

# Convention reflects industry struggles

Who knew that 2007 would be in the good old days category?

That was the last good year — in terms of attendance and registration revenue — for the Colorado Press Association annual conference. In fact, it was our best year ever for both attendance and income.

The numbers slipped for the February 2008 event as many newspapers and newspaper groups began tightening their budgets. Two items they reduced, publishers told us, were travel and staff development.

As a result, we restructured the format for the 2009 convention. Fewer sessions with an emphasis on homegrown talent for the Saturday programs helped reduce expenses. But attendance slumped as newspa-

pers continued to cut their budgets.

Our annual contest continues to be popular and it also continues to subsidize the convention. The convention traditionally loses money because we keep the registration affordable and because contest income offsets the loss.

However, this year many newspapers couldn't afford to send as many staffers as in the past. Or they simply didn't send anyone to the sessions. The one

event that did draw well, with more than 350 people attending, was the Saturday contest awards program that concludes the convention.

What does this mean for future Colorado Press conventions?

More changes.

The CPA Board of Directors at its June 19 meeting will consider a proposal to revamp the

2010 convention so it will be more convenient and affordable for our members.

The proposal reduces the convention to two days — Friday and Saturday — while retaining the most popular features. The Friday agenda will include the FOI and legal session with our attorneys and the college student job fair. Saturday's awards luncheon will be followed by the contest awards program.

The Board will also consider reducing the registration fees to make the event more affordable for newspapers and individuals.

Colorado Press isn't the only state newspaper association revising its annual convention format. Other organizations face the same declining attendance and income challenges, and they're making similar changes.

They're cutting the length of their conventions, usually by one full day, recruiting more in-state speakers and reducing registration fees because, as one association executive director

wrote: "We continue to see mandatory furloughs at all group-owned newspapers, consolidation of group-owned titles and offices, wage freezes and compensation rollbacks. Our 2009 convention attendance in January was down about one-third with members saying that expense restrictions were the sole reason."

Here's a sampling of comments from association directors "We are not using high dollar speakers, training sessions are home grown."

"We too have cut ours back to a two-day, one-night convention. We also are cutting back on speaker fees, using panels and partnering with AP."

"We have all but eliminated speaker fee expense for our meetings by using panels, our own stable of consultants (lawyer, lobbyist, FOI attorney) and partnering with groups. The days of our folks expecting a well-known speaker who requires a fat check are over. They want more practical ses-

sions on legal matters, FOI, sales training and other standards."

Using homegrown talent is appealing for more just financial reasons — airfare and lodging are major expenses — because we have many good journalists in Colorado. People who attended Pulitzer Prize-winner Jim Sheeler's reporting session at our February convention said his presentation was excellent. Sales of his "Final Salute" book, which Jim autographed, validated that impression.

We do want to know what sessions you would like at the 2010 convention agenda, in addition to the FOI session and college student job fair. We solicited suggestions earlier this month on our membership list-serve so please respond with your ideas before June 30. We begin planning next year's convention each summer.

We look forward to seeing you at our 2010 convention in February at the Brown Palace Hotel.



by Ed Otte  
CPA Director

## School board, paper reach settlement

District will pay fees, release transcripts in meeting violation case

*Editor's note: The following story by Jack Weinstein is reprinted from the May 19 issue of Steamboat Pilot & Today.*

The Steamboat Springs School Board formally accepted a lawsuit settlement offer from the Pilot & Today on Monday.

The settlement was tentatively approved by board members last month on the heels of a March ruling by the Colorado Court of Appeals that the previous School Board violated the state's Open Meetings Law by not properly announcing the intention of its executive ses-

sion at a Jan. 8, 2007, meeting. As a result of the ruling and settlement offer, the district will pay \$50,000 of the newspaper's attorney fees and release the transcripts from the illegal meeting.

The motion to accept the settlement offer was approved 4-1 on Monday, with a couple of board members expressing satisfaction that the lawsuit is now behind them. Board member John DeVincentis was the only dissenting vote, but he wasn't the only one displeased with the outcome.

