

# Spot News

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## MILLER RESIGNS FROM NEW YORK TIMES

# National SPJ Addresses Judith Miller Controversy

By Georgiana Vines

Judith Miller has left the New York Times to the surprise of no one who attended the national SPJ convention in October in Las Vegas

Miller received a First Amendment Award from then-National SPJ President Irwin Gratz but the decision to recognize her for going to jail for 85 days to protect a source became controversial after details emerged on the extent of her relationship with her source.

It was clear she had become a news maker for controversial reasons, a role no journalist enjoys, instead of just a news reporter objectively going after the facts. That puts any journalist, even someone who has won a Pulitzer prize, in a position of constantly being questioned.

At the convention, Gratz and the national Executive Committee took the position that Miller's time in the Virginia jail to protect a source deserved recognition. She was released after her source, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the vice president's chief of staff, told her in a phone conversation that she was free to discuss their

conversation on CIA operative Valerie Plame.

Libby since has been charged with one count of obstruction of justice, two counts of perjury and two counts of making false statements.

The SPJ Executive Committee itself did not take a position on a separate issue of Miller's agreement with Libby to mischaracterize the nature of a confidential source. This is a detail that came out in the New York Times on Sunday, two days before Miller was to receive the First Amendment Award. It turns out she had agreed to attribute any story she wrote to a "former Hill staffer" instead of a "senior administration official."

Some delegates at the convention, with leadership from the Northern California Chapter, attempted to address this issue in a resolution entitled, "Journalists and anonymous sources."

They submitted a resolution extremely critical of Miller's pre-agreed attribution. The resolution also was critical of her

coverage of supposed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which helped the administration make its case of launching a military attack on the country. Miller told the convention and

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### ***Dates to Remember***

#### **Board Meeting**

6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4 at Mandarin House, Downtown West Blvd.

#### **Annual Holiday Party**

6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6 at Cherokee Bluff Condominiums Clubhouse. **Remember to: RSVP to Missy Jackson at 588-8007 or [missyj@att.net](mailto:missyj@att.net) by Dec. 4; bring a wrapped gift valued at under \$10; bring a covered dish, and your checkbook.**

***Happy Holidays!***

has written that “If your

MILLER  
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sources are wrong, you are wrong.”

The resolution quickly divided delegates and other attendees who looked to Miller’s case of protecting a source as a major factor in obtaining a federal shield law in Congress. In fact, she was scheduled to speak at a Congressional hearing the day after receiving the award — a point made by shield law supporters in opposing the critical wording in the resolution.

After a debate in a business session, the delegates voted 53-51 to remove critical references to Miller. The resolution as passed urged journalists and their news organizations “to grant anonymity with reluctance and caution, and to keep in mind their primary purpose of giving readers, viewers and listeners as much information as possible to reasonably assess the motives and reliability of those words and influence they are conveying with the protection of anonymity.”

Since the convention, members of the California Chapter have continued their criticism of the award. Gratz has continued to be interviewed and explain his and the Executive Committee’s action.

Al Cross, a former national president who chaired the resolutions committee, will have more to say about the debate in an upcoming issue of Quill magazine.

*Georgiana Vines is an East Tennessee SPJ Board Member, 1992-93*

As it now stands, the *Pence Free Flow of Information Act (HR 3323)* has been sent to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. To date it has 63 co-sponsors.

## Annual Holiday Party Dec. 6 Auction will benefit Endowment Fund

Dig out those odd gifts you’ve been given over the years that you want so badly to “regift”, cook up a dish, grab your checkbook and join the ETSPJ for the annual Holiday Party at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6 at the clubhouse at Cherokee Bluff Condominiums.

Continuing our tradition, attendees will participate in a wacky gift exchange, where guests bring a wrapped item valued at less than \$10 to open and possibly “steal” from one another. A new event this year will benefit the ETSPJ Scholarship Endowment Fund. Member Jean Ash is donating a selection of items from China that will be placed up for auction. Included are several ladies’ brocade jackets (suitable for holiday parties), “silk” neckties both comical and serious, plus a few surprises she has stowed away from trips this summer. If no auction items are appealing, cash donations to the Fund will still be accepted.

To find your way to the festivities:

Follow Alcoa Highway to UT Medical Center exit. Veer right onto Cherokee Trail (otherwise you’ll go to the hospital). Proceed .4 of a mile to Cherokee Bluff Drive on the left. Wind carefully up the hill and then check in with the guard. Go left past the guard station and the clubhouse will be straight ahead. Park in front of the clubhouse until all the spaces are full; then park in a parking lot to the left of the clubhouse.

