

Spot News

Vol. 11, No. 5 May 2006

A publication of the East Tennessee Chapter
of the Society of Professional Journalists

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Plan to attend Front Page Follies first rehearsals next week

By Jean Ash

ETSPJ Communications Coordinator
and Follies Chair

David Lauver, Anne McKinney and others on the script committee have been working hard and are ready for action!† We've set the first rehearsal meetings for 3 p.m. Sunday, May 7, and the following at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 9, in the hopes that everyone who is interested in being part of this year's show can attend one or the other — if not both! Both meetings will be at the News Sentinel in the Moskos Room.

Special for current SPJ members. See Follies coupon on Page 4.

David will have scripts and this will be your chance to look them over and, after you stop rolling on the floor with laughter, put in your bid for the roles for that you would like to consider performing.

We will also use these preliminary meetings to see the which days of the week and times would accommodate the schedules of as many as possible.

If you cannot attend either one and want to either be IN the show or HELP with the many other aspects of the Follies, please let me know at either jeanash@comcast.net or phone 691-2606. Please tell me what evenings or weekend after-

noons are good for you for future rehearsals.

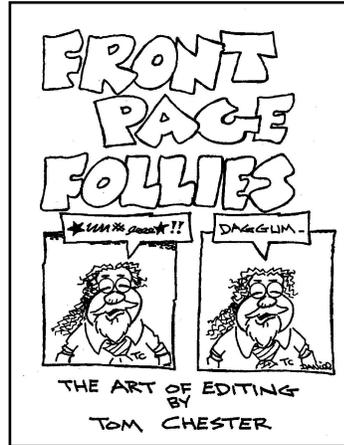
It would also be nice if you could e-mail if you CAN attend one or both of the first rehearsals, so we know how many copies of the script to prepare.

For News Sentinel security, we cannot leave the building's door open. Someone will be at the door from five minutes before the meeting is set to start until fifteen minutes afterward. If you can't come until later than quarter after the hour, do come, but please call me on my cell phone when you arrive and I'll go to the door to let you in. That's 567-8859.

By the way, members of the cast and others who work on the FPF may have dinner at the Convention

Center right before the show at our actual cost, which will be somewhere around \$25-30. You will also get a FREE T-shirt.

The Follies dinner, auction and show are on Saturday evening, June 17, and we'll have a dress rehearsal that day.



Golden Press Card dinner

May 8 is deadline
for reservations;
awards are May 12

What: Annual awards dinner to recognize best work of East Tennessee journalists during 2005 calendar year.

Who: The stars of the night are the prize-winning reporters, photographers and headline writers, but we will be treated to the wit and wisdom of the national Society of Professional Journalists president, David Carlson.

When: Make your reservation by May 8. A cash bar reception starts at 6 p.m. on May 12, followed by dinner at 6:30.

Where: At the University Club on the corner of Kingston Pike and Neyland Drive where plenty of free parking is available.

How: Send a \$20 check payable to ETSPJ to Dan Foley, 1600 Coronada Lane, Knoxville, TN 37922 or e-mail him at dan-foley@utk.edu. If space is still available, tickets at the door will cost \$25.

Why: Because a good time will be had by all as we visit long-time acquaintances and honor our colleagues and friends for their outstanding work.



TOWN HALL PANELISTS, who informed and entertained the audience, were Lloyd Daugherty (above), Georgiana Vines, Hallerin Hill (top right), Robin Wilhoit, Hubert Smith (top far right), Gene Patterson (bottom right). Panel moderator Dean Rice (far right) listens to a question posed to panelists from audience member Tom Salter. (Photos by Jean Ash)

Media panelists and audience exchange election coverage ideas

By Dorothy Bowles
Spot News Editor

“Confusion” was the watchword at the ETSPJ-sponsored Town Hall Meeting on April 19, but by the time local reporters and talk-show hosts explained campaign-coverage policies at their organizations and listened to questions and comments from write-in candidates and others in the audience, consensus seemed reached that media should avoid communicating confusion to their audiences about the May 2 election.

Coming on the same day that five county commissioners filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the city charter and in wake of the state Supreme Court’s recent ruling upholding Memphis’ term limits, the Town Hall Meeting attracted nearly 50 citizens, all eager to learn or express their opinions about topics like proper steps for the election commission, paper ballots versus voting machines, media coverage of write-in candidates, voter apathy, perceived media bias, blogs and other Internet sources, an entrenched Knoxville power structure and teaching civics in schools.

Panelists agreed that covering more than 40 write-in candidates, waiting for paper ballots to be counted before election results are known and not knowing whether incumbents legally can serve if they are re-elected, all contribute to a tougher than usual campaign season for journalists.

“The write-in situation makes News Sentinel coverage different this year,” News Sentinel political columnist Georgiana Vines said. She noted that the newspaper’s voters’ guide was already planned before the Supreme Court ruling, but another

one would profile candidates who announced in the extended deadline period. She said that the paper’s editorial board was interviewing all candidates and that the paper’s Web site would play a more important role in election coverage.

