



SPJ National Convention Oct. 4-7, Washington



(Above) Clint Brewer, editor of *The City Paper*, Nashville, takes the oath as national SPJ president. It is administered by Christine Tatum, outgoing president. (Left) Georgiana Vines visits with John Seigenthaler, First Amendment Center, Nashville.



(Above) Bob Schieffer, CBS News, left, and Jim Bohannon, talk show host, Westwood One Radio, conduct the opening night auction. Georgiana Vines successfully bid for a lunch with senior White House correspondent Helen Thomas. (Right) National SPJ President Christine Tatum, *The Denver Post*, thanks Ken Paulson for presenting a program on the First Amendment. Paulson is editor of *USA Today* and formerly was executive director of the First Amendment Center, Nashville.

PHOTOS BY ELENORA E. EDWARDS,
SPOT NEWS EDITOR



Bob Schieffer, CBS News, left photo, moderates the Watergate panel. Members, right photo, from left, Ben Bradlee, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, *The Washington Post*; Scott

Armstrong, investigator for the Senate Watergate Committee; Alicia Shepherd, whose book on Woodward and Bernstein was published recently; and Daniel Schorr, CBS News

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Nov. 18, 2007 - 5:30 p.m., ETSPJ board meeting, Mandarin House West, Knoxville
Nov. 29, 2007 - 7 p.m., ETSPJ meeting, News Sentinel Building, Community Room, Knoxville
Early December 2007 - Holiday party
March 28-30, 2008 - Regions 12 & 8 spring conference, New Orleans, La.
June 2008 - Ted Scripps Leadership Institute, Indianapolis
Sept. 4-7, 2008 - SPJ National Convention & Journalism Conference, Atlanta

The ETSPJ guy

BY JOHN HUOTARI
ETSPJ president

Stand up for open government

Journalists and open-government advocates received some great news in October.

First, a jury upheld the principle of open government when it said Knox County commissioners had violated Tennessee's public meetings law by deliberating in private when appointing a dozen office-holders in January.

Then, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and the U.S. House of Representatives passed a shield law to protect the confidentiality of reporters' sources in most federal court cases.

Unfortunately, though, the battle is not over.

The White House has vowed to veto the federal shield law if it is sent to the president. The Bush Administration says the legislation could encourage leaks and limit the government's ability to prosecute terrorism cases.

In Tennessee, meanwhile, local government officials have used the Knox County case as a reason to try to weaken a provision in the Open Meetings Act that calls for open meetings when two or more members of a local government body get together to deliberate public business.

In October, a state panel recommended changing the definition of a public meeting from a "two or more" standard to a "quorum" standard. A quorum is typically



HUOTARI

ETSPJ to sponsor workshop on shooting video for the Web

The East Tennessee Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists will sponsor a workshop on shooting video for the Web at 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 29, at the News Sentinel Building in Knoxville. It will address the fact that reporters are being asked more and more to carry cameras with them to shoot video for online news Web sites, according to Amanda Greever, ETSPJ program chairman.

Panelists:

- Bob Legg, who teaches broadcast production courses at UT, who has agreed to give some instruction in the basics of shooting video

- Brittany Bailey, a backpack journalist at WBIR-TV, who has agreed to offer her insights on "shooting for news." She can

offer hands-on shooting tips including how to lean on natural lighting for interviews and the importance of including wide, medium and tight shots for visual storytelling. She has valuable experience posting stories to the Web. In addition, Bailey can explain the skills required for keeping interview subjects at ease when they are facing a camera.

- Jigsha Desai, an online editor at the News Sentinel, Knoxville. She works with fellow staffers to keep *KnoxNews.com* updated. She can discuss various aspects of keeping the site fresh with blogs, breaking news and multimedia extras.

The workshop will be free for SPJ members and \$5 for non-members. ETSPJ will serve snacks.

SPJ cites chapter excellence

The ETSPJ won two awards in five areas of competition on the SPJ national level and was the only chapter to do so. Winners were announced in September and at the National Convention and Journalism Conference Oct. 4 through 7 in Washington, D.C.

Annually, SPJ also recognizes chapters for outstanding work during the previous year in five key areas: First Amendment and freedom of information activity; campus relations and scholarship activities; activities promoting diversity among journalists; professional development and continuing education programs; and chapter communications.

In the areas of diversity and professional development, ETSPJ was the small chapter honoree. The awards were based on programs held in 2006-07.

In the area of diversity, ETSPJ con-

ducted a program that focused on East Tennessee's growing Islamic and Middle Eastern population and discussed issues of working with local media and other facts journalists need to know when covering this particular ethnic community in the region. The meeting was well attended, and journalists present called it one of the most informative of the year.

In the area of professional development, ETSPJ conducted various programs focusing on the core missions of the society as well as blogging, holiday gatherings, writing workshops and a lunch with state legislators.

SPJ cited the Western Washington Pro and the Utah Headliners Club as the 2007 Chapters of the Year.

(Look for more on the national convention in the December issue of *Spot News*.)

a majority.

Since then, the panel, known as the Open Meetings Subcommittee, has dropped the proposed quorum standard. It is now recommending a meeting be open when it includes more than four members of a public body or a majority, whichever is less.

I opposed the change to a quorum standard and volunteered to help the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government fight it. Earlier this month, I supported a Knoxville City Council resolution in which members said they did not want state officials to weaken the state's open meetings law or allow deliberations of public business in private meetings.

I also oppose the newer "four or more" proposal. The change would restrict citizen access to government meetings, reduce media coverage of public affairs and create the potential for private deals to be struck behind closed doors.

