

THE CHASER

SPJ

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Fort Worth Chapter / Society of Professional Journalists

*"If it happened in Fort Worth ...
it's news to us!"*

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From the President's Desk ...

These are difficult times for journalists. We've always had to battle people who would diminish our rights to report the news. But now, it seems, there are more and more members of the public who wouldn't care if we did lose those rights. They see us as irresponsible, arrogant, uncaring.

If there's any organization that stands for responsible, quality journalism, it's SPJ. There's been a lot of concern lately about journalism's credibility, but credibility always has been implicit in SPJ's mission — from its founding 88 years ago right up to the three-year debate over our new Code of Ethics. I have every intention of continuing that ethical focus.

When the Denver convention committee came up with a theme — "The High Road" — we were thinking about the information superhighway, transportation, telecommunications and, of course, Denver's mile-high altitude. But we especially wanted to stress journalism ethics, credibility and accountability. Through initiatives such as Project Watchdog, we need to spread that message well beyond our membership.

We need to work to improve public confidence in the news media, to show good judgment, to make the public understand that we do have standards.

After all, if journalists don't have credibility, we're not really informing anyone — because they don't believe what we're telling them.

— Fred Brown
excerpted from Quill, September 1997

Howdy, Fred

SPJ national president has a message for Fort Worth, and it's best told in a bar

It's time to kick up our heels and kick off the new year with Presidents Night and SPJ national president Fred Brown at Billy Bob's Texas on Oct. 23.

Following the tradition of the new prez making his first speech in Fort Worth, Brown will get a taste of Lone Star hospitality — and some killer grilled chicken breast — at the Texas Room in the world's largest honky-tonk.

Brown, 56, is political editor of The Denver Post, where he covered politics and state government for 12 years and wrote editorials for 10 years before returning to the political beat in 1988. The holder of a Sigma Delta Chi Award for editorial writing, he is expected to address the perception that journalists' ethics are at best transient and at worst nonexistent.

"We must convince a skeptical public that some journalists — most of us, even — really do have standards," he said. "Our problem is that we never

let on about our better nature."

Everyone's nature, better or otherwise, should find full expression at Billy Bob's. There's a cash bar, and dinner cost — a svelte \$16.95 for the aforementioned chicken with rice pilaf, vegetables, salad, rolls, tea and a shimmering slice of Southern pecan pie — allows full access to the 100,000-square-foot Billy Bob's, its Texas-sized dance floor and merchandise area, its Skoal Bandit NASCAR exhibit and sawdust-and-neon cowboy trysting crannies, before or after the meeting.

Happy half-hour starts at 6:30 (board meeting at 5:30), with dinner at 7. Students eat for \$8.50.

Please RSVP by noon Oct. 20 to chapter chief Kay Pirtle's answering machine, 232-0625.

Billy Bob's is between Northeast 28th Street and Exchange Avenue in the Stockyards (you knew that). Turn east off North Main Street at Stockyards Boulevard.

National convention coming to Arlington in 2002

The Fort Worth and Dallas chapters will host and Arlington will provide facilities for the national SPJ convention five years from now.

The directors of the nation's largest journalists' organization unanimously accepted a bid from the chapters to host the convention, which is expected to attract between 500 and 1,000 people. This year's four-day meet drew 800 to Denver.

The convention will be the first time that

the society comes to Arlington. No date has been set, but SPJ conventions usually happen in the fall.

"This is every bit as much work as it is rewarding, and we're very excited," said Kay Pirtle, Fort Worth chapter president, who attended the Denver convention. "The useful information there was overwhelming.

"As much talent as these two chapters have, if we can't organize a convention in five years, get out of here."

Pirtle issued a challenge to campus chapters in the area.

"Their members are tomorrow's leaders, not only in SPJ but in the industry," she said. "We need their skills, their energy."

T-rrific time at Joe T.'s



Dorothy Estes, former director of UT Arlington Student Publications, offers advice to University of North Texas faculty members Susan Zavoina and Tom Reichert at the September Fort Worth chapter meeting. Almost 50 people, many of them journalism students from the two schools, packed the back room at Joe T. Garcia's restaurant in North Fort Worth for the meeting.

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