

DEB HOPE

JOURNALIST, 67

JOURNALIST BECAME ONE OF B.C.'S MOST POPULAR TV ANCHORS

Known for her generosity of spirit, she supported a number of charity events and was a strong ally of other women working in television

JODY PATERSON

She was already a rising star on B.C.'s most popular TV news channel on that momentous day in 1985, though still using her first husband's surname and not yet the one that she would make famous.

She and her camera crew were in the car coming back from reporting on a news story. She needed a date for a posh banquet in Vancouver that night being hosted by the Chinese government, and was running out of options.

Having already been turned down by the cameraman in the front seat, Deb van der Gracht turned to the shy young cameraman in the back seat and asked without much interest if he wanted to come with her. Roger Hope said yes.

The rest was history, Mr. Hope says. They were a couple virtually from that night on for more than three decades of Deb Hope's reign as one of B.C.'s best-known and most beloved TV news anchors.

And then they were a couple through a much harder decade as Ms. Hope developed early-onset Alzheimer's disease. The first signs began to emerge around the time of her 2014 retirement from Global News, when she was 59. She died May 15 of the organ failure common in late-stage Alzheimer's. She was 67.

"We'd always really loved travelling together, so I made sure we kept on travelling after she retired from Global, even though we knew something was wrong," Mr. Hope says.

"I took her to Hawaii 12 times, twice to Africa, London, the Great Wall of China. It was an effort, but I wouldn't have it any other way. She was the best thing that ever happened to me."

Deborra Jane Brown was born Oct. 11, 1955, in Trail, B.C. She grew up with two siblings who were already into their adult lives when she was born, and a younger sister. She left home at 18, acquiring a BA in French language and literature at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, and then a degree in journalism at Carleton University, in Ottawa.

Her first reporting job was with Canadian Press in Ottawa, followed by a move to Vancouver to work for now-defunct United Press Canada. Her longtime colleagues at Global News and its forerunner BCTV say those early reporting years informed Ms. Hope's news approach for the rest of her career. She was a reporter first and foremost, committed to coverage that would resonate with viewers.

"We called it the 'Deb Hope sniff test,'" recalls journalist Keith Baldrey, who worked alongside Ms. Hope for almost 20 years. "I'd be trying to sell her on a political story that I thought was really interesting and she'd start snoring. You can lose perspective



Deb Hope was named to the Order of Canada in 2022 for her support of charity events, which included the Courage to Come Back fundraiser for Coast Mental Health Foundation. COURTESY OF THE HOPE FAMILY

when you have a beat. Deb was the guard against that."

It isn't easy for a TV news anchor to be who they really are when on air, says Ms. Hope's friend and work colleague Squire Barnes. Ms. Hope was the exception, and renowned for an unrestrained laugh that heralded her arrival at work and burst out of her on air whenever something struck her as funny.

"She was a rare bird and was exactly the same both on air and off," Mr. Barnes recalls. "Viewers approached her like a friend. There was nothing fake about her."

She was beloved by everyone who worked with her, Mr. Barnes says, with no sign of the "Anchor Monster syndrome" that can afflict popular on-air personalities.

"She was so kind to staff, calling everyone 'Darlin,'" says her former boss Ian Haysom. "But when she'd come to my office for one of those talks about something she hadn't agreed with, it'd be, 'Hey, Mister...'"

Ms. Hope was a familiar face in Global's live coverage of B.C. provincial elections over the years,

when she would anchor the panels of experts commenting on the elections' twists and turns. She understood the potential for linking her devoted viewers and fans to good causes through her news shows and high-profile charity events such as the annual Variety Show of Hearts Telethon, which she hosted for more than 20 years.

The popular Adopt-a-Pet segment that Ms. Hope introduced to the noon news in 1995 helped find homes for thousands of animals in its 23-year run, says the woman with the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BCSPCA) who used to join Ms. Hope for those segments.

Eileen Drever recalls with much humour those years of bringing dogs, cats, horses, chickens and more to the studio every Tuesday. The segment where a cat in Ms. Drever's lap suddenly projectile-vomited onto Ms. Hope's chair landed a mention from Oprah Winfrey and a spot on a U.K. blooper roll.

Ms. Hope was named to the Or-

der of Canada in 2022 for her many years of supporting charity events, which included the Courage to Come Back fundraiser for Coast Mental Health Foundation. Her 2006 story on Global featuring the five British Columbians chosen for Courage to Come Back Awards that year won her a Jack Webster Foundation journalism award in the category of Best Breaking News Reporting TV/Video.

She also had a rich personal life, as an involved parent of two daughters with Mr. Hope and a stepdaughter from Mr. Hope's previous marriage. Her love of singing led her to become a baritone with Westcoast Harmony Chorus and Lion's Gate Chorus, performing four-part barber-shop-style music through the two Sweet Adelines International chapters.

