

# Spot News

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## 28th Follies to honor open-records advocate Tom Chester

The 2006 Front Page Follies will honor Tom Chester, deputy managing editor of the News Sentinel and a respected journalist in the East Tennessee area.

"**Tom Chester's** passion for news is unsurpassed," said Jack McElroy, editor of the News Sentinel.

"**He is** an inspirational journalist, devoted to seeking the truth and proclaiming it as quickly and loudly as possible," McElroy added.

"**He is a** tireless leader in the fight for open government and a beacon of integrity in a profession fraught with ethical pitfalls. He is also a character and a lot of fun to work with."

**During his 18** years at the News Sentinel, Chester received recognition from multiple organizations. In 2000 he received the First Amendment award from both the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Associated Press Managing Editors for coverage of the Thomas "Zoo Man" Huskey case. Both awards recognize the ability to manage editorial integrity, while supporting journalistic rights.

**Chester was also** awarded the

Malcolm Law Memorial Award for Investigative Journalism.

**Chester has been** a mentor to many journalists. A number of these writers have gone on to such newspapers as the Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times and New York Times.

"**I've been** privileged to work with a lot of good people in the market," Chester said. Chester spent his early years working a variety of jobs, ranging from farm hand, carpenter, painter and even gravedigger. He served as an information specialist for the U.S. Air Force from 1972 to 1976. During that time, Chester also wrote for the Montgomery Adviser in Alabama.

**In 1978, Chester** graduated from the University of Tennessee with a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication. By that time he had become a mainstay at the Knoxville Journal, moving up the ranks from copy boy to city editor. In 1987, Chester joined the Knoxville News Sentinel and has taken on several different editorial roles since that time.

"**The East Tennessee Chapter**

of the Society of Professional Journalists is very proud to honor Tom Chester for his many accomplishments in the field of journalism," said Chapter President Ed Hooper.

"Tom is the embodiment of a professional newspaper man who follows the story wherever it leads. He has earned tremendous respect from his journalism colleagues."

**Chester said** he was grateful to share company with such an impressive list of journalists who have been honored by SPJ, especially News Sentinel Cartoonist Charlie Daniel.

"Just to be honored with Charlie is great," Chester said.

**The Follies** are scheduled for 6 p.m. Saturday, June 17, at the Knoxville Convention Center. The annual roast of newsmakers is sponsored by the East Tennessee Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and raises funds for communications scholarships at the University of Tennessee and Pellissippi State Technical Community College.

**Local TV anchors** and meteorologists will add their special brand of fun to the event.

The public is invited. Tickets are \$100, or \$1,000 for a table of 10.

**For ticket information** call Jean Ash at 691-2606 or send e-mail to [etspj\\_communications@gmail.com](mailto:etspj_communications@gmail.com).



**Tom Chester**

# Oak Ridge school censorship sparks panel discussion

Oak Ridge school officials have adopted a new, written policy to change the Oak Leaf student news-paper from a forum for student expression to a public relations tool for the high school, learned more than 30 people who attended the chapter's January program.

In a panel discussion titled "Censoring Students: Press Freedom and Public Schools," Brittany Thomas, editor of the Oak Leaf, and Krystal Myers, author of a story dealing with the subject of birth control, described the firestorm created when the ORHS principal, in her first year at the school, refused to allow teachers to distribute copies of the paper. The paper was reprinted and circulated to students after Myers' article, which she said extensively quoted a local physician, was removed, and an article about tattoos was altered.

Myers said the pregnancies of several freshmen girls at the high school sparked the staff's interest to write about birth control. The principal objected the doctor's use of specific, sex-related terminology, the student journalists said. School officials expressed concern that area tattoo businesses that violate state law by applying the body art to minors without parental permission might sue the school district for calling attention to their illegal practices although no students were identified the article.

According to current U.S. Supreme Court rulings, assuming that



**Bonnie Hufford, Krystal Myers, Brittany Thomas, Ed Hedgepeth and Dorothy Bowles discuss student censorship at the January meeting.**

the Oak Leaf was by previous practice a public forum for students, school officials should not have censored the articles unless they could present factual evidence that the questioned articles would cause a "substantial disruption" in the school, according to panelist Dorothy Bowles, a UT professor and for more than 25 years a Student Press Law Center advisory board member. Thomas and Myers maintained that the paper for years had operated as an open forum for students and that the masthead included a statement to that effect.

Bowles explained how Supreme Court holdings would allow the school to switch to a policy of prior review by administrators, thus avoiding the "substantial disruption" legal test. While the Court does not allow a government agency like a public school absolute control over school-sponsored student expression, it al-

lows officials to censor if they can show valid educational purposes rather than the stricter legal test. Age appropriateness is considered a valid educational goal. Bowles also pointed out that many school districts elect to maintain open forum student papers to avoid potential legal liability.

Ed Hedgepeth, Knox County Schools director of secondary instruction and for 24 years a principal in Knox schools, explained the written policy for student papers in his district. All student papers are subject to prior administrative review, but he said that few, if any, administrators regularly exercise that policy. Instead, they provide a list of potentially controversial topics and instruct faculty advisers to submit for review any article about one of those topics.

