

## Vernon Oickle — Hall of Fame Nomination

Vernon Oickle was born and raised in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, where he continues to reside with his wife, Nancy, and their family.

Growing up in a small town in rural Nova Scotia, Vernon had always wanted to pursue a career as a newspaper reporter and actually started his newspaper career as a Grade 11 student at Liverpool Regional High School by working on the school's paper. After completing high school in 1979 and despite having the choice of attending journalism school closer to home, he moved to Lethbridge, Alberta, where he attended Lethbridge Community College. Upon his graduation in 1982 with an honours diploma in Journalism, the love for his home province brought him back to Liverpool where he began his professional newspaper career at the local weekly newspaper, *The Advance*.

Since then, Vernon has carved out a distinguished career as one of the hardest working and most respected journalists in Nova Scotia. As a testament to his success, Vernon has won numerous regional, national and international awards for news reporting, opinion writing, photography and newspaper design. In 2009, 2013 and 2014, the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors based in Missouri named him as one of the top 12 editorial writers among their membership.

In 2012, Vernon won the society's prestigious Golden Quill Award for best editorial writing among its international membership. Up to that point, he was only the third Canadian editor and the first Nova Scotian to win this honour since it was first presented in 1961. Also that year, he won the H.R. Long Scholarship for Excellence in Editorial writing from the International Society of Weekly Newspapers Editors Foundation.

By the time Vernon left *The Advance* in 1994, he had been appointed editor, along the way helping to establish the paper as one of Canada's best weeklies in its circulation class. He was the editor of the award-winning weekly newspaper, *The Bridgewater Bulletin* and *The Lunenburg Progress-Enterprise*, from 1994 to 2014, during which time he won numerous awards for reporting, photography and opinion writing including the Best Local Editorial Award in 2013 from the Canadian Community Newspapers Association. He is the recipient of both the Bronze Quill and Silver Quill awards given by the Canadian Community Newspaper Association for a distinguished career in the community newspaper industry.

Throughout his weekly newspaper career during the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, Vernon covered some of the most high profile news events to impact Nova Scotia, Canada and, in some cases, the world. Those stories began with his in-depth reporting of the Jane Stafford-Hurshman murder trials in 1982 and carried on with his reporting on record-breaking drug seizures in Queens County, the shooting of RCMP Staff Sgt. Derek Burkholder, and culminating with the crash of Swissair Flight 111 at Peggy's Cove on September 2, 1998, an event that has left an indelible and lasting impact on the entire South Shore region of Nova Scotia.

Today, Vernon continues his journalistic career, writing a general interest column — *The View From Here* — that appears in the South Shore Breaker, a weekly publication that was launched in the spring of 2014, and reaches more than 40,000 readers with his opinions and reflections on rural life in coastal Nova Scotia.

In addition to being an award winning journalist and editor, Vernon is the author of 34 books, many of which collect and preserve the heritage and culture of Atlantic Canada. For the past decade, books by Vernon have dominated the Nova Scotia Best Seller's List making him one of the most prolific writers in Atlantic Canada.

His books include the 1993 best-seller *Life and Death After Billy: The Story of Jane Stafford*; the 1994 *Friends and Neighbours*: (a collection of stories from The Liverpool Advance); the 1997 *Busted: Nova Scotia's War on Drugs*; the 1999 *Queens County in photos*; the 2001 *Ghost Stories of the Maritimes*; the 2001 novel *Dancing With The Dead*; the 2002 *Ghost Stories of the Maritimes Vol. II*; the 2007 *Disasters of Atlantic Canada*; the 2008 *Canada's Haunted Coast*; the 2008 *The Editor's Diary: The First 13 Years*; the 2010 *Angels Here Among Us*; the 2010 best-selling novel *One Crow Sorrow*; the 2011 best-seller *Red Sky at Night: Superstitions and Wives' Tales Compiled by Atlantic Canada's Most Eclectic Collector*; the 2011 novel *Two Crows Joy*; the 2012 *South Shore Facts and Folklore*; the 2012 novel *Three Crows a Letter*; the 2012 novel *Four Crows a Boy*; the 2014 biography *I'm Movin' On: The Life and Legacy of Hank Snow*; the 2014 tourism book *Beaches of Lunenburg-Queens* and the 2014 *Nova Scotia's Outrageous Outhouse Reader* (The Big Book of Nova Scotia Trivia).

