

Commentary

Mandy Martin recognized at national newspaper awards

By Bob Owen

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Mandy Martin, editorial director for the Northumberland Publishers family of newspapers, was named one of two Unsung Heroes at the National Newspaper Awards in Toronto May 9. The honour recognizes those who deserve the admiration of the National Newspaper Association. Unsung heroes are the dedicated editors and journalists in small cities and towns around the country.

Christina Spencer, National Bureau writer for the *Ottawa Sun*, described them as "the heroes of Canadian journalism". In announcing the honour, Ms. Spencer provided guests at the gala with an overview of Ms. Martin's career.

"Mandy Martin ... personifies the journalist who works in a small community. She started at age 17 in 1969 at the old *Cobourg Sentinel-Star*. In 1971, she was named managing editor, the youngest at a daily newspaper in Canada. That's at age 19.

"In 1997, it was back to the *Cobourg Daily Star* as a reporter, then on to her current position as editorial director of: the *Cobourg Daily Star*, *Port Hope Evening Guide* and a number of weeklies, all part of the Osprey group."

A number of Ms. Martin's current and former supervisors have added to those made by Ms. Spencer to provide a clearer picture of what the editorial director means to the publishing business.

Lou Clancy, Editor-in-Chief of the *Toronto Sun*, is a long-time associate of the Cramahe Township resident. He writes, "Mandy is the quintessential community

paper editor. She cares deeply about her community and the newspaper's role in it, and visibly bristles at any suggested slight to either.

"Mandy chose the community she wanted to live and work in and dedicated herself to it. No one works harder or sets higher standards. Northumberland is blessed to have her."

Darren Murphy now publishes the *Peterborough Examiner* and *Lindsay Post*, having moved there after two years at Northumberland Publishers.

"Over the time I worked with Amanda in Northumberland, I was impressed on a daily basis with her dedication to our readers and to the communities that we served. Mandy demonstrates an exceptional work ethic and works diligently to uphold our core values and core purpose. A pleasure to work with and an asset to our company, Mandy is very deserving of this recognition."

"The fact that Mandy was recognized for this honour is no surprise to me," says her current publisher, Don MacLeod. "Mandy has worked tirelessly helping to produce the best local newspaper in the area for years and is also very involved in the community. I know that recognition is the last thing on her mind while dedication and follow-through are first and foremost. She is very deserving of this and I am extremely proud of her and very much enjoy working with such a professional."

Retired vice president of the Canadian Newspapers Association, Bryan Cantley describes her as "the quintessential unsung

hero".

The editorial director admits she was thrilled at being selected for the honour. Always one to deflect praise to her staff, Ms. Martin says, "Our newsroom is small, intense and fiercely committed to ethical, hard-hitting stories. We live here. We have roots here. We are passionate about what we do."



Mandy Martin

The National Newspaper Awards have been Canada's premier journalism awards for close to 60 years.

The awards were established by the now Toronto Press Club thanks to a generous donation from the late George McCullagh, then president and publisher with *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Telegram*.

An edited version of Ms. Martin's bio is included below.

At the age of 17, Ms. Martin started in the news business as a reporter at then *Cobourg Sentinel-Star* in the days of lead type. The owner, the late Dr. Jim Johnston, was a fierce advocate of quality and depth in newspapers.

After 10 years in which Northumberland Publishers acquired four additional newspapers (the *Port Hope Evening Guide*, the *Campbellford Herald*, the *Newcastle Reporter* and *Colborne Chronicle*) and entered the computer age, she spread her wings. She had previously volunteered as a photographer/instructor in Honduras and Costa Rica, Central America, for nine months. In 1981, she signed on as an international travel writer with the

magazine division of Southam Communications (the building today houses the *National Post*) and travelled the world for 3.5 years.

From 1984-93, she worked for Ontario Hydro, first as a corporate relations officer in eastern Ontario, then as a business/office manager. When hydro began paying people to leave, she opted to complete a university degree at Queen's (history and psychology), graduating in 1995 on the Dean's Honour Role for academic achievement (highest academic standing of all convocating students). Over the next two years, she tried her hand in an MPP's office, worked as a conference and catering manager and did some retail sales.

In 1997, when a reporter position came up back at the *Cobourg Daily Star*, she signed on. Several months later, she was named editor of the *Colborne Chronicle* and a new weekly (now gone), the *Apple Gazette* in Brighton.

She and her partner, Lanny Murphy, relocated from Prince Edward County to Colborne in Northumberland County's Cramahe Township in 1999.

In 2003, she was appointed editor of the *Cobourg Daily Star* and in 2006, editorial director of the daily newspapers, the *Cobourg Daily Star* and *Port Hope Evening Guide*, weeklies *Colborne Chronicle* and *Northumberland Weekly* and the quarterly *GO! Magazine*, all owned by Northumberland Publishers, part of the Osprey businesses now known as Sun Media, a Quebecor company.

"What goes on in smaller communities matters, often on provincial and national stages. That is part of the wonder and joy of journalism," says the fiery journalist.