

Spot News

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of the Society of Professional Journalists
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ETSPJ wins nation's top small chapter award



Incoming SPJ president, Irwin Gratz, presents Dorothy Bowles an award won by ETSPJ at the national convention in New York, Sept. 11.

The East Tennessee professional chapter, Society of Professional Journalists, won three top national awards at the SPJ national convention in New York City, Sept. 11.

The chapter won awards as the "Most Outstanding Small Chapter in the Nation," the "Best Chapter in Region 3," and "Best Small Chapter in the Nation for Professional Development." East Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida make up Region 3.

Dorothy Bowles, SPJ president for 2004-2005, accepted the awards on behalf of the chapter. Also attending was Georgiana Vines, ex officio board member of ETSPJ and member of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation board of directors.

Lisa Hood Skinner, chapter president during the award-winning year, said, "This past year, the chapter was actively involved in the continuing fight for freedom of information and high ethical standards." She added, "We also hosted or co-sponsored meetings featuring three different Pulitzer Prize winners."

Continuing education programs feature database reporting

ETSPJ will hold a two-part continuing education program on computer-assisted reporting, Oct. 20 and Nov. 17.

Dan Foley, associate professor in the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at UT, will lead a session from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 20, in the News Sentinel Knox Room. His topic is "The Devil Is in the Details: Analyzing Government Budgets."

Foley's newspaper career spans more than 20 years. He was a state government reporter for the Lee Newspapers State Bureau in Montana for four years and a congressional correspondent for Copley News Service in Washington, D.C., for two years. For 17 years, he worked for the *Quad-City Times*, Davenport, Iowa, as an investigative reporter, managing editor and editorial page editor.

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SPJ resolutions target law enforcement practices

Following are some of the resolutions the Society of Professional Journalists passed resolutions at the 2004 SPJ convention:

- Urges journalists to curtail their improperly qualified over reliance on anonymous sources who often feed the press self-serving and even false information under the cloak of anonymity; and
- Deplores the threat to the constitutionally protected freedom of the press posed by judges who reach into the confidential editorial processes of the newsroom in speculative searches for information that might turn out to help one party to a lawsuit or assist prosecutors in rounding up information they fail to obtain by more direct means.
- Rejects the assumption that secrecy makes us more secure, and reaffirms its earlier calls for freedom of information, at a time when the public has even more need to be informed.
- Urges SPJ members and chapters to identify and challenge all privately employed police forces that are not complying with state open-records laws.
- Condemns law enforcement agencies' selective release to the media of false or incomplete information about named but uncharged individuals.
- Implores journalists to show greater skepticism toward "gift horses" from law enforcement agencies, to question the motives of agencies that leak information about uncharged suspects, and to refrain from publishing or broadcasting a "scoop" that may damage the reputation of an innocent person.
- Extends its sympathies to the families of our fallen comrades, and our professional respect for all who have the courage to engage in such reporting; and
- Directs the SPJ Board of Directors to devise a method of highlighting and honoring, at each convention of the Society of Professional Journalists, the ultimate sacrifice made by our comrades killed as a result of their work in this nation or abroad.
- SPJ urges the State Department to reform the visa provisions to make it easier for foreign media representatives to practice their craft within our borders.

Fraser, Shory serve on ETSPJ board

The following biographies were received too late for inclusion in the September Spot News.

Thomas Fraser is a native of Charleston, S.C., and is a municipal and environmental reporter and assistant city editor at The Daily Times in Maryville. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee School of Journalism and is a publisher and editor of the bimonthly tabloid Hellbender Press, East Tennessee's Environmental Journal. He lives in Concord with his mountain dog Emmitt and enjoys sports and the outdoors.

Bill Shory is news director at WBIR-TV, where he supervises the entire news staff and the wide range of top-rated news programs produced at WBIR.