**See Censorship, on Page 3**

## ETSPJ Officers and Board of Directors

**Ed Hooper, president**

**Jean Ash, secretary, Front Page Follies chair, communications coordinator**

**Adina Chumley, Golden Press Card co-chair**

**Lisa Hood Skinner, Golden Press Card co-chair**

**Dan Foley, treasurer**

**Dorothy Bowles, immediate past president, Spot News editor**

**Robb Atkinson**

**Christine Jessel**

**Mia Rhodarmer**

**Steve Row**

**Georgiana Vines**

**Letters to the Editor Policy:** The board encourages letters to the editor of Spot News. Like letters policies at most newspapers, we ask that letters be limited to 200 words or less. Letters will be subject to editing for space and content. Send e-mail to [etspj.communications@gmail.com](mailto:etspj.communications@gmail.com)

# Chapter board welcomes three new members

Steve Row, Mia Rhodarmer and Christine Jessel accepted invitations in January to become members of the chapter's board of directors. They replace former board members Thomas Fraser, Tom King and Dan Farkas, whose increased job responsibilities or family illness led to their resignations.

**S**teve Row, an SPJ member since the early 1970s, relocated to Knoxville after a 35-year career with The Richmond (Va.) News Leader and then the company that publishes the merged News Leader and Richmond Times-Dispatch. After the merger, Row moved from covering government to directing the company's journalism education outreach program. He co-directed a Dow Jones Newspaper Fund urban journalism workshop for minority high school students from 1993 to 2003.

Row served a term as president of the SPJ Richmond chapter, has been active in SPJ program planning and freedom-of-information matters,



Row

and served on a Virginia State Bar committee that explored the use of tape recorders in courtrooms.

Since moving to East Tennessee, Row was associate editor of City View magazine for 14 months and now writes for the community relations office at Pellissippi State Technical Community College, freelances for a variety of publications and teaches non-credit writing courses at UT and Pellissippi State.

**M**ia Rhodarmer joined the Monroe County Advocate & Democrat in 2000 as a reporter and became editor in March 2003. She graduated with a mass communications degree from UNC-Asheville in 1992 and attended graduate school at Murray State University in Murray, Ky.



Rhodarmer

Previous experience includes working at the Macon News in her hometown of Franklin, N.C., education reporter for the McDowell News in Marion, N.C., working with non-profits in Franklin, and the Murray State development office.

She is married to Charlie Rhodarmer and lives in Vonore. She is a member of the Sweetwater Civitan Club, volunteers for Habitat for Humanity, and enjoys spending time on Tellico Lake, playing tennis, and walking her two dogs.

**C**hristine Jessel was born in Parkersburg, Iowa, but grew up in Sevierville, Tennessee. She has a B.A. from Vanderbilt University, where she graduated magna cum laude with a degree in English literature. She is a Phi Beta Kappa scholar as well. She earned an M.S. in Communications from the University of Tennessee in 2004.



Jessel

Jessel started her career in radio as a disc jockey at WRVU, Vanderbilt's student radio station. While attending the University of Tennessee, she worked as operations manager and news director at WUTK-FM, UT's college radio station. She is now a reporter/anchor for Citadel Broadcasting.

## (Censorship continued from Page 2)

Bonnie Hufford, UT professor and executive director of the Tennessee High School Press Association, noted that most Tennessee high schools operate under a similar prior review policy, which is endorsed by a national association for school boards. She also noted that the Oak Leaf frequently wins awards and suggested that its previous student forum status enabled its staffs over the years to write about more ambitious topics than many other schools in the state.

Oak Ridge school officials turned down the chapter's invitation to participate in the program.

A lively Q and A session followed the panel.

[Oak Ridge School Superintendent Tom Bailey was invited to join the panel but he sent this e-mail in reply: "I will not be able to participate as one of the panelists on your forum at this time. With implied statements of litigation pending, I have been advised not to discuss or participate in discussions that could have any direct or indirect association with this issue. I look forward to participation in future forums. Sincerely, Tom Bailey" Since Dr. Bailey has identified himself as the only spokesman for this issue and to balance the panel, the program committee added Ed Hedgepeth, Knox County Schools Director of Curriculum and Instruction, to represent a secondary school system administrator's point of view. —Communications Coordinator]

## Local reps will preview legislative session at chapter meeting Feb. 11; public invited

Can Tennesseans expect a massive cleanup of the way their elected representatives do business or was the special legislative session on ethics reform much ado about nothing?

The next ETSPJ meeting provides an opportunity to ask members of our local delegation to explain how ethics legislation shook out after partisan politicians, lobbyists, and committee after committee adding amendment after amendment mixed it up for three weeks in Nashville.

The meeting with local representatives and Tom Humphrey, Nashville bureau chief for the Knoxville News Sentinel, is at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 11, at Calhoun's on Bearden Hill. The public is invited. Attendees may order lunch from the menu.

Gov. Phil Bredesen called the General Assembly into special session in early January for the first time since 1999.

"The public's trust in us has come under a cloud" as a result of the arrests of at least nine current and for-

mer state and local officials, the governor told lawmakers in a joint House and Senate session.

Before the special session began, a bipartisan legislative committee suggested numerous reforms, including as follows:

- that the General Assembly, its committees and subcommittees meet in public.
- that an ethics commission be formed with power to investigate ethics complaints, to make sure legislators and lobbyists file required disclosure forms and to levy fines up to \$10,000.
- that lobbyists would be required to reveal identities of clients and how much they spend to influence legislation.
- that cash contributions to political campaigns would be banned.
- that amounts of legal campaign contributions would be limited further.
- that citizens would have easy Internet access to legislators' travel, mileage and expense reimbursements.

### Mark your calendar for coming events

**Friday, Feb. 10:** Deadline for Golden Press Card entries, 5 p.m., Room 333, Communications Bldg. on UT campus

**Saturday, Feb. 11:** Members of local delegation will preview current legislative session, 11 a.m., Calhoun s on Bearden Hill

**March 31-April 1:** Region 12 conference, Memphis

**Friday, May 12:** Golden Press Card awards dinner, 6 p.m., University Club

**Saturday, June 17:** Front Page Follies, 6 p.m., Knoxville Convention Center



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