When you RSVP please indicate what covered dish you will bring. Contact Missy Jackson at 588-8007 or [missyj@att.net](mailto:missyj@att.net) by Dec. 4. We need your name in advance so the guard will let you in.

From “SPJ Leads”

COMIC BOOK QUOTE OF THE WEEK.

**"Journalism is just a gun. It has only one bullet. But if you aim it right, that's all you need. Aim it right, and you can blow a kneecap off the world."**

**- Spider Jerusalem, "Transmetropolitan"**

**KUDOS!** Chicago Headline Club member Jon Marshall, a freelancer and instructor at Northwestern University's Medial School of Journalism, has launched a blog highlighting the best in U.S. journalism. Called "News Gems," the blog features examples of stories with thorough, enterprising reporting and great writing from newspapers, television, radio, magazines and Web sites. While journalists receive a barrage of criticism, News Gems aims to be a daily Pulitzer that acknowledges great work. Check it out at [www.newsgems.blogspot.com](http://www.newsgems.blogspot.com). E-mail Jon with suggested stories at [newsgems@sbcglobal.net](mailto:newsgems@sbcglobal.net).

## UT Student Enjoyed National Convention

UTK senior in Journalism and Electronic Media, Catherine O'Brien, was selected to be the designer of the daily paper published at the National SPJ conference in Las Vegas October 16-18. Following are her comments about the experience:

While in Las Vegas I was one of twelve college students to publish a daily paper of the convention. Two other designers and I, designed the templates to be used each day. The experience was unique and unlike anything I will ever do. The twelve of us basically created a newspaper, where there was no newspaper. No design, no stories, nothing existed until we created it. I met a lot of people from different universities who taught me new ideas and techniques in the newspaper world. I learned that every publication is unique and has its own strengths and weaknesses. Everyone from writers to photographers and designers have to adapt and that was the most valuable lesson learned.

*Ms. O'Brien is from Richmond, Va., and graduates spring of 2006.*

## ETSPJ Wins National Awards

The East Tennessee Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists once again was named National Outstanding Small Professional Chapter.

Along with the small professional chapter award, ETSPJ won the Circle of Excellence for Small Chapters for Campus Relations and Scholarship Activity

and the Region 3 Outstanding Small Chapter Award.

ETSPJ delegate, Dorothy Bowles, accepted the awards last month at the national SPJ conference in Las Vegas.

This is the second consecutive year that ETSPJ was named best small chapter.

Bowles will display these in her office for the coming year.



ETSPJ delegate, Dorothy Bowles, proudly displays the plaque proclaiming ETSPJ as the "National Outstanding Small Professional Chapter."

Photo courtesy of John Fox

### SPJ Officers 2005-2006

President - Ed Hooper  
Vice President-Follies - Jean Ash  
Secretary - Jean Ash  
Treasurer - Dan Foley  
Membership Chair - Tom King

Communications Coordinator  
Missy Jackson - 588-8007  
missyj@att.net

Board Members:  
Dan Farkas  
Robb Atkinson  
Lisa Hood Skinner  
Adina Chumley  
Georgiana Vines  
Past President:  
Dorothy Bowles

## **“Good Night, and Good Luck” Now Playing at Downtown West**

Attendees at the October SPJ National Convention were treated to a special screening of “Good Night, and Good Luck”, a feature film celebrating the courageous career of Edward R. Murrow.

Produced by Warner Independent Pictures, the film is now showing locally at Downtown West.

Following is the synopsis of the film from the Washington State University website:

*Good Night, and Good Luck* takes place during the early days of broadcast journalism in 1950s America. It chronicles the real-life conflict between television newsman Edward R. Murrow and Senator

Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. With a desire to report the facts and enlighten the public, Murrow and his dedicated staff—headed by his producer Fred Friendly and Joe Wershba in the CBS newsroom—defy corporate and sponsorship pressures to examine the lies and scare-mongering tactics perpetrated by McCarthy during his communist ‘witch-hunts.’ A very public feud develops when the Senator responds by accusing the anchor of being a communist. In this climate of fear and reprisal, the CBS crew carries on and their tenacity will prove historic and monumental.

For more information about the film, Murrow and Washington State University, visit: <http://murrow.wsu.edu/>. There you will find that:

The website provides comprehensive information of Murrow’s huge influence in broadcast journalism and information on WSU’s Edward R. Murrow School of Communication, and the Murrow Symposium, which began more than 30 years ago as a panel discussion and lecture series designed to honor the legacy of Murrow.

*Show times at Downtown West are listed as 1:10, 4:10, 7:10 and 9:50.*

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