

# News Release

## WHCA Names 2003 Award Winners

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The war against terrorism and impending war in Iraq were the dramatic focus of this year's top journalism awards from the White House Correspondents' Association. David Sanger of The New York Times and Jim Angle of Fox News won the two Merriman Smith prizes, while Dana Milbank of The Washington Post was honored with the Aldo Beckman award and Sean Naylor of the Army Times won the Edgar A. Poe award.

The awards are to be presented at the association's annual dinner Saturday, April 26, 2003.

Sanger won the Merriman Smith Memorial Award in the print category for his reporting on President Bush's new National Security Strategy. The document - crafted to reflect the new threat posed by America's terrorist foes - seeks to shift the nation away from deterrence and toward preemption. Sanger obtained an advance copy and filed on it a day before its release. The judges called his copy "rich and textured ... a model for accuracy, speed, objectivity and initiative."

Angle won the Smith prize in the broadcast category for live reports on the decision to return U.N. weapons inspectors to Baghdad after a four-year absence. He was on the air within minutes of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's announcement. The judges found "every sentence of his well-structured report advanced the story, providing context and insight on what may have prompted the sudden shift."

The Smith awards recognize 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.

With the Aldo Beckman Award, Milbank was honored for a range of stories about the president's politics, policies and personality. The judges praised Milbank's examinations of the sometimes "malleable" facts in Bush speeches; the traits Bush inherited from his mother; how the Bush compassionate agenda sometimes falls short of its lofty goals; and how the September 11th attacks transformed the Bush presidency. The judges said Milbank's work "offered probing glimpses" even as it "exemplified the Fourth Estate's role as the watchdog of American democracy."

The Beckman award honors 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 \$1,000 prize is presented by the association and The Tribune Company. Naylor, this year's Poe winner, chronicled the hunt for al-Qaida operatives across the frigid mountain terrain of Afghanistan. In a series of reports about the first battles in the war against terrorism, he described both the

bravery of U.S. soldiers and the limitations of precision bombing in an ancient land. The judges said Naylor's analysis of what went right and what went wrong "may help save lives in Iraq."

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 a team from The South Florida Sun-Sentinel for its reporting on the Florida child welfare system and to Michael Berens of The Chicago Tribune for his reporting on the crisis facing America's hospitals.

The Smith judges were: Ellen Shearer (chair), co-director and professor, Medill School of Journalism; Lee Thornton, professor, Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland; and Ed Fouhy, Stateline.org.

The Beckman judges were: Rich Foster (chair), The Freedom Forum; John Mashek, former reporter, The Boston Globe; Larry Kirkman, dean, American University School of Communications.

Judging the Poe award were: Sharon Downey (chair); Wesley Pippert, professor, University of Missouri School of Journalism; Pamela Luecke, journalism professor, Washington and Lee University;

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.*