

Spot News

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Convention report

SPJ issues call for new members

by Adina Chumley

Remember the telephone ad campaign that encouraged callers to “reach out and touch someone?” Well, that fairly sums the message SPJ National is putting before all its membership. During the National Convention in Seattle, SPJ Executive Director Jim Gray said membership is the number one project for the Society of Professional Journalists.

During opening comments, Gray said his staff at National Headquarters will review all programs and consider how they will attract new members and retain those already on the rolls. Gray also issued a challenge to all SPJ chapters asking them to call members who have not renewed memberships. “SPJ is ‘a calling,’” said Gray. “We represent an honorable profession, and I challenge each of you to get one new member.”

During the delegate meeting, SPJ considered and passed several resolutions. Included were a resolution on press coverage of the war on terrorism, a resolution condemning the jailing of writer Vanessa Leggett and a resolution commending the Voice of America for reporting the war on terrorism despite governmental efforts to stop the airing of an interview with a Taliban leader.

President Al Cross said SPJ will continue to call for access for journalists who are reporting on the war. In addition, Cross said SPJ will take the lead in furthering the cause of ethical reporting. “I want SPJ to be a beacon on a hill, showing the value of freedom of information and reminding citizens and journalists of ethical principles that are more important than ever,” said Cross.

Several convention programs were added and/or changed to reflect the issues facing journalists in the aftermath of September 11. Some of the revised sessions included the Role of Religion Reporting After the Terrorist Attacks, How

Trauma Changes the Story – and the Journalist, and the Care and Handling of Controversial Pictures.

Nearly 850 journalists, students and educators attended the National Convention.

Reporters to discuss UT Gilley-Reed story

Reporters who covered the Pamela Reed - UT President Wade Gilley story last summer will speak at the East Tennessee Society of Professional Journalists joint meeting with the UT student chapter at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 13, in the 6th floor conference room of Hodges Library on the UT campus.

David Keim, who worked on the story for the Knoxville News-Sentinel, and others will talk about their problems in gaining access to university records and other aspects of the coverage. At this time, the names of speakers are not firm, but the chapter hopes to have a representative from the UT general counsel's office and someone from University Relations in addition to other reporters.

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Why dumb questions are sure bets for science writers

by Adina Chumley

Science has been the story of the last 200 years. That's the word from former science writer, Bill Dietrich, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. You might find that a little hard to believe considering the current big story that has captured our attention since Sept. 11. But Dietrich even makes a case tracking the current conflict back to the struggle that was born in Greece between rationalism and religion. "People are still passionate about how they look at the world," says Dietrich.

Dietrich and MSNBC Science Editor, Alan Boyle, spoke during a forum at the Society of Professional Journalists National Convention in Seattle, Oct. 5. They shared advice for reporters, especially those who are handed a science-related assignment for which they are ill prepared. Here are some tips:

1. Prepare yourself. – Get some background information from magazines and books
2. Ask dumb questions. – Ask what readers might ask if given the chance. It will help the writer make the subject comprehensible.
3. Don't be afraid of scientists. – Most scientists are ordinary people who happen to have a healthy curiosity.
4. Bring a dose of healthy skepticism. – Money is an issue in science stories. Find out how the research was paid for and check scientist's credentials.
5. Be wary of science from special interest groups or advocacy groups.
6. Be statistically wary. – Ask where stats came from and from whom.

7. Government funding – Ask who paid for the research.
8. Be cautious of junk science. – Some scientists may not have legitimate conclusions.

As the war on terrorism continues, Boyle says science stories will shift from basic science to applied science. "Science stories will have a military angle, such as: How good are our military systems? Do they work as advertised?"

Boyle says much of his research is done over the Internet. He suggests these Web sites when researching science stories:

- newswise.com
- eurekaalert.org
- pressnature.com

Dietrich also suggested the book, *Field Guide for Science Writers*. He says it is a must-have for science reporters. In addition, you can find advice and contacts on the National Association of Science Writers website, nasw.org.

Weather reporting

Learn how to prepare for hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural disasters on the web at www.fema.gov. The awarding-winning Web site provides valuable emergency management and disaster-related information to the public. It also offers a kids page with games stories and quizzes.

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SPJ National Convention photographs

Georgiana Vines pays tribute to June Anderson Almquist, former national SPJ and Sigma Delta Chi board member, at this year's SPJ convention in Seattle/Bellvue, Wash.

Almquist, who retired as assistant managing editor of the Seattle Times, initiated discussions with the Times' executive editor about helping to sponsor the convention while Vines was national president in 1992-93 and otherwise helped lay the groundwork for the annual gathering.

Almquist, who died of cancer in 2000, was greatly missed by her friends at the convention.

Mini-burka



Chapter president, Adina Chumley, won third place in a costume contest at the national convention. Contestants were asked to "wear" bandanas (replicas of the Texas state flag) as creatively as possible. This was to promote next year's convention to be held in Fort Worth. Vice president Larry Aldridge suggested that Chumley wear the Afghan woman costume.

From left are Chumley; Christopher Symington, Southern Connecticut State University Campus Chapter (second place); and Cali Carlin, Brigham Young University Campus Chapter (first place).



Hooper receives DoD service medal

ETSPJ member Ed Hooper has received the highest military honor awarded to civilians, according to an announcement from Congressman John J. Duncan, Jr.

Hooper received the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service in an official Department of Defense ceremony in August at the Knoxville City/County Building.

The medal was awarded for Hooper's "dedicated work as a broadcast and print journalist in documenting the lives of Tennessee veterans." He was praised for his efforts to upgrade the identification on the graves of Tennessee's Medal of Honor recipients.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's statement said, "While serving as a broadcast journalist and writer, Mr. Hooper brought to the national consciousness the remarkable service and sacrifices of the young men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces and brought to life the personal sacrifice, character, courage, and dedication of America's servicemen and women, her veterans, and all those who support them."

Also issuing statements praising Hooper were senators William Frist and Fred Thompson. Frist said, "Ed Hooper exemplifies what being a true patriot is all about."

Hooper has been a frequent winner of awards in ETSPJ's annual Golden Press Card competition.

Christmas party planned at Cherokee Bluff clubhouse

The annual ETSPJ Christmas party is planned for 7 p.m., Friday, Dec. 7, at the Cherokee Bluff Clubhouse.

Please bring an unwrapped toy for Toys for Tots and a wrapped gift costing \$10 or less for the crazy auction. Also, prepare a covered dish and let Georgiana Vines or Sally Guthrie (588-1474) know what you are planning to bring, so we can coordinate the food. Reservations are required so Vines can let the guard at Cherokee Bluff know you will be arriving.

Directions

If going south on Alcoa Highway, get off at the UT Medical Center exit. After exiting, you will run into Cherokee Trail on the right. Take it and go 0.4 of a mile to Cherokee Bluff Drive, which is on the left. Go up the steep hill and you'll come to a guard station. The guard will check your name off the list (be sure to make reservations). Go left after passing the guard station to the clubhouse. There are a few parking spaces in front. Otherwise, turn left again as soon as you can pass the guard station, and there's a parking area.

If coming north on Alcoa Highway, take a right to the UT Medical Center. Then take Cherokee Trail and follow directions above.

Mark Your Calendar

Nov. 13, 7 p.m., Coverage of Reed-Gilley Story, 6th floor, UT Hodges Library

Dec. 7, 7 p.m., Christmas Party, Cherokee Bluff Clubhouse

April 19-21, SPJ National Writers' Workshop Region 3 Conference, Atlanta

June 8-9, SPJ National Writers' Workshop, Indianapolis