

By Kevin Wing
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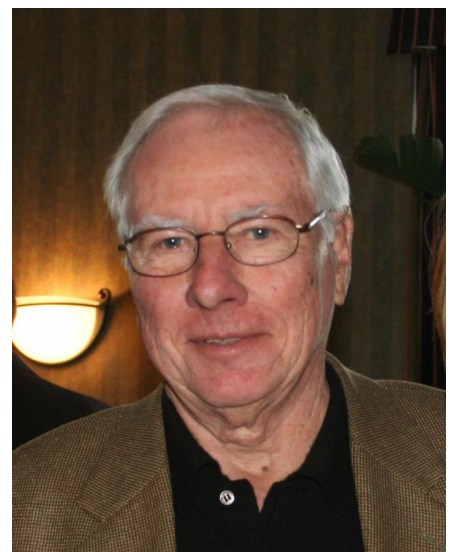
Vern Hawkins, the longtime, venerable Bay Area and northern California reporter who capped his indelible journalistic mark on the northern California television industry with more than 20 years as a beloved and respected reporter for Oakland's KTVU from the 1970s to the 1990s, died March 10. He was 82.

Hawkins, an Emmy® Award-winning reporter, was a member of the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. He was inducted in 1993.

Hawkins joined KTVU in 1976, eventually retiring in 1998 after four decades in northern California television. Prior to joining KTVU, he worked several years at KPIX in San Francisco in the early 1970s, and before that, at KCRA in Sacramento. Early in his career, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Hawkins was an anchor and reporter at KVIQ in Eureka.

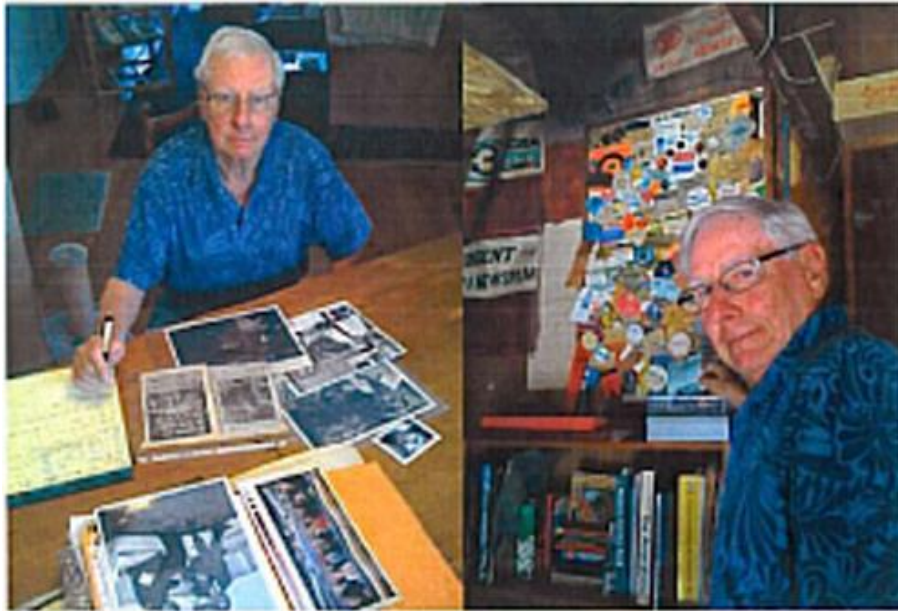
Rita Williams (*SC'2001*), Hawkins' longtime friend and a retired KTVU reporter herself, remembers Hawkins as kind and sweet.

"As the "youngster" at KTVU in 1978 among so many accomplished veteran reporters, I was touched when this handsome man showed me the ropes in the old



station, sharing a typewriter, editing film, giving the typed script to a managing editor to approve," Williams recalls. "Of course, that was Vern. The mentorship lasted until he retired.

Williams says Hawkins, as a reporter, was unflappable and unassuming.



"He was a quick and concise writer, every word counted," she says. "He had a dry, wry wit accompanied by that great smile. I was jealous that I was not a camerawoman/man who got to spend time in the field with him. In part, that's because Vern could find (long before internet searches) the best restaurant wherever a story took him.

Don McCuaig (SC'2002), also a longtime friend and a retired KTVU photojournalist, says he learned a lot from

Hawkins.

"Vern taught me a lot about travel and how to shoot," McCuaig says. "He was a shooter at one time. He was never pushy and had great patience with new and old crews. He also was a lot of fun."

After their many years of working together at KTVU, McCuaig says he began to see a different side of Hawkins.

"At the end of his working career, I saw a side of Vern I'd never seen before. He had a great love of animals. Doing stories at the San Francisco Zoo became a his favorite job. When Vern passed, I wrote **Nancy Chan**, the PR person at the zoo in those years. She was heartbroken and told me he was her favorite reporter of all time."

Chan is now public relations director at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo.

Fred Zehnder (SC'1991), who served as news director at KTVU from 1978 to 1999, worked with Hawkins throughout their careers in Bay Area and northern California television. Many years before KTVU, both of them worked at KVIQ in Eureka: Hawkins was an anchor and reporter there, and Zehnder was news director.

"Vern and I had radio station backgrounds," Zehnder says. "We were both just out of the Army in the late 1950s, and ended up at KVIQ, a small, understaffed TV station in Eureka where Vern was the "11 o'clock News" anchorman as well as announcer and transmitter engineer, and I was the news department and the film director."

Zehnder says the hours were long and the station didn't pay them much, but adds it was a lot of fun for both of them.

"Probably the most fun either of us ever had working in TV news," Zehnder says. "If we'd kept discrepancy reports they would have run to several pages every day. He and I would relive some of those nightly disasters every time we got together after work. He was one of the few still around who had gone through that do-it-yourself TV era. I'll miss him a lot."

Memorial services will be held at a later date.

Jerry McEowen, 77