

Alaska Press Club Awards 2006

PRINT

BREAKING NEWS

Judge: Lee Ann Colacioppo, The Denver Post

Large Papers

1st: "Anderson Indicted," by Richard Mauer, Lisa Demer, Tom Kizzia, Kyle Hopkins, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: This story was packed with details and showed the reporters' command of the material. A good job weaving the news with lots of context.

2nd: "BP shuts down Prudhoe Bay," by Wesley Loy and Richard Richtmyer, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: Tracking down all the elements of a breaking news story on a weekday morning is one thing. Doing it on a Sunday afternoon is quite another. Story reflected great hustle under tough conditions.

3rd: "Feds probe non-profit," by Rod Boyce and Sam Bishop, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. Comments: This story had good depth, apparently because the paper had been on top of the issue. While the story broke on deadline, it reads with the authority and depth of a longer-term piece.

Small Papers

1st: "Number of discarded crab soars," by Margaret Bauman, Alaska Journal of Commerce

2nd: "Rural Alaska to receive" by Rob Stapleton, Alaska Journal of Commerce

3rd: "Security Aviation Investigation," by Rob Stapleton, Alaska Journal of Commerce

BEST GENERAL NEWS STORY

Not available as of press time.

BEST USE OF STORY & PHOTOS BY A JOURNALIST

Large Papers

Judge: Mark Holm, Photo Editor, Albuquerque Tribune

1st: "Silver lining," by Amy Schenck, Frontiersman. Comments: This piece about great salmon fishing at a popular recreation area contained the "best-of-show" single image among the entries. Beyond that, among the four photos used in this piece, good lens choices and perspectives were used to best describe visually, how popular the Jim Creek area has become. The wide-angle photo, shot at water level, of fish on a stringer, with over a dozen anglers diminishing into the beautiful Alaskan background was very well executed.

2nd: "Iraquis say they're living in fear," by Margaret Friedenauer, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. Comments: The two photos used with this story about insecurities felt by some Baghdad residents because of continuing violence did a good job of visualizing the environment in a residential area. The lede photo keys on the body language of a US soldier stepping gingerly through a flooded street. A figure on the edge of the secondary photo, peering cautiously out of a doorway as two soldiers talk to a resident outside, adds tension to the photo.

3rd: "Raptors in Alaska," by Mark Farmer, The Associated Press. Comments: Photos do a good, straight-forward, yet artful job of physically describing the fighter jets discussed in the story, the F22A Raptor and the F-15C Eagle. Sources in the story seemed pretty enthusiastic about the Raptor, so we found ourselves wondering if photos of pilots in or around the planes on the flight line, or some other (documentary) situation might not add a human touch to the piece. Obviously, that may, or may not have been possible.

Small Papers

Judges: Photo editor Doug Parker and staff photographers Eliot Kamenitz and Sean Gardner, The New Orleans Times-Picayune

1st: "At Last!" by Brian Lepley, Alaska Post. Comments: Nice, peak emotion of reunion communicates the ties to family and the community. Nice mix of tight, emotional shots with overalls.

2nd: "Governor Face Off," by Bryan Martin, Kodiak Daily Mirror. Comments: Good, solid journalism communicates succinctly the intensity of the situation. Please, the mortise is not necessary and almost ruins an otherwise outstanding news photograph.

3rd: "A tale of two villages," John Pennell, Alaska Post. Comments: A good selection of photos.

BEST SHORT FEATURE

Judge: Linda Castrone, Assistant Business Editor, Denver Post

Large Papers

1st: "Bugle Girl" by Mike Dunham, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: This story was well reported and well told, but it stood out above the others because of the subject's unusual tale. Through 15-year-old Nichelle Cushing, Mike was able to address the rapidly aging veteran population, the sorrow of our losses in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the urge. In his moving lead, Mike painted a stirring picture of the rain, the coffin, the tiny girl and her 105-year-old bugle. He allowed the scene to unfold slowly before he jumped to Nichelle's motivations - a father in Iraq and their move to Alaska - and then elegantly wound back to the opening scene for his ending.