"She danced and sang in the front row of both those choruses for many years," says one of her quartet partners, Pat Fry. "She was so dynamic to watch, and a terrific singer."

Ms. Hope never got a good ex-

planation from her Orkney Islands parents for the unusual spelling of her first name, Deborra.

But when an African customs agent glanced at her passport one early morning at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, a few years back, the agent whipped out her own driver's licence with the same spelling and the two women were soon hugging and laughing like old friends, Mr. Hope recalls. "That was Deb."

Signs of trouble for Ms. Hope emerged gradually, first with misplaced items or a missed teleprompter line, and then more obviously, Ms. Fry remembers Ms. Hope singing every song perfectly at rehearsals, but falling completely silent as soon as a song ended. "Keeping up a conversation became harder and harder."

Mr. Hope says his wife's effervescent personality left even medical professionals guessing wrongly for years as the couple went searching for answers. But Ms. Hope's father had died of early-onset Alzheimer's at the age of 61, and Mr. Hope remembers his wife beginning to suspect "what was on the way."

"She used to call me Rocco, and there was a point early on in this where she said to me, 'Rocco, I'm so sorry to be doing this to you. There's no cure or treatment - this is what killed my dad.'"

Long-time Global colleague Pam Mason-Louie - Ms. Hope's on-air stylist and fashion consultant - recalls a weekend in 2017 when friends took Ms. Hope out to see the play *Kinky Boots*. While it was a wonderful evening, her friends had to shield Ms. Hope from people who recognized her from the news. She no longer remembered who she had once been.

The disease had advanced significantly by the time she and Mr. Hope joined friend and former boss Clive Jackson and his wife that same year for one last African safari, Mr. Jackson recalls. "But the look of delight was still there when she'd see the animals," he adds.

Reluctant for a long time to go public with Ms. Hope's health issues, Mr. Hope was finally convinced by Mr. Barnes to go ahead with a Global piece in October 2020 on the impact of Ms. Hope's diagnosis on her family. By then, Ms. Hope was living in a long-term care facility near the couple's Coquitlam home.

Since her death, Mr. Hope has been inundated with e-mails from women working in TV saying how much they appreciated Ms. Hope's support in the early days of their careers. "This is a cutthroat business, but she was a team player," he says.

Ms. Hope leaves her husband; sister, Bonnie; daughters, Katherine and Roxanne; stepdaughter, Leah; and granddaughters, Veronica and Ryan.

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I REMEMBER

IAN HACKING

For many years Ian Hacking's office in the Philosophy Department at the University of Toronto was next to mine. Because we were both physically and philosophically close, we often chatted, had lunch together and gossiped about this or that. Here are a few things I remember.

I particularly recall one topic we discussed often. Which is more significant in the history of philosophy: arguments or examples? We agreed - examples. The point of a good one is that it can induce a gestalt shift (something initially looks like a duck but later looks like a rabbit). I think we agreed that Plato's argument in the *Meno* was a failure but the slave boy example was effective in getting us

to think we might have a cognitive capacity to perceive abstract entities. (With coaching, the uneducated boy figures out how to double the area of a given square. How did he do it?) Moreover, Descartes's wax argument is not valid, but it is terrific at getting us to think about the nature of matter. A wax candle can be cold or warm, give off a scent, change shape or colour. Through many changes one thing remains constant - the wax is spatially extended. From this Descartes leaped to the conclusion that matter = space. Geometric properties are objective, while colours and smells are subjective. The primary-secondary distinction, as it is called, is almost universally accepted in philoso-

phy, psychology and physics today.

Ian's own work had this character. If I ask people who have read his terrific *Representing and Intervening*, "What is Ian's argument for entity realism?" they are often stumped. But they sure remember the examples and can invariably recite the slogan about electrons, "If you can spray them, they are real."

The importance of manipulation was central to his views about science and stimulated an interest in experiments in the wider community; the previous focus was on theories. It also had consequences he was willing to accept. In keeping with the old view that "astronomy is an observational

science but not an experimental one" (because we can't manipulate planets, galaxies etc.), he held that gravitational lenses should not be taken realistically. Not many of us, however, followed him down this path.

Examples were also central in his work on "making up people." The wonderful examples in his fascinating *Mad Travelers* made his case about the social nature of transient mental illness. These were people starting in the late 19th century who went into a trance-like state and wandered all over Europe. It stopped when the Great War started. Wondering where such concepts as juvenile delinquent came from and how they make up "kinds of people"

led Ian to his subsequent famous work in *Rewriting the Soul*. Social kinds are not the same as natural kinds.

Explicit real examples always meant a lot to Ian. I think they meant a lot to readers, too, since they made his work so readable. His deep interest in the history of science came as no surprise. It provides us with spectacular instances of humans at their best struggling to acquire knowledge, and it sheds more light on epistemology (the study of the nature of knowledge) than the subtlest abstract arguments.

James Robert Brown, Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus), University of Toronto