



# Virginia Chapter Newsletter

February 2003

**Application Deadline is April 4**

## ***Richmond SPJ, SDX Educational Foundation To Award Two \$2,000 Scholarships This Year***

Applications are now being accepted for two scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each for college students, attending schools in Virginia, who will be juniors or seniors in the next academic year.

The scholarships are given annually by the Richmond SPJ, SDX Educational Foundation with the assistance of the Virginia Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

The deadline is April 4. The scholarship application form is available at < <http://www.spj.org/virginia/>>.

Students attending colleges or universities in Virginia are eligible. The applicants do not have to be majoring in journalism, but must demonstrate an intent to pursue careers in print or broadcast journalism.

The two winners will be honored at the chapter's George Mason banquet, which will be held in Richmond in late May or early June. The winners will be guests at the banquet.

The educational foundation has awarded scholarships to aspiring journalists since 1971.

Nancy Beasley and Don Dale are co-chairmen of the 2003 SPJ scholarship committee. Those with questions about the scholarships may telephone Dale at (804) 204-2705 or (804) 353-3731 or e-mail him at <[ddale@mindspring.com](mailto:ddale@mindspring.com)>.



College students who will be juniors or seniors next year are eligible to apply for one of two SPJ scholarships this year. The deadline for applications is April 4.

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

**Dean of White House Correspondents, Helen Thomas, to be Featured Speaker at SPJ Region 2 Convention. See page 2.**

**Time to Send Us Your George Mason Nomination. See page 3.**

**Registration Deadline is March 7**

***Dean of White House Correspondents, Helen Thomas, To Be Featured Speaker at SPJ Region 2 Convention***

Hearst Newspapers columnist Helen Thomas will be the featured speaker at the SPJ Region 2 convention March 28-29 in Ocean City, Md.

Thomas has covered every president since John F. Kennedy, and she fought against prevailing stereotypes to pave the path for all female journalists who have followed in her footsteps.

Her daily press-conference ending, "Thank you, Mr. President," has become one of journalism's best-known closing lines.



Helen Thomas, who has covered every president since John F. Kennedy, will be the keynote speaker at the SPJ Region 2 convention.

Her topics will be the possible war in Iraq and covering the White House.

The overarching theme of the convention will be "Snipers, Church Scandals and a Possible War: Covering the News in SPJ's Region 2." SPJ's co-host for the convention is the Radio-Television News Directors Association. SPJ members from Virginia, D.C., Maryland, Delaware and North Carolina are expected to attend.

The convention will begin Friday, March 28, with registration and a reception (cash bar) at the Holiday Inn Oceanfront in Ocean City, headquarters for the weekend's activities.

Workshops on Saturday, March 29, will focus on "The Front Line: Covering the Sniper Story" (9-9:50 a.m.; panelists will include reporters from the Maryland AP bureau and The Free Lance-Star), "FOIA and Open Government: What's the Outlook in Region 2" (10-10:50 a.m.), "Answering the Media: Local Officials Thrust into the Spotlight During the Sniper Shootings" (11-11:50 a.m.;

panelists will include a Richmond-area sheriff and a representative from Virginia Commonwealth University), "Media Resources: How News Organizations of Different Sizes Covered the Sniper Story" (2-2:50 p.m.; speakers will include editors from The Free Lance-Star and the Washington Post), "Reporting Abuse: How Reporters Covered the Catholic Scandals" (3-3:50 p.m.) and "Diversity in SPJ and RTNDA" (4-5 p.m.).

From noon to 2 p.m., the convention will hear from prosecutor Paul Ebert of Prince William County, Va., who will be handling the John Allen Mohammed case. Mark of Excellence Awards will also be presented during the luncheon.

The convention's banquet will be preceded by a social gathering (cash bar) from 6 to 7 p.m. Thomas will speak at the banquet, which will begin at 7 p.m.

Another feature of the convention will be an auction to benefit the SPJ scholarship fund and the legal defense fund. Those with items to contribute to the auction are asked to telephone Betty Snider at (800) 877-0500, Ext. 5427, or to e-mail her at <bsnider@freelancestar.com>.

The registration fee for the convention is \$100 for professional members, \$55 for student members and \$110 for non-members. To register, send a check to Sue Kopen Katcef at 402 Fox Hollow Lane, Annapolis, Md., 21403.

Those who attend must make their own hotel reservations by telephoning (800) 837-3588 (be sure to ask for the SPJ rate). A two-night stay is required to qualify for the special rate, which is \$99 per night for a room for up to six people.

The deadline for hotel reservations is March 7. Directions to the hotel are on-line at <<http://ocmdhotels/holidayinn/map.html>>.

Those with questions about the convention may e-mail Jonathan Hunley at <[jhunley@freelancestar.com](mailto:jhunley@freelancestar.com)> or telephone him at (800) 877-0500, Ext. 5004.

---

## **Deadline Is March 14**

### ***Time to Send Us Your George Mason Nominations***

It's time to nominate your journalism role model for the SPJ Virginia Pro chapter's highest honor, the George Mason Award. The annual award recognizes an individual for outstanding contributions to Virginia journalism.



George Mason (1725-1792) was a Virginian and author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. The chapter's highest award is named for him. (Photo by Ron Jennings, © 2003 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Some recipients have been honored for a lifetime's work and others for an especially outstanding year. Winners include editors, broadcasters, reporters, attorneys, publishers, columnists, legislators and journalism educators.