2nd: "My Space, I *heart* You" by Lynne Snifka, Anchorage Press. Comments: In many cases, first-person stories read like diary entries because so much of their content is cerebral. In this case, Lynne has used the voice of a strong narrator to carry her readers

through an online adventure. She strengthens it with solid reporting, including such details as daily increase in the number of MySpace users, and allows us to experience the website along with her. As in all good nonfiction writing, she lets us see her foibles as well as her successes (paranoia about posting her real age, decision to post it as 100). Lynne also uses dialog well, inserting little bits of it on occasion to add life to her story.

3rd: "The Great Pumpkin" by George Bryson, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: George has taken an annual event and turned it into an opportunity for good storytelling. From the lead (which asks the question at the heart of all state fair entries - just how big is it?), through the background material and the eventual punchline, he has woven an enthralling narrative. His use of detail adds richness throughout. The language is clean and simple. The story is perfectly constructed to build drama, and most of all, I loved that he didn't answer the opening question until the very end. Kudos to the headline and cutline writers for not spoiling that surprise.

Small Papers

1st: "Bean's Cafe offers hope to Anchorage's homeless" by James Halpin, The Northern Light. Comments: This reporter has captured the ambiance of an urban soup kitchen as well as the character of its regular customers through rich use of descriptive writing. James is not afraid to use his observational skills to describe clouds of breath in the frigid morning air, or the smell of burnt grease in the humid kitchen. Deftly woven in are statistics about homelessness in Alaska and the voices of the homeless.

2nd: "A Valentine set in Stone" by Kristen Inbody, Kodiak Daily Mirror. Comments: The Stones' story is not unusual, but Kristen has been able to translate it beautifully into something every reader can relate to. Her language is spare and direct, which lets the couple's romantic tale tell itself. The mundane details are sublime - he arrived late in white turtleneck, chinos and penny loafers, for example. We get them one at a time as the story plays out, and at the end get a lovely little piece of advice about how they have made their marriage succeed.

3rd: "Hiland inmates re-stitch their lives" by Mary M. Rall, Alaska Star. Comments: The beauty of this piece is its simple language and straight-forward storytelling. It starts with a nice touch in the lead (learning, growing and making amends one stitch at a time) and continues with nice quotes from women who were not always so nice (Wasilla is currently serving a 99-year sentence for murder, attempted murder and arson). This reporter also seems to have created a good rapport with the inmates and was able to translate that into some moving quotes.

BEST LONG FEATURE

Judge: Bill Slakey, city editor, Albuquerque Tribune

1st: "Peaceful Harbor," by Tom Kizzia, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: A fascinating story, deeply and sensitively reported. The details of the two families' lives together take the reader into their world and the difficulty of their decisions. The

descriptive writing—in the lead paragraphs in particular—draws the reader right into the story and never lets go.

2nd: "Ashes to ashes" by Debra McKinney, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: I laughed out loud repeatedly while reading this story. Excellent pacing and set-up made the payoff in each of the anecdotes that much more delicious. The sidebars were well-conceived and added important elements to the story without bogging the main story down.

3rd: "Bardcore—Up all night in Fairbanks with Shakespeare" by Tom Moran, Anchorage Press. Comments: I liked the loose chronological structure of this piece, which helped tie together a big cast of characters and a wide range of themes. What I really liked, though, was that the chronology wasn't overemphasized—it was just strong enough to unify the piece without overwhelming it. The same can be said for the Shakespeare allusions and the playful use of lines from the plays: They were weighted just right and added just the right character to the story without overdoing it.

BEST BUSINESS REPORTING

Judge: Becky Bisbee, business editor, Seattle Times

Large Papers

1st: "Powerful Pair," by Wesley Loy, Anchorage Daily News. Comment: Good watchdog journalism—keeping track of the revolving door between people in power and the oil industry. Writer allowed each side to have their say and let the reader decide. Nice details that brought the two subjects to life.

2nd: "In real estate, bidding wars give way," by Richard Richtmyer, Anchorage Daily News. Comment: Well researched look at changing real estate market. Full of people talking about what they are seeing and reasons for the shift. Good use of charts and photos to illustrate report.

3rd: "Vend will I see you again," Lynne Snifka, Anchorage Press. Comment: Delightful behind-the-scenes read about something every office can relate to—vending machines. Interesting details about choices consumers make.

Small Papers

1st: "Barrick, NovaGold pulling no punches (link is to a pdf download, story on B7)," by Sarah Hurst, Petroleum News. Comment: Good command of each company's financials. Good discussion of the hostile takeover. Appropriately technical for a trade journal.