Television anchors Robin Wilhoit, WBIR, and Gene Patterson, WATE, echoed Vines about increased reliance on their respective stations’ Web sites. Patterson also said that during the 11 p.m. newscast on Election Day, WATE would increase coverage of race results in surrounding counties, assuming that Knox County results would not yet be known.

Radio commentators Hallerin Hill, Hubert Smith and Lloyd Daugherty all said radio provided them an advantage over newspapers or TV stations in that they had ample time to interview candidates on-air and to field calls from listeners.

Daugherty, noting his longer experience on the political side than in radio, expressed surprise at how many candidates and public officials refused to participate in radio shows.

Hill noted that radio talk shows deal in opinion and aren’t bound by the same ethical codes of journalism as reporters.

Daugherty chided local news media for, in his opinion, deferring to the status quo, over relying on official sources and not asking more probing questions, especially about finances.

Moderator Dean Rice noted that most of the night’s discussion focused on the upcoming election’s process rather than issues facing the community.

General agreement was that the candidates themselves, local media and the public have an educational duty in the campaign and election.

Farewell to former President Bonnie Riechert, a good SPJ friend

By Jean Ash
Communications Coordinator

When she heard that Belmont University's Department of Media Studies was looking for a "mature partner," Bonnie Riechert said she brushed her distinguished-looking salt-and-pepper hair from her forehead and said, "Oooohh!"

Eight ETSPJ friends and colleagues of Riechert's attended a farewell luncheon for the former president, second vice president, secretary, treasurer and board member of the East Tennessee Chapter from the late '80s through the mid '00s at Riverside Tavern April 17. Riechert is leaving the faculty of the UT College of Communication and Information's School of Advertising and Public Relations after this semester to begin a new career in Nashville in August.

Belmont is a private university with a student body of 4,700 and is located

near Vanderbilt. Bonnie will teach media relations, public relations, and communications courses split between two departments. "It's just perfect for a Gemini," Reichert said.

The original idea, Reichert told the group, was to move closer to her aging parents and maybe even to retire. However, the realities of health insurance costs led her to consider interviewing at MTSU before learning about the Belmont University opening.

"Students I had lunch with there made me feel very welcome," Riechert said. Students have just chartered a PRSA chapter that she will be able to help get firmly on its feet.

"Working with students is very important to me," she said. She will remain active with SPJ there as well.

Besides her friends, of course, Reichert says one of the things she will miss most is her fellow Tai Chi enthusiasts. Since there is no group similar to

the one she's been active with here in either Murfreesboro, where she will reside, or in Nashville, she vows to start one.

Several at the luncheon remarked on Bonnie's enthusiasm and excitement, saying how refreshing it is to see someone so upbeat about a job. And for those planning a visit to the Nashville area next year, Reichert says her home has a guest bedroom and she welcomes SPJ friends to visit. For now, you can reach Bonnie at belmontprprof@aol.com.



While awaiting their lunch, Jean Ash posed the ETSPJ "Bonnie send off" group for a photograph. Clockwise from left are Dan Foley, Lisa Hood Skinner, Adina Chumley, Dorothy Bowles, Suzanne Neal, Georgiana Vines, Bonnie Riechert and Jan Maxwell Avent.



*Photo by Jean Ash
Bonnie Riechert shows off her gift from ETSPJ, a travel cup emblazoned with the SPJ logo.*

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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

Tennessee FOI Update: Attempts to close records go nowhere

A bill in the state assembly that would have effectively closed all **traffic accident reports** appears dead for this session. The proposed legislation would have redacted identifying information of drivers, passengers and witnesses in all collision reports.

Open meetings legislation that FOI advocates unsuccessfully lobbied for as part of the special ethics session was stymied also in the regular session. Local government groups persuaded legislators to have a committee study the proposed amendments to the current Sunshine act.

As originally proposed, this study group would issue its report on Oct. 1, but the county commissioners association objected to a report coming out before the November election even though all of its members will be on the August ballot. The panel's deadline was postponed to Dec. 1. Meanwhile, deliberations continue concerning the makeup of the study committee.

Another FOI controversy this session revolved around **animal testing** and failed to pass. The bill would have closed the name of owners of diseased livestock, location of farms, and the names of veterinarians in test reports at the state Agricultural Department's lab.

The veterinarian's association argued that making such information confidential would

encourage more owners and vets to submit samples to the state lab. Further, the state vet group claimed that it couldn't qualify for homeland security grants unless the records were closed. Others speculated that the motive for seeking closure was fear that a pack of reporters and photographers would show up at the farm where a diseased animal dies.

~DISCOUNT COUPON~

Good for 1/3 off regular price of a Front Page Follies ticket!

If you're a member of the East Tennessee Chapter, Society of Professional Journalists, you may receive a discount on a great dinner and guaranteed hilarity June 17! Submit this coupon with your reservation and save \$33.33 on the cost of your ticket! (Regular price \$100 so your ticket total would be \$67.67.)

Name _____

SPJ Membership Number _____
(May be found on the ID card sent when you last renewed or *Quill* mailing label)

Offer good for current members of ETSPJ.
Only one discount per member. Not transferable.
Must be submitted with your reservation.



EAST TENNESSEE CHAPTER

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