Before moving to WBIR, Shory was executive producer of special projects at WCCO-TV in Minneapolis. In that role, he supervised all the station's long-form and investigative reporting. Before working at WCCO, Shory was news director at WHNT-TV in Huntsville, Ala. from 1999-2002. He also worked as a news manager at WCNC-TV in Charlotte, N.C., and WBMA-TV in Birmingham, Ala. He began his news career as a producer at WHNT and at KJAC in Port Arthur, Texas.

Shory received a degree in communications and history from Trinity University in San Antonio where he was a National Merit and Trustees' Scholar.

Shory lives near Knoxville with his wife, Michelle.

Officers and Board ETSPJ

President Dorothy Bowles

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Secretary Jean Ash

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Adina Chumley **Membership Chair** Tom King

Thomas Fraser **Program Chair** Ed Hooper

Tom King **Ex Officio** Georgiana Vines

Aaron Ramey

Bill Shory **Communications Coordinator**

Sally Guthrie (588-1474)

ETSPJ picnics with UT students

ETSPJ president, Dorothy Bowles, welcomes everyone to the annual picnic. She told the students that she is giving the student chapter the eight tickets that she won in the SPJ Legal Defense Fund auction at the national convention. The first eight student SPJ members who sign up for a School of Journalism and Electronic Media trip to New York in January will get the tickets to meet Diane Sawyer and Charlie Gibson or Peter Jennings and get a VIP tour of the ABC studios.



David Lauer, Susan Lauer, Adina Chumley and Thomas Fraser are surprised by the Spot News photographer.



David Lauer and Lisa Skinner think about brownies for dessert



Dan Foley, John Fox, Susan Lauer, Georgiana Vines (front) and David Lauer visit the food table.



Students and staff of the Daily Beacon were among those attending the picnic.

Photos by Jean Ash

Cronkite, Moyers speak at SPJ convention

by Dorothy Bowles

Everything seemed super-sized at the SPJ national convention in the Big Apple last month: prize-winning speakers, important contemporary topics, career-building training sessions, celebrity journalists, a record-setting auction for the Legal Defense Fund, and a rollicking opening reception aboard a gigantic aircraft carrier. Conventioneers also enjoyed a harbor cruise featuring multiple dramatic light shows from the vast New York and New Jersey skylines, from two beams reaching skyward to interact with changing cloud formations at the World Trade Center site, and from the recently refurbished Statute of Liberty.

The keynote session was an intergenerational conversation between former CBS anchor Walter Cronkite and soon-to-be NBC chief anchor Brian Williams. The pair focused primarily on changes in news coverage and factors contributing to those changes, and they advocated hour-long network newscasts, more foreign coverage and a return to traditional journalistic values.

Both lamented today's party-managed political conventions, which led commercial television to end gavel-to-gavel coverage.

"They (the parties) swept under the rug all the interesting things at the convention," Cronkite said, characterizing modern conventions as "glorified pep rallies with balloons."

Both keynoters criticized FOX News Channel, charging that it is politically motivated and operated.

"The (conservative) faithful now have their network, a network that now matches their ideologies," Williams said.

The speakers expressed disappointment in the media today for what they called a lack of adequate investigative reporting, a "dulling up" of news coverage, Cronkite said.

The former anchor reserved his harshest remarks for what he termed "slandermongers" on the Internet. Rampant falsehoods spread on the Internet indicate a lack of knowledge about libel and slander, Cronkite said, noting that "these people" are largely unchallenged in their untruths.



Tennessee SPJ national presidents (aka "Tennessee Mafia") attended the 2004 convention. From left are Reginald Stuart, 1994-95; Georgiana Vines, 1992-93; and Frank Gibson, 1990-91.

"Journalism under Fire" was the title of another major address during the convention, this one delivered by Bill Moyers, whose 50-plus-year journalistic career tracked from a small Texas newspaper to Newsday to television networks.

Moyers recounted some of the major documentaries he and his producer developed, noting impediments to good journalism from government secrecy and sophisticated and expensive corporate public relations campaigns, using "scurrilous underground" tactics to discredit reporting that challenged dangerous products or working conditions. He told of pressures from segments of Congress and industry to reduce funding and otherwise restrain PBS' aggressive reporting.

