

Espy Jay

DECEMBER 2005

Prez Sez:

I WANT TO WELCOME all of our new SPJ members in Western Washington! We are glad to have you as part of our vibrant organization. SPJ is a leader in journalism ethics, professional development, legal defense of journalists, and journalism education. We sponsor a contest each year to reward excellence in the fields of print, broadcast and Web-based journalism. We host forums and panels on issues vital to our profession.

As we start another exciting year, we do so with heavy hearts. Our fellow journalists in the Gulf states are suffering. Many of them lost everything in Hurricane Katrina; but they are pressing on. They continue to document this unspeakable tragedy and serve as the voices of their communities. The Western Washington SPJ Board has coordinated efforts to send care packages to journalists in the disaster areas. The board encourages news staffs in Western Washington to adopt a newsroom in Louisiana or Mississippi. To find information on other ways you can help your fellow journalists, contact the Council of National Journalism Organizations at <http://www.cnjo.org/>.

Natural disasters are not the only threats we are facing. The journalism profession is under attack. We must step up the fight for a federal shield law for reporters. Washington is one of 19 states that does not have a statewide shield law. Attorney General Rob McKenna plans to submit legislation next year that would create one.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that journalists work together to preserve a free press. If you are passionate about your profession, we encourage you to become more than just a member of SPJ. Become involved. You can help make a difference.

—Kirsten Kendrick, President
Western Washington Pro Chapter, SPJ
Kirsten is a reporter at KPLU

The Newsletter of the Western Washington Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists

c/o Washington Newspaper Publishers Association
1434 Elliott Ave. West, Third Floor
Seattle, WA 98119

Get with the program

"Lessons From Katrina: Preparing For Our Own Disaster"

The Western Washington Professional Chapter of SPJ and the DART Center for Journalism and Trauma hosted a panel Thurs., Nov. 17, on how journalists in Washington state should prepare for a natural disaster on the level of Hurricane Katrina. Panel participants were Ross Reynolds, host of KUOW's "The Conversation," as moderator; photographer Ken Jones and reporter Bernard Choi of KING-TV; Mike Brunker, West Coast news editor for MSNBC.com; Roger Simpson executive director, the DART Center for Journalism and Trauma; and Jim Mullen, director of the Washington State Emergency Management Department.

Each of the media panelists spent time in the hurricane disaster zone. Brunker kept a "roving blog" and said he was amazed at the personal stories he was able to relate. Brunker said it is important to have a game plan before disaster strikes. For example, he said, make sure your newsroom is equipped with satellite phones.

Jones and Choi were dispatched to Louisiana to help KING-TV's sister station, WWL-TV. Choi and Jones said it is important for news managers to make sure their newsrooms are ready and fully equipped to cover a major disaster. "The logistics need to be thought out well in advance," they said. Jones presented a moving slide show of the footage he gathered in the hurricane zone.

We've set up an e-mail group called SPJWash to disseminate news like this, and to give SPJ members a place on the Internet to discuss what's happening, trade gossip (didja hear about the latest hiring at X, or the new job opening at Y?) and make connections. Go to <http://groups.msn.com/spjwash> to find out more and to sign up. (Open to SPJ members only. Consider it one of the privileges of membership!)

Press Club!

SEATTLE PRESS CLUB - Dec. 2, 2005 ● 7 to 9 p.m.

Elysian Brewery, 1221 E Pike St. Seattle ● More details at SPJWash.org

Raise a toast at the last Seattle Press Club event of 2005. We'll meet Dec. 2 (7 to 9 p.m.) to reminisce about the past year, muse about the state of journalism and meet interesting folks in our profession. Visit www.spjwash.org for additional information

For people with busy social calendars, as well as you obsessive planner types, Press Club events are normally held the first Friday evening of every month. Here are the dates for the next several 2006 Press Club events: Jan. 6, Feb. 3, March 3, April 7 and May 5.

While we've been meeting in Seattle, we do plan to hold at least one event on the Eastside in 2006.