2nd: "Homeowners' dreams become nightmares," by Kate Tracy, Alaska Star Comment: Even-handed reporting on common construction issue for new homes. Brought to life the problems by talking to real people and showing the reader what the home owners are dealing with.

3rd: "Small business stays afloat in cove," by McKibben Jackinsky, Homer News Comment: Great sense of place story. Good quotes. Fun read.

BEST GOVERNMENT STORY

Large Papers

Judge: Paul Simon, Editor, MediaNews Wire Services

1st: "Child Protection List," by Lisa Demer, Anchorage Daily News. Comment:

Excellent reporting and writing evoke a strong outrage on this one. Well-structured and easily understood. The beauty is one can question whether the main character is totally innocent while recognizing a flawed system that unfairly penalizes parents - often without their knowledge and without due process.

2nd: "How pet projects in Alaska became pet peeve on hill." By Yereth Rosen, Christian Science Monitor. Comment: Aha, so that is what the "bridge to nowhere" was all about. This was a great subject to explore as an example of controversial congressional earmarks. The entry clearly examined the merits - or lack thereof—of the two proposed bridges in Alaska as well as the whole process that leads to lawmakers' quietly pursuing pet projects as taxpayer expense.

3rd: "No Jesus" by Leila Kheiry, Frontiersman. Comments: Fascinating coverage outside the norm from a planning commission, of all things. Why the commission just doesn't accede to law and cease opening prayers that address a specific religion is puzzling - but it's great fun reading the comments of various officials seeking to justify their so-called right to invoke the name of Jesus. Hard to believe this was occurring in 2006 rather than 1906.

Small Papers

Judge: Diane Alters, Assistant City Editor, Denver Post

1st: "City Merger Plan Draws Ire," by Carey James, Homer Tribune. Comments: well-written; explores a complex issue well.

2nd: "Cruise Initiative Raises Voices," by Emily Palm, The Skagway News

3rd: "Tony Knowles, 63, Joins Facebook Trend," by Nate Raymond, Sun Star

BEST EDUCATION STORY

Judge: Lee Ann Colacioppo, Denver Post

1st: "The Unfinished Education" and "Dropouts defy stereotypes" by Eric Morrison, Juneau Empire. Comments: Telling statistics, good examples of kids and powerful quotes combine to make this the best of the education stories. It's both newsy and highly readable.

2nd: "It's a time for wishing," by Katie Pesznecker, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: The story makes the reader feel like you actually have been to Hope. You see the town, you feel what the residents are going through.

3rd: "ABCs of Reading," by Katie Pesznecker, Anchorage Daily News

Small Papers

1st: "Union: Mat-Su threatens to fire overpaid teachers," by James Halpin, The Northern Light. Comments: A strong effort at trying to sort through the complicated, secretive process of an ongoing audit. Nice variety of voices and well-balanced.

2nd: "Looking forward," by Scott Christiansen. Kodiak Daily Mirror. Comments: This presents a great slice of life mixed with an interesting tale of a man on a mission. Nice detail about the conversations and the backgrounds of the people this program is trying to reach.

3rd: "Homeschooling a full-time job," McKibben Jackinsky, Homer News. Comments: We could have heard more about this family and the challenges they face and how they make it all work. An interesting tale about an interesting family.

BEST PROFILE

Large Papers

Judge: Paula Span, a former Washington Post staff writer, is a contributing writer for the Washington Post Magazine and a contributing columnist for the New York Times. She teaches at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

1st: A tie!

"She Takes Lead in Deciding Fate of Kids" by Lisa Demer, Anchorage Daily News

Comment: By showing (not telling) how a state official makes decisions about custody and foster care, Demer not only brings an individual to life, but points out changing policies in the Office of Children's Services.

and

"Potato Head" by Debra McKinney, Anchorage Daily News. Comment: Charmingly rendered profile of a spudmeister with idiosyncrasies to spare.

2nd: "Hero's Farewell," by Alex deMarban, Anchorage Daily News. Comment: Portrait not only of a slain soldier, but of the Guardsmen and the grieving town that cherished him. Nicely non-generic.

3rd: "Atlas Smirked," by Lynne Snifka, Anchorage Press. Comment: Fine example of journalism-by-hanging around, resulting in a lively look at a web maven/musician/producer/Ayn Rand apostle.

