



## Richard E. Harpster

Richard E. Harpster, reporter, editor, columnist, photographer, public speaker, and radio commentator, died Friday, October 6, 2006 at Easton Hospital after a brief illness. He was 82 years old.

**Born:** He was a son of the late William Herrold and Erma Smith Harpster. **Personal:** A native of Danville, Pa, he lived in Washington, NJ since 1935. He was a 1942 graduate of the old Washington High School and earned a degree in journalism from Rider College in Trenton in 1949. After graduating, he began his career as a reporter for the Washington Star. In 1950, he joined the Newark Evening News covering Warren County for 22 years. When the Newark News ceased publication in 1972, he became editor of the Phillipsburg Free Press until 1975. His coverage of Warren County politics won him wide acclaim. An outline of his coverage in the county was featured in a publication of The Center for the Analysis of Public Issues of Princeton. In 1979, he was selected by the Easton Express as one of Warren County's seven power brokers, along with the late Governor Robert B. Meyner; State Senator Wayne Dumont; Assemblyman and Chairman of the State Republican Committee, Garabed Haytaian, and Freeholder, Irene Smith. Throughout his career, he was known as "muckraker" for his blistering attacks against crooked politicians and government entities. He joined the staff of the Morristown Daily Record in 1983 where he covered politics and crime, wrote columns and editorials, and served as Sunday Editor. In 1989, during the administration of Governor Thomas Kean, he became Public Information Officer for the State Department of Community Affairs. He retired from full time work in 1989 and wrote columns for the Star-Gazette of Hackettstown, the Warren Reporter of Washington, Today in Hunterdon in Flemington, the Knowlton News in Columbia, and Fifty Plus in Succasunna. He covered the story of the Tocks Island Dam from its inception in 1962 to its demise in 1975. He was the only newsman who reported on the plight of the Delaware River property owners and their aggressive treatment by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In 1973, he won a nation-wide editorial-writing contest sponsored by the International Conference of Weekly Newspaper Editors, School of Journalism, Southern Illinois University. The editorial, entitled "Harassment," described the oppressive treatment of property owners by the Corps during the taking of their property for the dam. His articles against the dam, its effect on property owners and its environmental consequences are credited with bringing the project to a halt. In 1996, he began a commentary program with radio station WRNJ in Hackettstown. He was a public speaker on politics, current events, government, and newspapering. He collected antique glass negatives from which he made photos which were sold in antique shops in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He also collected, framed, and sold antique sheet music. He served in the old Army Air Corps during World War II as a radio-teletype operator, attaining the rank

of Staff Sergeant. He served two years at Hickam Field, Hawaii and a year on Guam. He was a lifelong member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was a member of the Warren County Cultural and Heritage Commission and a contributor of articles on Warren County history to their newsletter. He was also a member of Greenpeace, an international environmental movement.

Jim Alexander had the privilege of working with Dick Harpster in the 1980s when the latter served as the Public Information Officer of the State Department of Community Affairs under the administration of Governor Thomas H. Kean. He was a bulldog of a reporter and a person committed to telling the truth.

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