We hope to see you! If you have questions, comments or suggestions for future venues, contact Alex Johnson (alex.johnson@msnbc.com) or Dale Steinke (dsteinke@king5.com).

WHATCOM/SKAGIT CLUB – No meeting is scheduled for December.

OLYMPIA PRESS CLUB – No meeting is scheduled for December.

Next meeting: Jan. 7 ● 7 to 9 p.m.

Location: Plenty, 200 4th Ave. W., Olympia

RSVP: Mark Lawton, centersquared@yahoo.com
(meets 2nd Thurs. of each month)

TACOMA PRESS CLUB – Dec. 2, 2005 ● 7 to 9 p.m.

Steilacoom Pub and Deli, 1202 Rainier St., Tacoma

RSVP: Steve Dunkelberger, sdunkel@businesssexaminer.com

NEWS

Volunteer Call-out

Education Chairman Alex Johnson is working on getting professionals involved with journalism students in high schools within the region. He is looking for volunteers to work with students or speak to classes, as well as professionals interested in meeting individual students for lunches or coffee.

Alex is also soliciting judges for the high school contests. If you'd like to volunteer in any of these areas—or if you have other ideas—message him at alex.johnson@msnbc.com

Be a hero

Freedom of the Press. Ethics. Diversity. Open meeting and open records laws. Mentoring student journalists. Contest. Professional training. These things do not grow on trees by themselves. They happen because our volunteers—our heroes—make it happen.

SPJ needs people to get involved, whether it's a few hours a month or a few hours a week. We can find an opportunity that fits into your life.

Pick your passion. Drop us a line. Be a hero.
For information, contact chapter president Kirsten Kendrick at president@spjwash.org

What happens in Vegas...

A summary of the 2005 SPJ Convention and National Journalism Conference

The Society of Professional Journalists made headlines at its national convention this year. The society's national board voted to present a First Amendment Award to Judith Miller, the New York Times reporter who went to jail for 85 days for refusing to divulge her source in the CIA leak controversy. Several news organizations, including CNN, covered the event.

Miller delivered a speech at the convention, explaining what led to her jail sentence and what has happened since her release. She agreed to testify before the grand jury investigating the CIA leak after her source personally released her from a confidentiality agreement. Not everyone agreed with what Miller had to say. Several convention delegates remained seated during a standing ovation as she received her First Amendment Award.

Miller told delegates she went to jail for two reasons. First, she was not convinced that a blanket waiver signed by her source, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby (chief of staff for Vice President Dick Cheney), was given freely. Miller said she wanted a personal letter and phone call from Libby to assure her that he released her from their confidentiality agreement. She received both while in jail. Second, Miller said the special prosecutor in the case refused to sign an agreement limiting the questioning to one source. Miller said she feared that, without such an agreement, she might be forced to reveal the names of other confidential sources. She received that agreement from the special prosecutor while in jail.

After her speech, Miller participated in a panel discussion titled "The Reporter's Privilege Under Siege." Joining her were Associated Press reporter Josef Hebert, reporter Patricia Hurtado of Newsday, and Bruce Sanford of the law firm Baker and Hostetler. The group

discussed the need for a federal shield law for reporters.

During the convention's official voting session, delegates passed a resolution urging Congress to "pass a law recognizing journalists' privilege." The delegates also passed a resolution dealing with how journalists handle anonymous sources. The resolution "urges journalists and their news organizations to grant anonymity with reluctance and caution, and to keep in mind their primary purpose of giving readers, viewers and listeners as much information as possible to reasonably assess the motives and reliability of those whose words and influence they are conveying with the protection of anonymity."

Breakout sessions during the convention covered a wide range of topics, including the ethical questions surrounding the Spokesman-Review's investigative series of Spokane Mayor Jim West. Outstanding student journalists were also honored at the convention.

If you are interested in attending the 2006 SPJ National Convention, it will be held in Chicago Aug. 24-Aug. 27. More information is available at www.spj.org.