Small Papers

Judge: Tom Koetting, deputy managing editor, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Koetting has worked at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel since 1997. He worked as a copy editor and a

reporter at the St. Paul Pioneer Press, and then as a reporter and an assignment editor at The Wichita Eagle. He has won several national and regional writing awards.

1st: "'The Weather Lady' forged the way to safer waters," by Melissa Campbell, Alaska Journal of Commerce. Comment: A wonderful profile of an unassuming woman who became a bit of legend, written in a way that readers get a sense of how life in Alaska has changed over the years. Great context; good quotes.

2nd: "For Provost Reichardt, end in sight," by Nate Raymond, Sun Star. Comment: A fairly straightforward assignment that was elevated by smooth, graceful writing. Readers get a real sense of the subject, and what makes him tick professionally.

3rd: "Meet the Eagle Lady," by Mary M. Rall, Alaska Star. Comment: Very good use of detail and descriptive language.

BEST ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

Judge: Douglas Fischer, Oakland Tribune

Large Papers

No winners. Comments: I am dismayed to report that no submission on environmental coverage from a large paper in Alaska could be considered prizeworthy in 2006. Given the astounding challenges on virtually every aspect of the environment in Alaska – and the exemplary efforts extended to cover them by the state's small-market papers – this dearth of quality reporting from Alaska's papers of record is inexcusable. A handful of capable features on environmental issues were submitted. But in a year where global warming went mainstream, the Pebble prospect gathered steam, Lower Slate Lake was sacrificed, the idea of a Tangle Lakes refuge developed, and the Bush Administration continued to roll back Clinton-era restrictions on drilling in the NPR-A, Alaska's readers got nary a word – at least, not a word the state's largest papers considered noteworthy. There was no word on growth, on energy development, on climate change, on hunting. This is a shame. Alaskans deserve more.

So I call on reporters in Alaska's most well-staffed, resource-rich newsrooms to look anew in 2007 at the many challenges to Alaska's environment. A tempting response is that many of these issues have been covered ad nauseam in prior years. That is no excuse for silence. A journalist's job is to shed light, find new angles, help advance the debate. On the environment in 2006, Alaska's best journalists left the issues to languish behind closed doors. This is disappointing.

Small Papers

General comments: Kudos to Alaska's smallest papers for aggressively and ambitiously tackling the environment in 2006. Had any of these stories appeared under the masthead of the state's largest papers, I would have been thrilled. And the body of work was impressive: The pool of entries was deep enough to have filled both large and small papers slots with top-shelf examples from the state's smallest newsrooms. I'm glad to see

somebody's covering the environment in Alaska, and I hope Alaska Press Club officers will indulge my desire to single out two additional pieces with honorable mentions.

1st: "Global warming threatens Northwest Arctic coast," by Susan B. Andrews and John Creed, The Arctic Sounder. Comments: Years from now 2006 will be known as the year global warming went mainstream. Andrews' and Creed's description of Kotzebue's eroding shoreline, swamped lowlands and efforts to reduce its carbon footprint is a stellar example of how an amorphous, difficult-to-report issue like climate change can be made extremely relevant for local readers. The authors seamlessly mixed the latest science with elders' observations and the costly challenges facing the borough. Most refreshingly, they did not waste any space on climate naysayers. All together, the piece highlighted the patent ignorance behind the Alaska congressional delegation's unsustainable stance on climate change.

2nd: "Tanker flow long noted as risky," by Carey James, Homer Tribune. Comments: Why is it we must wait until an Exxon Valdez smashes itself upon a reef or a Hurricane Katrina slams into the coast before we take action to reduce a well-known risk? James' excellent enterprise reporting presents a clear-eyed analysis of the Kachemak Bay's de facto role as the region's only safe haven for stricken vessels, the Bay's threadbare protections, and the head-in-the-sand, cross-your-fingers-and-hope-it-doesn't-happen approach that is federal and state policy. Where were the big papers on this? Who knows, but you can be sure of one thing: When there is a spill, they will come parachuting in alongside federal agents, oil company cleanup officers, and a legion of others suddenly concerned about the Bay's health.