The award, presented since 1964, is named for George Mason, a Virginian who was author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which was the basis for the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights.

A nomination should summarize your nominee's contributions and should be mailed by March 14 to Laura Fortunato at 11117 Glen Hollow Court, Richmond, Va., 23233, or e-mailed to <[Laura.Fortunato@rich.frb.org](mailto:Laura.Fortunato@rich.frb.org)>. Please include the nominee's telephone number and e-mail address, if any, and your name, telephone number and e-mail address.

The banquet, which will include the announcement of the names of the winners of two SPJ journalism scholarships, is usually held in early June. The date will be set once the winner is selected.

Press-law expert Alexander Wellford of the Richmond law firm of Christian Barton LLP won the prestigious award last year. The 2001 recipient was Marvin L. Lake, public editor of the *Virginian-Pilot* in Norfolk. Marge Fisher, editorial writer and former capital correspondent for the *Roanoke Times*, was the 2000 winner.

Other recent recipients include John B. Edwards, editor and publisher of the *Smithfield* (Va.) *Times*; John B. Tansey, retired general manager of WRVA radio in Richmond; Jerry Finch, senior editor and ombudsman of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*; and Ginger W. Stanley, executive manager of the Virginia Press Association. John Mitchell Jr., a crusading journalist and founding editor of *The Planet* (which became the *Richmond Afro-American*), received the award posthumously in 1996.

**First Person**

## ***Looking Back Across 20 Years***

**By Paula Otto  
Virginia Pro Chapter Board Member**

This spring I'm marking the 20th anniversary of my graduation from West Virginia University with a B.S. in journalism. This milestone is making me realize why my students look so young and also prompting me to reflect on the way things were in the broadcast industry when I was an undergraduate.

In the fall of 1979 I memorized the FCC broadcast ownership rules – known as seven and seven. Companies and individuals were limited to no more than seven television and seven radio stations. Those limits grew some through the 1980s before dramatically changing in 1996 when the FCC relaxed its rules. That's led to the emergence of several huge media companies, including Clear Channel, which owns 1,200 radio stations across the country at last count.

Now the debate is centered on cross-ownership, as the FCC considers relaxing the rule that prohibits ownership of television, radio and newspapers in one market by one company. Proponents say it will benefit consumers by combining resources and ultimately delivering better local news information. Others say it will create media monopolies, limiting competition and limiting the diversity of media voices.

Media outlets have produced information across multiple platforms – now known as convergence – for years. Local television anchors do afternoon radio news briefs, newspaper reporters appear on the 6 o'clock news and reporters send viewers and readers to the Web for more information.

I don't think there's any question that convergence is here to stay. At VCU's School of Mass Communications, we're retooling our curriculum to better prepare future journalists for this new era. While specializing in one area, our students will learn print, broadcast and on-line skills. We're also reinforcing the basics: critical thinking, ethics and solid reporting.

What will the media look like in the next 20 years? Will there even be a section on ownership regulation in the Journalism 101 texts of the future? Stay tuned.



Paula Otto

---

### ***Membership Update***

**The Virginia Pro Chapter is inching its way to 100 strong. The most recent membership count stands at 88, up from 66 in 2000. There also are 28 Virginians who are members of the National SPJ, but are not affiliated with the state chapter.**

**President's Message**

***Journalism: A Lifetime of Learning and Courage***

**By Laura Fortunato  
Virginia Pro Chapter President**

Whether you are a student, a rookie or a veteran journalist with thousands of bylines and several awards in your professional archive, no doubt you are still learning, perfecting skills, searching for meaning in your work and world.

Embarking on a career in journalism requires courage, a commitment to a lifetime of learning and the ability to re-frame your experience. Sure, the tenets of good journalism – accuracy, objectivity, fairness and a better-than-“good” working knowledge of English basics are timeless.

But journalists are part of the world in which they live. In the effort to understand and to provide meaning to the events of our day, journalists walk a fine line as witness and participant in an ever-changing world. In the past two years particularly, journalists have shown incredible wherewithal in their ability to report on some of our most horrific hours.

Virginia journalists have been among those on the front lines, covering events such as the terrorist attacks of 9-11, the scandals of religious and corporate leaders, and the killing spree of a pair of snipers who paralyzed communities from Maryland through Virginia as the nation watched. Most recently, they covered the death of a hometown hero who dared to dream big dreams by traveling to outer space, as well as the ongoing threat of war that dominates our daily reality.

Enduring these social and personal challenges as journalists is tough work. It requires the ability to make oneself both vulnerable to the unfolding events and yet resilient in the face of their impact. Journalism demands a developed skill-set, along with a never-ending desire to learn about oneself and the world around us. Moreover, it requires courage. Kudos to our Virginia colleagues who continually remind us of what it means to be a journalist.



Laura Fortunato  
(Photo by Geep Schurman, FRB-Richmond)

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the SPJ Virginia Pro Chapter is to represent and bring together Virginia journalists on issues of importance to the profession to achieve fellowship, education and support, and to improve our credibility with the public.



**Louise Seals**  
**Richmond Times-Dispatch**  
**P.O. Box 85333**  
**Richmond, Va. 23293-0001**

**TO:**