Despite changes in the world and in journalism, Moyers said the journalists' job remains essentially the same: "to gather, weigh, organize, analyze and present information people need to know in order to make sense of the world."

He maintained that the job of journalism has become more difficult today because of a variety of factors, including the "sheer magnitude of the issues we need to report and analyze." First among those issues,

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Convention

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Moyers discussed what he termed “the most unmanageable of all problems . . . the accelerating deterioration of the environment.”

“One of the biggest changes in my lifetime,” Moyers said, “is that the delusional is no longer marginal.” Among the examples he cited were the recent terrorist acts at a school in Beslan, Russia, the fact that votes from believers in the Rapture Index could decide the presidential election next month, and that the CIA now includes in its standard employer polygraph exam the question “Do you have friends in the media?”

While Moyers explained a litany of potential problems that he sees from the growing conglomeration of media ownership that, he said, gives profit margins greater priority than the journalism, “we need to know and to keep our freedoms.” He left his audience feeling energized and convinced that good journalism matters in this complex world.

Moyers closed by noting that he believes “more strongly than ever that the quality of journalism and the quality of democracy are inextricably joined.”

Continuing education

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At UT he teaches Public Affairs Reporting and Print / Web Newswriting and Reporting.

On Nov. 17, Laura Ayo of the News Sentinel will present “Database Reporting: Finding Facts Before Officials Do” from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the News Sentinel Knox Room.

Ayo is the News Sentinel’s computer-assisted reporter. In addition to maintaining the paper’s database library, she analyzes data to add depth to deadline stories and special projects. Her CAR work has earned her several SPJ awards and other awards. Laura has a degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University, interned at CNN’s investigative reporting unit in Atlanta and worked at newspapers in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Lafayette before joining the News Sentinel in 1999. She has covered education and the federal and state legal systems.

We must provide the News Sentinel a list of attendees to ensure access to the building. Please make reservations with Sally Guthrie (sguthrie@comcast.net,



Georgiana Vines presents \$10,000 Pulliam 1st Amendment Award to Dan Christensen of Miami Daily Business Review for reporting on secret cases in U.S. District Court in Miami. Sue Porter, president of Sigma Delta Chi Foundation, and Gordon “Mac” McKerral, SPJ president, applaud

2005 Region 3 Conference Update

by Holly Fisher, Region 3 Director

Plans are in full swing for the Regional Conference. *The (Charleston) Post and Courier* has signed on as the sponsor of the Opening Night Reception. And the *Charleston Regional Business Journal* is an in-kind sponsor, offering mailing and copying services. Thank you to those sponsors!

I am in talks with other media outlets, including our three TV stations that have expressed an interest in getting involved.

The conference will be April 8-9, 2005, at the Charleston Riverview Hotel in downtown Charleston, S.C. Start spreading the word. I do have a flier available I would be happy to send you as a pdf document. You can make copies and start encouraging everyone you know to attend.

With help from the East Tennessee Pro Chapter, I will be finalizing the program list over the next month, so if you have suggestions for program ideas and/or speakers, please let me know ASAP.

sallyguthrie@mindspring.com or 588-1474) by the 17th for the October meeting and by the 14th for the November session.

Mark Your Calendar

Oct. 20, 7:30 p.m., Continuing education, part 1,
Knox Room, News Sentinel

Nov. 17, 7:30 p.m., Continuing education, part
2, Knox Room, News Sentinel

Oct. 16-17, IRE Better Watchdog Workshop,
Bowling Green, Ky.

[http://www.ire.org/training/betterwatchdog/
kentucky.html](http://www.ire.org/training/betterwatchdog/kentucky.html)

April 8-9, 2005, Region 3 Conference, Riverview
Hotel, Charleston, S.C.

Meeting: Oct. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

News Sentinel Knox Room