Books in 2015 include *Red Coat Brigade* (a young readers novel), *Ghost Stories of Nova Scotia* and *Kiss The Cod*, a collection of superstitions from Atlantic Canada. In 2016 he released *Strange Nova Scotia* and *Newfoundland and Labrador Outrageous Outhouse Reader*. The novel, *Five Crows Silver*, was released in 2017 along with *Where Evil Dwells: The Nova Scotia Anthology of Horror*. In 2018, he published *How to Talk Nova Scotia: The Bluenosers' Book of Slang* (which became the best-selling book in Nova Scotia for 2019) and the *Nova Scotia Book of Lists*. Books in 2019 included *My Nova Scotia Home*, *We Love Nova Scotia: A People's Portrait* and *More Ghost Stories of Nova Scotia*. This year, he will release two more books — *Queens County: A History in Pictures* and *The Second Movement: Nova Scotia's Outrageous Outhouse Reader #2*.

In addition to his long list of newspaper awards and honours, in 2012 Vernon received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, recognizing his contributions to his community, province and country, and in April 2015 he received a Distinguished Alumni Award (Community Leader) from Lethbridge College where he studied journalism from 1980 to 1982, graduating with an honours diploma in 1982. As a testimony to his outstanding career, in 2014 the South Queens Middle School in his hometown, Liverpool, announced the creation of the annual Vernon Oickle Writer's Award to be given annually to a student who excels in the art of writing, either fiction or non-fiction.

FOLLOWING ARE A SERIES OF SUPPORT LETTERS FOR THIS NOMINATION

## **Letter in support of Vernon Oickle's nomination for induction into the Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame**

Plain and simple, Vernon Oickle is a newshound. Always has been, always will be. If there's a story to tell, he wants to tell it.

Since the day he first set foot in the door of The Advance as a young journalism school graduate, he has made it his life's purpose to tell people's stories. Through 33 years at community newspapers in Liverpool and Bridgewater, he told them all — stories of triumph and tragedy; stories about local fundraising initiatives or municipal government boondoggles; stories that brought perspective to issues of a provincial or federal scope; stories that reflected life in the communities he served.

It's been six years now since his full-time job in the newspaper industry came to an end. But he continues to relate those stories in a popular weekly column that appears in publications across Nova Scotia and through the books he has written as one of the province's most gifted and prolific authors.

His name is synonymous with community journalism on Nova Scotia's South Shore and his reputation extends far beyond the region. I was blessed to work with Vernon for seven years in Liverpool. Like him, I began my career at The Advance — coincidentally 33 years ago — and I spent my formative years under his tutelage.

Along the way, I learned plenty of practical skills that would serve me well in the years to come. Of far greater significance, though, I had the opportunity to observe his interactions with the public, his work ethic and the passion he had for his craft.

He was humble, level-headed, fair, respectful, always with a smile at the ready, and treated equally each person he interviewed. He was dedicated to his job and took seriously the responsibility that came with being his community's storyteller. I imagine he made those same lasting impressions on other young journalists who had the good fortune to work alongside him early in their careers.

Throughout his distinguished career, Vernon and his newspapers were the recipients of countless regional and national awards. He took pride in those accolades as recognition of a job well done. But I don't have to tell you that newshounds like Vernon don't do it for the awards — they do it because they're passionate about writing, they love to tell people's stories and they understand the importance of reliable community-based journalism.

All that said, I can't think of anyone more worthy of recognition for his lifelong contributions to Atlantic journalism. I'm honoured to call Vernon a mentor, a

colleague and a friend, and there's no doubt he is a deserving candidate for induction into the Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brian Freeman

*Journalist and editor at The Liverpool Advance and  
retired copy editor from The Chronicle Herald.*

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To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the nomination for Mr. Vernon Oickle's induction into the Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame.

Vernon's distinguished career in journalism has covered well over three decades, during which he was recognized a multitude of times, regionally, nationally and internationally, for his writing and editorial excellence.

I had the pleasure of working under Vernon's tutelage for 13 of those years, during which time he not only taught me the "ins and outs" of being a responsible and unbiased journalist, but also the art of newspaper photography, all of which served me well during my own career.

