the newsroom. If you only saw her at work, you might be forgiven for assuming she devoted her entire life to the Graphic, but I was lucky enough to get glimpses of Heather outside the office—driving to Charlottetown for Tim Hortons coffee (children, you probably won't believe this, but there was no Tim's in Montague in my day), cross-country skiing at Brudenell, bowling on the Eastern Graphic team (her assessment of my abilities, "You may not hit any pins but there's a good chance you're going to put that ball through the back of the building"). She has a life filled with friends and family and hockey and fishing that offers an escape from her work but is also essential to her work—Heather knows how to be part of the community she reports on. As someone now running an online weekly in her hometown I can tell you, that's no easy feat.

I could try to enumerate all the things she taught me and all the fun we had but we'd be here until Crow Piss. (See what I did there, Heather?) So instead, I'll just say, congratulations on 50 years at the Graphic, Heather Moore, and thank you—for everything.

**Mary Campbell**

## Tips and tricks of the trade

I landed at the Eastern Graphic fresh out of the Holland College journalism program in January 2005.

I always considered myself a strong writer and I had a little background in the sports departments of both my hometown Truro Daily News and The Guardian, where I spent my time once journalism classes were over for the day.

But as any news reporter will tell you, writing and reporting are two separate things.

Heather took this sports writer and turned him into a reporter.

She helped me hone my skills by teaching me to be like a dog with a bone when it came to chasing down stories and gave me the tips I needed to get past the many roadblocks reporters face on a daily basis. She also taught me, in signature Eastern Graphic style, to not always accept the generic, attention deflecting answer from politicians, but to dig a little deeper and hold government accountable with a focus on telling the story of the common citizen.

Heather never had a shortage of juicy stories for her reporters to chase because the people of Eastern PEI came to her with



Matthew Veno, Eastern Graphic reporter - January 2005 to November 2006.

their issues. She is one of you and she has earned the trust from her community that she will get to the bottom of a story.

In spite of the many awards she's won throughout her career and the many reporters she's helped to spread their wings, that's the true testament to her work over the past 50 years.

Following my time in Graphic land, I worked for a short stint with the Valley Today in Windsor, NS, before moving on to become Sports Editor at the Truro Daily News for eight years.

**Matt Veno**