



# THE Source

Society of Professional Journalists  
Oklahoma Pro Chapter

December 2000



## 2001 SPJ calendar filling fast

The new year will be a busy one for SPJ members.

•At the Dec. 8 board meeting, a motion was made to increase the number of board members currently allowed by Oklahoma SPJ by-laws from nine to 11.

In keeping with the by-laws, the motion is carried over for vote at the Jan. 12 board meeting to be held at the Oklahoma Press Association, 3501 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

All SPJ members are invited to attend.

•The annual SPJ Banquet is set for Saturday, Feb. 24. Make plans to attend and mingle with fellow journalists.

•The SPJ job fair is scheduled at the University of Oklahoma, March 2. The keynote speaker will be New York Times writer Kelly Crow. Bring your résumé and meet with potential employers.

## Contest entries arrive, banquet plans finalized

### Embassy Suites Hotel site of this year's festivities

By *Kim Morava*  
*SPJ vice president*

As we log in the winning entries from the SPJ contest, plans are also under way for the annual awards banquet to recognize contest winners.

All entrants and SPJ members will receive information in early January about the banquet and how to make reservations.

The banquet will be held Feb. 24 at Embassy Suites Hotel, 1815 S. Meridian. in Oklahoma City.

Registration begins at 6 p.m., and a cocktail and social hour will be held until dinner is served at 7 p.m. The awards ceremony will

begin shortly thereafter.

The menu will include a garden salad, as well as a combination entrée of filet mignon and chicken dijonnaise. The meal will be served with a twice-baked potato, chef's fresh vegetables, hot rolls and beverages of tea, coffee and water. New York cheesecake will be served for dessert.

A veggie platter can be ordered upon special request. The menu will include all of the above, minus the filet mignon and chicken dijonnaise.

Cost for this year's banquet is \$26 per person. A cash bar will also be available.

Everyone is invited to attend.

All of this year's con-

test entrants will receive status of their entries in early January. Notification letters will detail the entrant's status as a winner or non-winner.

Information about which stories won awards or which place was awarded for a winning entry will not be released until the night of the banquet.

A complete list of winners will be available following the banquet.

Those who did not enter this year's contest and are not SPJ members can be added to the January mailing list by request. To do so, contact Kim Morava at [kmorava@news-star.com](mailto:kmorava@news-star.com) or call (405) 214-3962.

## NEXT Board Meeting, Jan. 12

Make plans to attend the monthly board meetings of the Oklahoma Pro chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists held the second Friday of each month.

The meetings are a great place to be heard and share ideas with other SPJ members or to become a member.

The next meeting is noon, Jan. 12, at the OPA board meeting room located at 3601 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City.

Bring a brown-bag lunch including a drink and join fellow journalists.

SPJ needs you and your ideas so make plans to attend. We look forward to seeing you there!

# Oklahoma executions pack January calendar

By *Barbara Hoberock*  
SPJ board member

Oklahoma is poised to execute eight death row inmates in January, the most since statehood. The list of inmates set to die include Wanda Jean Allen, who is set to die for the shooting death of her lover, Gloria Leathers.

Allen will be the first woman to be put to death since at least statehood.

For reporters who will be assigned to one or more of these executions, I offer a few basic tips to get you started.

•One, read the trial transcript. It is available in Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson's office on the first floor in the state capitol. You can get access to it by contacting Gerald Adams, Edmondson's public information officer.

The transcript provides numerous details and the name of witnesses you might want to track down. A crucial portion of the trial transcript is the stage two evidence where prosecutors lay out the aggravating evidence and defense attorneys put on the mitigating factors. You will learn what other, if any, crimes the defendant committed. You will likely learn about the inmate's childhood, parents, education and mental capacity.

•Second, ask for the interview. Normally, go through the current defense attorney. Explain to the attorney that it is important to put a face on the person the state is seeking to execute. This is the ultimate price the

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## Remember, whatever your opinion of the death penalty, the public does not care. Keep it out of your reporting.

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state can extract from its citizens.

As a condition for the interview, but certainly not always, some attorneys will ask that you do not discuss the crime with the inmate. That decision is usually left up to your editor.

Make sure you have read the transcript before you request the interview. It shows the attorney that you have put in the time on the case.

If the attorney is not returning your phone calls, write the inmate requesting the interview. Let Lee Mann, Oklahoma State Penitentiary warden's assistant, know what you are doing. She usually will be the one making the arrangements if you get the interview. Bring a photographer to the interview. Let the photographer know he or she will be shooting from behind plexiglass, which can be difficult. Normally, the jail in the county where the trial was held will have a mug shot, which will be somewhat dated.

•Third, talk to the current attorney and the trial attorney for both the defense and prosecution. This information can be found in the case file in Edmondson's office.

Read the appeals and the decisions. Some are very interesting. Look for the use of jailhouse snitches and eyewitnesses. Also be concerned

about DNA evidence, if it exists. Many times, cases in the 1980s and earlier didn't involve DNA testing because it was hard to do and not easily accessible, for whatever reason.

•Fourth, talk to the victims' family members. State law allows them to witness the execution. I would suggest going through Edmondson's office victim witness coordinator to let them know you would like an interview. It is unfair to do a story about the inmate and leave the family of the victim out. It puts balance into the article or articles you are writing to get as many perspectives as possible. Often, the family is willing to provide a picture of the victim.

In addition, get the clemency packet from Edmondson's office and from the defense attorney. This will provide you with a warehouse of information. It is only available if the inmate is seeking a clemency hearing before the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board. Get to the clemency hearing if you are planning on covering

the execution.

•Fifth, check newspaper archives to determine what was written originally. Normally, the articles will give you more insight into the crime.

