

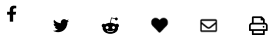
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RIP, Jane.

5 glimpses of the late, great Jane Kansas

The Halifax journalist, crank and activist died the way she lived.

By [Kyle Shaw](#)



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Born June 5, 1954, a Saturday, Jane Kansas died more than 68 years later on December 18, 2022, a Sunday. The last few years had seen her declining from various ailments; it was kidney failure that took her at the end, at the Valley Hospice in Kentville. Her writing is full of such details, although knowing them here doesn't make her passing any easier to take.

Jane was a journalist in the fullest sense, a keen observer and questioner and explainer of the good and bad and interesting. She worked in The Coast office for years as an editor, and wrote for The Coast and others for longer. In prose and in person, she could be loudly cranky about the things that were wrong, but exuberantly passionate about the things that were right. You could be both. She had a whole other career as a subject of media stories, when it seemed she was the only queer activist in Halifax. She was also an entrepreneur, a traveller, a performer. If viral videos had been around when Jane used to vacuum her cat—yes, exactly that, Jane going over Moochie with a vacuum cleaner to their mutual delight—her adopted home town might have lost her years ago.

Her dearest friend sent an email on Sunday with the afternoon news, assuring other friends that “Jane died as she lived—exactly as she wanted.” In that spirit, we’ll let Jane’s words speak for her. Here are a few examples from her Coast history to help you get to know, or to remember, the icon.

The longest day

“On the third anniversary of my mother's death I borrow a car and drive out to her grave, as I do a few times a year: Mother's Day, St. Patrick's Day (her birthday), June 20 (her death day) and maybe an odd spring or fall day. She is buried in the countryside, in a corner of a sweet small cemetery called Pine Hill, just outside Hubbards. Her grave is almost under a pine tree at the edge of some woods and I like to imagine bunnies there at night, sitting on the rusty fallen needles, peeping out from under the tree and then cavorting on my mother's grave in moonlight, the grass bathed silvery and green.”

[Get the story from June 2018](#)



"I take the coffee, a butter tart and a magazine out to the porch and my mother is there."

25 for 25: episode 1996

For its 25th anniversary, The Coast produced a podcast looking at the last two and a half decades. Jane was a guest on the 1996 episode. “Thanks, I’m glad to be here.”

[Get the podcast](#)

Fare thee well, Newfoundland Store

Jane often chronicled loss for The Coast—in this case the closing of Halifax’s specialty Newfoundland grocery store after 50+ years—and through her telling the person or place managed to stick around a bit longer. “Shopping at the Newfoundland Store was a bit like a staycation. No beeps and squeaks of scanners, no hollow voice intoning *unexpected item in bagging area*. Here there was the sway of the needle on analog weigh machines. Exotic goods. The iconic Purity crackers. Purity syrup. Hard bread. Butter crackers. Fraser Farm Gravy and Meatballs. Old Tyme pease pudding. Lots from the Purity from down home. Jam Jams, hard crackers, lemon biscuits. Peppermint lumps. And cases of Newfoundland pop: Crush pineapple or sweet birch beer.”

[Read the story from January 2020](#)



The Coast

Sometimes angry, sometimes ecstatic, always passionate.

Who’s your daddy?

“I am the only person to have ever complained in public about Christmas Daddies.”

[Read the story from December 2005](#)

Motel hell

In which Jane laments the Esquire Motel’s neon sign, a welcoming signal from the 1950s that was wrecked by Hurricane Juan. “We will not see the likes of the Esquire sign again but maybe it’s better this way. The great beacon lost with the bang of an act of god and not the whimper and whine of more earthbound machinery and change.”

[Read the story from October 2003](#)



The Coast

Jane Kansas at The Coast's temporary emergency office after Hurricane Juan.

Tags [City](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kyle Shaw



Kyle is the editor of The Coast. He was a founding member of the newspaper in 1993 and was the paper's first publisher. Kyle occasionally teaches creative nonfiction writing (think magazine-style #longreads) and copy editing at the University of King's College School of Journalism.

[Read More about Kyle Shaw »](#)

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