Like local officials I've interviewed, I believe the current "two or more" standard is working. The "four or more" standard would be a step backward.

I hope you will join me in remaining vigilant and ready to defend open government when this proposed new standard is discussed by the Open Government Committee Nov. 27 and 28 in Nashville. Besides this standard, the committee also could consider proposed new exemptions to the Open Meetings Act, commonly called the Sunshine Law.

Regarding the federal shield law, you might help by telling your Congressional representatives that you support this bill.



ELENORA E. EDWARDS, SPOT NEWS EDITOR

John Huotari, ETSPJ president, right, with John Seigenthaler, who won a national SPJ award

SPJ has been fighting to get this legislation passed in the interest of protecting reporters. There is currently no federal shield law.

John Huotari is the city hall reporter at *The Oak Ridger*. He can be reached by phone at (865) 220-5533 or by e-mail at john.huotari@oakridger.com.

Welcome, members

The ETSPJ chapter welcomes the following folks who have recently joined or renewed:

- Kylie R. Fritz, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City
- Greg Johnson, News Sentinel, Knoxville
- April Young, East Tennessee State University/Piney Flats

John Becker, WBIR-TV anchor, is membership chairman. If interested in joining or rejoining ETSPJ, one can contact him at jbecker@wbir.com.



ELENORA E. EDWARDS, SPOT NEWS EDITOR

Susan Lauver, representing PRSA, moderates the Oct. 18 PRSA-ETSPJ meeting at which Bill Shory, left, Mike Cohen, center, and Larry Aldridge discuss matters of ethics they deal with in their work.

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National SPJ one of the best, Vines says

BY GEORGIANA VINES

This year's annual convention of the Society of Professional Journalists was one of the best I've attended since I started going in 1972.

One of my favorite sessions was "Watergate: Thirty-five Years Later." Featured were Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the Washington Post, who did the initial reporting on the break-in at the Watergate hotel that eventually led to the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon. Also on the panel: Ben Bradlee, their editor and now a vice president with the Washington Post Co.; Daniel Shorr, who reported the story for CBS; Alicia Shepherd, author of a book on Woodward and Bernstein; and Scott Armstrong, an investigator for the Senate's Watergate Committee. Moderator was CBS' Bob Schieffer.

The room was packed for the panel, which was very encouraging since so many student members were in attendance along with the pros, many of whom were working in 1972 when the story broke.

More than history was told at this program. There were good tips for journalists to do their job accurately, ethically and in context.

"Be a good listener," Bernstein said.

Woodward cautioned that "something in the moment looks different in the future." He was referring to the rumor circulating at the time that the reason U.S. Rep. Gerald Ford of Michigan was selected to be Nixon's vice president after Spiro Agnew resigned was that Ford would pardon Nixon. Woodward said it was hard not to believe it then but that as time has passed and he was able to interview Ford on the subject, he no longer thinks that was the

reason Ford was selected.

I also took advantage of a tour of the Marble Palace, which was limited to the first 50 who registered on opening day.

No eating or drinking or use of cell phones, photography or audio is allowed in the courtroom where the U.S. Supreme Court has hearings when it's in session portions of three days a week from October to June. The rest of their time is spent in conferences just among themselves with no clerks or in research or writing their cases, the guide said.

The courtroom is very traditional, with seats based on seniority to the right or left of the chief justice. They may have guests who sit in the area reserved for lawyers, but there is assigned seating based again on the seniority. A seat on the front row close to the justices on the right side is reserved for the president when he attends. The court was not in session this day, but the aura of the place is felt deeply.

Besides the numerous programs, business of SPJ is conducted twice. The organization has its own tradition. At the first business meeting, nominations are made for the various offices up for election. Then at the second session, late on Saturday afternoon, elections are held for positions other than regional directors.

Tennessee is well represented on this year's board as well as in the history of the organization. Our new president is Clint Brewer, executive editor of the City Paper in Nashville, a graduate of the University of Tennessee. Our regional director is Sonny Albarado, who until recently was with The Commercial Appeal in Memphis and now is projects editor at the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Other Tennesseans who have served as

national president are Frank Sutherland, retired editor of The Tennessean; Frank Gibson, who runs the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government; Paul McMasters, former executive director of the Freedom Forum based in Nashville; Reginald Stuart, a recruiter for McClatchy newspapers who is a native of Nashville and began his journalism career with The Tennessean; Al Cross, executive director of the Institute for Rural Journalism & Community Issues at the University of Kentucky and a political columnist for the Louisville Courier Journal, born in Knoxville, and me.

One of the highlights of the convention is an auction for the Legal Defense Fund. Bidding can be competitive, and I was successful on one—lunch with Helen Thomas, a journalism icon who's been covering the White House since the early 1960s when John Kennedy was president. She is one of my role models.

Georgiana Vines was national SPJ president in 1992-93. She is retired associate editor of the News Sentinel and continues to be a political columnist for the Knoxville newspaper.

Editor's note

If any member wants to contribute an item to the December issue of Spot News or wants to provide a tip on something we should cover, please contact me at eledwards@aol.com or (865) 457-5459. The deadline is Dec. 3.

Spot News

2007-08 editor

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Tennesseans at the Oct. 6 SPJ dinner, from left; John Huotari, Elenora E. Edwards, Reggie Stuart, Georgiana Vines, Clint Brewer, Sonny Albarado and Al Cross. Stuart, Vines and Cross are past national presidents, and Brewer is current national president. Albarado is Region 12 director, and Huotari is ETSPJ president.