•Finally, talk to the experts. Oklahoma has a chapters of homicide victims survivors, inmate groups, Amnesty International, the Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and the Oklahoma Death Penalty Institute. Many of these groups have websites.

If you need a national perspective, I would suggest starting with Richard C. Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center in Washington, D.C.

Dieter can talk about anything ranging from inmates who committed crimes as juveniles to inmates who are mentally retarded and on death row. The website is: [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org) or phone (202) 293-6970. I would also check out the stories written by the Chicago Tribune, online at: [www.chicagotribune.com](http://www.chicagotribune.com).

Covering an execution is never a pleasant assignment. Keep it in perspective. Remember, whatever your opinion of the death penalty, the public does not care. Keep it out of your reporting.

**Check out the  
Oklahoma SPJ chapter online at:  
[www.geocities.com/oklahomaspj](http://www.geocities.com/oklahomaspj)**

**There, you can:**

**•Renew your membership •Get the latest SPJ news •Contact board members •Access other SPJ sites •Submit ideas & suggestions**

**VISIT TODAY!**



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## From the President



By **Mark Hanebutt**  
*SPJ president*

# Journalism success story finds way back to Oklahoma

program and recent graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, will be the keynote speaker at the 2001 SPJ Journalism Job Fair.

The fair, scheduled for March 2 at the University of Oklahoma Student Union, is designed to help students who have graduated or are about to graduate with a journalism degree find jobs.

Crow will explain how she succeeded in landing a job at the Times and offer tips and insights about the journalism job market.

The 23-year-old Edmond native, writes for *The City*, a weekly section of the Times published on Sundays that covers local neighborhoods.

"Every week I walk the streets and work the phones to find out what strange things are going on in this crazy city, and I know how lucky I am... I love going to work every

day, which is an amazing thing, I think," she said during a recent interview for UCO's student newspaper *The Vista*.

Crow began her journalism career at Edmond Memorial High School, working on the school paper. After writing for UCO's Department of University Relations, she worked full time at the *Oklahoma Today* magazine.

She said she credits the professional background of the journalism professors at UCO and the individual attention she received there for much of her success.

I have to say I like that. "You wouldn't believe," said Crow, "how many people made it into Columbia with no idea what an Associated Press Stylebook is."

The Job Fair is open to all journalism students and is free. Pass it on.

Journalism professors, like editors, only see their success in the success of others. So when a great success story comes along, particularly one we can claim to be a part of, we have to make the most of it.

I'm making the most of it.

Kelly Crow, one of my former students, has landed a job at *The New York Times*.

The good news for the rest of us — particularly our students — is she's coming back to tell us how she did it.

The 1998 graduate of the University of Central Oklahoma's journalism

## Non-profit info part of website offering

By **Barbara Hoberock**  
*SPJ board member*

If you want to hit a goldmine of information, visit [www.powerreporting.com](http://www.powerreporting.com). The site provides a link to organizations which track non profits through their 990s, area codes, dictionaries, child statistics, to name a few.

It also has links to resources to help you put a name on a website, get business information and

do reverse searches.

The site is the brainchild of Bill Dedman, assistant metro editor for the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Dedman served for six years on the board of Investigative Reporters and Editors.

In 1989, Dedman earned the coveted Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting he did at *The Atlanta Constitution*. It was called "The Color of Money," and was an ac-

count of racial discrimination by mortgage lenders.

If your national organizations have him at a seminar, it is well worth the time to check him out. Dedman was a recent speaker at the Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors annual conference in Bloomington, Ill.

He discussed Internet literacy, which, he said, is gained in part by awareness — awareness of what is possible.

 **Happy New Year from SPJ** 



# Oklahoman and Tulsa World face off in forum

By Alyssa LaValle  
OKCCC student

An editorial forum held Nov. 16, which featured David Averill of the Tulsa World and Patrick McGuigan of the Daily Oklahoman, let the public see the masterminds behind each publication's editorial page.

Averill and McGuigan, editorial writers for their respective newspaper publications, united to answer questions on how they decide what to write in their editorial pages. The forum was held in the Daily Oklahoman auditorium in Oklahoma City.

After being employed with one of the state's largest newspaper publications for more than 30 years, editorial writer

David Averill spoke of his daily routine in making editorial decisions.

He said the Tulsa World has an informal atmosphere, as was obvious when he stated that the editorial board normally gets started at 10:30 each morning.

After some mild discussion about the previous night's David Letterman show and much talk about food, Averill said, the board breaks around noon for lunch.

"The most difficult thing about writing an editorial is coming up with a topic," Averill said. He later added, "The easiest part is writing it."

On the flip side, Daily Oklahoman editorial writer Patrick McGuigan said, "I never have trouble

getting going [with editorials]."

McGuigan has been with the Oklahoman for 10 years, first working as the chief editorial writer and then moving on to editor of the editorial page.

In contrast to the structure of the Tulsa World editorial team, McGuigan said the Oklahoman staff is more formal with their meetings and gets an early start at nine in the morning each day.

He said the board begins by sorting through such publications as the New York Times and the Dallas Morning News. Catching up on the news helps the staff see what they are faced with when writing editorials.

Although both men differ in the foundation of

how their editorials are created, they shared equal ground on a couple of things.

Both Averill and McGuigan believe that editorial writing takes a certain level of confidence in oneself and in one's belief system.

In addition, both men divulged that their publications support Republican candidate George W. Bush for president.

Both men are members of the Society of Professional Journalists. The local chapter sponsored the event.

For information on the Oklahoma Professional chapter of SPJ and upcoming chapter events, visit [www.geocities.com/oklahomaspj](http://www.geocities.com/oklahomaspj) on the Internet.



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**NEXT SPJ MEETING: NOON, JAN. 12, AT OPA, 3501 N. LINCOLN BLVD.**