

News Release

WHCA Names 2002 Award Winners

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Ron Fournier of The Associated Press, Peter Maer of CBS News and a team from Newsweek have won three of Washington's top journalism awards for their coverage of the Sept. 11 attacks. And Anne E. Kornblut of The Boston Globe has been honored with the prestigious Aldo Beckman award.

The awards, administered by the White House Correspondents' Association, are to be presented at the group's annual dinner Saturday, May 4, 2002. Fournier won the Merriman Smith Memorial Award in the print category, and Maer won in the broadcast category.

The awards honor outstanding presidential coverage under deadline pressure and carry a \$1,000 prize. Smith, a veteran correspondent for United Press International, covered the White House for 30 years. Fournier was cited for his bulletins from inside the evacuated executive mansion, which were filed as a Secret Service agent implored him to leave.

The judges called his copy "a compellingly written, carefully constructed and complete eyewitness account that avoided speculation." As Fournier was typing, Maer was describing for radio listeners an atmosphere of "controlled chaos" with West Wing staffers fleeing and agents scanning the skies.

The judges noted that when Maer's cell phone wouldn't work, he grabbed a phone at a nearby business - and kept providing "vivid descriptions that made listeners feel part of the scene." For Maer, it's his fourth Merriman Smith award; Fournier is now a three-time winner.

Newsweek's Sept. 11 coverage started long before the attacks. An article in the magazine's Feb. 19, 2001, issue warned with chilling accuracy: "The threat posed by (Osama) bin Laden is growing & coming ever closer to home."

Judges for the Edgar A. Poe Award found that story ("Danger: Terror Ahead") and a special report two weeks after the attacks ("The Road to September 11") both "prescient" and "in-depth". They were the work of Evan Thomas and Mark Hosenball, with additional reporting by Martha Brant and Roy Gutman.

The Poe award, for excellence on a story of national or regional significance, carries a \$2,500 prize. The Poe judges also gave honorable mentions to The Seattle Times for its investigative reporting on the hometown Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and The Dayton Daily News for a globally reported story on how unscrupulous agents recruit high school athletes in foreign countries.

With the Aldo Beckman Award, Kornblut is honored for stories running the gamut of the White House beat, from her compelling narrative of President Bush's first year in office to accounts of key moments including his stem cell decision and the closure of the Office for Women's Initiatives.

The judges cited Kornblut for "graceful and clear" writing, a "remarkable range" and "resisting the conventional and too often superficial approach of the media pack." The Beckman award recognizes journalistic excellence and personal qualities in the tradition of Aldo Beckman, a former White House Correspondents' Association president and Washington bureau chief of the Chicago Tribune. The Tribune Company and the association present a prize of \$1,000.

The Beckman judges were: Lee Thornton (chair), professor, Merrill College of Journalism, University of

Maryland; Tom Rosenstiel, director Project for Excellence in Journalism; and Loren Ghiglione, dean, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. The Smith judges were: Ellen Shearer (chair), co-director and professor, Medill School of Journalism; Bill Kovach, chairman, Committee of Concerned Journalists; and Adam Powell, former vice president, The Freedom Forum. Judging the Poe award were: Wesley Pippert (chair), professor, University of Missouri School of Journalism; Mary Coffman, Medill News Service; and Ed Fouhy, Stateline.org. Coordinating the judging was Ellen Shearer of Medill.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact awards committee chairman Mark Smith, AP Radio, at 202-736-9550, or Julie Whiston at the White House Correspondents' Association, 202-737-2934.

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