

# The 2000 WHCA Awards

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS'  
ASSOCIATION

ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THREE PRESTIGIOUS JOURNALISM  
AWARDS

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WASHINGTON -- One day several years ago, a weapons plant worker named Galen "Butch" Lemke called the city desk of his local paper, the Toledo Blade, and spoke to reporter Dave Murray.

"When you guys gonna tell my story?" Lemke asked. "We're dying out here."

Murray never forgot the call and, when he became city editor of the Blade, he assigned a reporter to look into possible health hazards at the weapons plant.

That reporter, Sam Roe, spent 22 months full time on the story and on March 28, 1999, he produced a comprehensive 20-story series that ran for six days in the Blade. The series detailed a pattern of deliberate and dangerous misconduct by the U.S. government and the American beryllium industry, wrongdoing that caused the injuries and deaths of dozens of workers.

Butch Lemke died five months after Roe's original series ran, but he died proud of what his hometown paper had done with his call. His reporting won this year's Edgar Allen Poe Award in the White House Correspondents' Association awards competition.

The Poe award judges wrote: "Sam Roe of the Toledo Blade is cited for exposing a major health risk to nuclear weapons plant workers that was concealed by the U.S. government for half a century."

Roe's work, which was a finalist in the investigative category of this year's Pulitzer Prizes, prompted a government review and a long-overdue acknowledgement of the health maladies suffered by those exposed to beryllium. In February, President Clinton submitted in his fiscal year 2001 budget a request for funds to be used as compensation for beryllium victims.

Roe and the other winners are scheduled to receive their awards at the annual White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, held this year on April 29 at the Capital Hilton. President Clinton will attend the dinner, as he has all eight years he has been president. NBC Tonight Show host Jay Leno is the featured speaker at the dinner, which will be broadcast live on C-Span.

UPI veteran White House reporter Helen Thomas is slated to present the awards.

Other journalism award winners are Jeanne Cummings of the Wall Street Journal, Jodi Enda of Knight-Ridder Newspapers, and Gary Nurenberg of

KTLA-Tribune Broadcasting.

Cummings is the winner of the Aldo Beckman Award, named after a longtime Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune.

Cummings, who has covered the White House for more than two years, won for a series of stories that the judges said conveyed "a deep understanding of White House operations and operatives" and that personified the journalistic excellence of Aldo Beckman, a former president of the White House Correspondents' Association.

"Cummings may be young, but her writing shows great wisdom," the judges wrote.

"She has an outstanding ability to paint pictures with words and make readers feel as if they are witnesses to the insider decision making process."

The Merriman Smith Memorial Awards went to Nurenberg and Enda. Nurenberg, who recently left the White House beat, won in the broadcast category for a deadline story about Monica Lewinsky's deposition.

"The reporting was accurate, balanced and fast," the judges said. "With obligations to other news programs and with the time needed to edit the videotape, Gary Nurenberg had less than an hour to write the story.

"Monica Lewinsky Deposed" is a strong example of what television journalists can do to put breaking events into perspective, combining tape from various places with smart editing, clear writing and above all a strong and sophisticated understanding of the story."

In homage to Merriman Smith, the legendary UPI reporter who covered the White House for more than 30 years, the Smith awards seek out outstanding examples of deadline reporting.

The other Merriman Smith award this year for print reporting goes to an irrepressible journalist who won the same award last year and who, in the opinion of the judges, would have made the old UPI veteran proud:

"Working under intense deadline pressure, Jodi Enda wrote a poignant story about an emotional day in Kosovo," said the judges.

"To witness the President of the United States urging cheering refugees to wait until it was safe to return home, Enda endured a hair-raising auto ride, hostile Macedonian guards, and a one mile sprint with laptop and notebooks in tow arriving at the site at the same moment as the President. The story that resulted is in the finest tradition of the Merriman Smith Award."

The Smith and Beckman awards include a prize of \$1,000.

The Edgar A. Poe carries with it a \$2,500 award. The judges of the Poe award said they believed that three other publications submitted entries that were especially praiseworthy.

The three are Joby Warrick of The Washington Post for documenting plutonium poisoning in Paducah, Ky.; Bill Adair of the St. Petersburg Times for a riveting piece on the investigation of the crash of USAir flight 427; and Dana Hawkins of U.S. News & World Report for the dangers of recycled medical devices.

The judging for the contests is directed by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism Washington program.

A list of the judges follows:

**Poe award:** Gene Gibbons, PEW Center on the States; Angelia Herrin, editor of WomenConnect.com; Wes Pippert, University of Missouri.

**Beckman award:** Tom Rosenstiel, Project for Excellence in Journalism; Ellen Shearer, Medill News Service; Lee Thornton, University of Maryland.

**Smith award:** Sharon Downey, Medill News Service; John Mashek, Boston Globe (retired), Adam Powell III, Freedom Forum.

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