"I am disappointed that the wording of one motion has led to a three-year ordeal," said board member Denise Connelly, who was president of the board at the time of the illegal executive session. "I'm happy it's over so we can dedicate our resources to education."

Current board president Robin Crossan said she was disappointed the newspaper and the board couldn't reach a "better" agreement.

"I do believe this was probably the best in the end," she said. "I am truly pleased that this is now behind us."

Connelly and Crossan said they looked forward to working with the Pilot in the future. DeVincentis disagreed.

"As far as the working relationship goes with the Pilot, I don't know," he said. "I've always felt like the school district has tried to be amicable with the Pilot and I look at this as an in-your-face move by them to take \$50,000 away from

our students.

Pilot & Today Editor Brent Boyer said it's the former School Board, not the newspaper, that has cost the district and taxpayers.

"The newspaper reached out to the School Board on two separate occasions before the Jan. 8, 2007, meeting to express its concern that the executive session would not be legal," Boyer said. "The board chose to ignore those warnings and proceed anyway, violating Open Meetings Law in the process."

"While it's unfortunate the previous board chose the path it did, we are pleased this issue has been resolved and that both sides can now move on."

The three-judge Court of Appeals ruled that the previous board — made up of DeVincentis, Connelly, Jeff Troeger, Jerry Kozatch and Pat Gleason — didn't properly convene the closed-door meeting. Gleason was the only board member to vote against going into executive session to discuss the then-controversial staff surveys of administrators.

Open Meetings Law requires public bodies to cite the specific provision that allows them to meet in executive session, and public bodies must identify the particular matter to be discussed in secret in as much detail as possible. During the Jan. 8, 2007, meeting, the School Board said it was going into executive session to discuss a personnel matter regarding "access to information."

## Singleton honored for community support

By Joey Bunch  
The Denver Post

William Dean Singleton was lauded Thursday night during the Mizel Museum's Community Cultural Enrichment Award dinner for the many hats he wears in supporting his community, but friends say his favorite hat is of the cowboy variety.

Mayor John Hickenlooper and Gov. Bill Ritter, the masters of ceremony, gave The Denver Post's owner and publisher a good-natured ribbing.

Ritter called Singleton "the man who beats the crap out of me every day in his newspaper."

But, as the governor listed the honoree's many accomplishments, he added, "You may not know Dean is a man who loves and respects his governor," to the laughter of the audience of more than 1,800 at the \$10,000-a-table charity fete at the Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum.

The award honors those who have contributed to the arts in Colorado, and past winners have included Hickenlooper, former Gov. Bill Owens and first lady Frances Owens, former Gov. Roy Romer and brewing magnate Pete Coors.

Speakers read letters from President Barack Obama, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

"This prestigious honor is richly deserved," the governor

read from Obama's letter.

Hickenlooper said Singleton's passion reminded the mayor of how his grandfather said to "always live life large."

"Dean embodies that as much as anyone I've known," Hickenlooper said.

Singleton listed the accomplishments of Denver during his time as The Post's owner. He recalled the campaign pledge of former Mayor Federico Pena.

"Imagine a great city? You're damn right," the Texas native said of his adopted hometown.

He added, "I'm humbled this dynamic city and state allowed a poor country kid from Texas to come along for the ride."

Singleton, 57, publisher of The Denver Post and dozens of other publications in 13 states; is the chairman of the Associated Press board of directors.

Speakers lauded Singleton's support of youth livestock competitions and many charities.

Singer and fellow Texan Michael Martin Murphey called his long-time friend "just a good old boy from Texas."

Martin sang his 1975 hit "Wildfire" and another song Singleton called his favorite tune, "You Were Born to Be a Cowboy."

Martin recalled something Singleton once told him.

"Murphy, when I'm out here working on the ranch, looking out over the cattle and wildlife, I'm at the end of my rainbow."

### Past president helps with ID

The person on the left in the front-page photo in the May issue of Colorado Editor is Gene Wells of the Delta County Independent. He was one of two people not identified in the cutline. CPA Past President Wilbur Flachman provided the identification information. Wells served as CPA president in 1971. Flachman was CPA president in 1977 when he published the Eagle Valley Enterprise.