Had it not been for Vernon, that would never have happened. He took a chance on me, a 45-year-old former car-salesman, who had absolutely no formal training, and moulded me into an award-winning journalist and photographer in my own right.

Over the years I watched him work that magic on a plethora of young, aspiring writers who passed through our newspaper's doors as summer students or recent journalism school graduates. Most, if not all, used the experience they garnered from Vernon's wisdom to move on to bigger and better things in a variety of media fields.

Vernon not only excelled as a writer, editor and mentor, but is also an admired and respected member of the community.

In my humble opinion, no one is more deserving for election to the hall.

Sincerely  
Robert F. Hirtle

*Retired journalist  
Lighthouse Media Group*

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**Marci Lin Melvin  
141 High Street  
Bridgewater, NS,  
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7 February 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

**Re: Vernon Oickle — In Support of Nomination for Induction into the  
Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame**

I have known Vernon Oickle since the 1980s when he was editor of the  
Bridgewater Bulletin and Lighthouse Log.

Vernon has single-mindedly pursued a career as a journalist and an author.

Although he is well known now for his many publications, from the murder  
mysteries he has created in his “Crow” series, to the many books on Nova Scotia  
folklore, his greatest persona is as a journalist, a profession he loves and at which  
he has clearly excelled. He has won numerous awards in journalism, not just  
for his journalistic instincts and style, but for his determination and ability to think  
outside the box.

He is a humble man. One would never know his success in the journalism field  
without considerable digging.

He certainly never discusses it himself. Which speaks volumes as to why he has  
been a success: he can communicate with “ordinary people”, a gift in itself; he is  
without airs. And he can communicate with those not so ordinary as well, but

through out, he is always himself. Unassuming. Hard-working. Going the extra step to achieve his dream of being a journalistic and author.

Vernon has created a literary legacy of all things Nova Scotian, with style, grace and, perseverance. Perhaps the best legacy he has given to up and coming journalists: “Just do it. And keep on doing it until you get it right.”

I am actually surprised given Vernon’s history that he has not been inducted before now. I have no hesitation in recommending a nomination go forward inducting Vernon Oickle into the Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame.

Respectfully,  
Marci Lin Melvin  
*Columnist and author*

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To Who It May Concern:

I write this letter in support of nominating Vernon Oickle to the Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame. I have known Vernon personally for more than 10 years, and known of him for more than two decades. Indeed, it is impossible to live on the South Shore of Nova Scotia and not know who Vernon Oickle is.

Full Disclosure: I have worked with Vernon Oickle for the last three years and have published at least a half-dozen of his books. I have seen up close his passion for his province and community and his commitment to the craft of writing. I’ve heard him say — and with brutal self awareness — he wouldn’t know what he’d do if he wasn’t writing. I would concur with his assessment.

Vernon comes from a humble background (his father worked at fish plants along the South Shore, primarily as a filleter; only taking time off to give his hand a chance to heal from cuts and scrapes incurred during the process) and it has shaped his appreciation for so called “ordinary folks.” He didn’t come to ghost stories as a folklorist like Creighton or even Clary Croft, or even as a believer. He came to them because they were human stories; because they offered “ordinary folks” an explanation of the world, or it helped keep alive the memory of somebody they loved.

Vernon's book jacket description of himself is always, "He continues to reside in Liverpool where he was born and raised." It is important to him that people understand that everything he does is rooted in the town and province he was born. Vernon believes the world can be equally revealed from a trip to Sydney as much as it can be from a visit to a foreign capital. He takes great pleasure in the nooks and crannies of the jagged coastline, but what always captures his thoughts and imagination is the people here.

I've been with him when people have come up to him, lamenting the fact that they no longer get to read his column in the paper he edited for 20 years. And it is not feigned kindness, it is genuine regret. And I can tell he misses them too.

I don't know how many books Vernon is up to now, but it is certainly the north side of 20. All of them, without exception, have in one way or another paid homage to Atlantic Canada. By the dint of his own work, he has launched a five-book mystery series, written about beaches and ghosts, language and storms. He is an industry unto himself.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to get to know him and hope that you consider his body of work worthy of induction into the Atlantic Journalism Hall of Fame.

John MacIntyre  
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