3rd: "Humpback spends six hours caught in gillnet" by Klas Stolpe, Petersburg Pilot. Comments: Typically upon receiving the contest entries I skim them all to get a sense of range of work. Stolpe's account of a whale rescue stopped me in my tracks. I read the article start to finish. It is a gripper, and Stolpe did a marvelous job describing the urgency, confusion and anxiety among fishermen and rescuers alike as they struggled to free a humpback tangled in 75 fathoms of gillnet, lead and cork line.

Honorable Mentions

"Saying 'no' to mine could be costly" by Ben Stuart, Homer News. Comments: Stuart did a great service to readers by reporting on a Leg Affairs opinion that said, in effect, Alaskans would pay untold billions if they didn't let mining companies rip apart the Iliamna Lake watershed to mine the Pebble prospect's reserves. I don't know what was more jaw-dropping: The analysis or Homer Rep. Paul Seaton's trumpeting of that analysis as reason why the mine could not be stopped. I wish Stuart had dug deeper and challenged the thinking behind the report. But I was quite grateful for his clear, straightforward explanation of the opinion and the stakes at play.

"Geothermal powers resort" by Sarah Hurst, Petroleum News. Comments: An exceptionally researched, readable and colorful piece about an entrepreneur's bid to wean his end-of-the-road hot springs from diesel by tapping the area's marginal geothermal

potential. Of course, it helps to have a quote machine like Bernie Karl ("Forbes voted it the worst business idea for 2004," Hurst quotes. "So I rebuilt it."). But Hurst's research, storytelling skills and ability to render simple the complex (the process, she explains, is simply "refrigeration in reverse.") make this story shine. Great work.

CRIME OR COURTS

Large Papers

Judge: David J. Krajicek is a special correspondent for the New York Daily News and a featured contributor to Court TV's Crime Library. He is the author of "Scooped!" (Columbia University Press), a look at coverage of crime and crime policy. Krajicek holds degrees from the University of Nebraska and Columbia University. He was as an assistant professor at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism before returning to writing full time. He is co-founder of Criminal Justice Journalists, a national association of crime reporters, and co-author of Covering Crime and Justice, a CJJ Web publication. His crime reporting primer is the basis for an online course at the Poynter Institute's News University.

1st: "Burglarized," by Megan Holland, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: This was a fine example of an enterprise story about a crime that is too often ignored, even though burglary is far more common than headline-grabbing violent crimes. The writing was vivid, beginning with the scene-setting anecdotal lead that nicely described the violation that burglary victims feel. The sourcing was broad, including several victims and police officials. Most stories would have stopped there. But Holland also included comments from a victims' advocate, a pawn shop operator, a security firm and a drug expert who helped frame why burglaries have increased. The photos and sidebars helped round out the package, although the too-similar shadings of the burglary distribution map made it somewhat difficult to read.

2nd: "Long Road of Trouble" by Julia O'Malley, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: O'Malley's piece proves once again that there is human drama behind nearly every crime news story. Thank goodness she took the time to look behind the police report. Every few paragraphs brought forth yet another mind-boggling detail of the exquisitely dysfunctional upbringing of these poor children. This story would have been made stronger by contextual material from experts on the impacts of alcoholism, imprisoned parents and the other forms of dysfunction apparent in this pitiful family.

3rd: "Gangs," by Megan Holland, Anchorage Daily News. Holland's story is a sturdy heads-up on gangs in Anchorage. It doesn't overstate the problem but uses expert comments (including police, a school official and victims) to show that gangs are there. The graphic and sidebar help make it a good package.

Small Papers

Judge: Hurst Laviana has covered crime at the Wichita Eagle for more than 20 years while specializing in computer-assisted reporting on the side. He was the lead reporter in a series of stories that concluded in 2003 that more than two dozen Kansans had died at the hands of parolees during a four-year period. The newspaper that year won the

Associated Press Managing Editors' Freedom of Information Award for its efforts in forcing the state to open its parole records. Laviana also was the reporter who broke the story of a serial killer called the BTK Strangler who resurfaced in March 2004 after 25 years of silence by sending a letter to the newspaper. The case culminated in the arrest of a dog catcher named Dennis Rader, who was sentenced in August 2005 to life in prison after pleading guilty to 10 counts of first-degree murder.

1st: "Acquitted Darling plans to enjoy life," by Layton Ehmke, Homer Tribune.

Comments: The story is based on an interview with Jay Darling after he was acquitted by a jury of murdering his wife in 1997. The reporter does a nice job of capturing the personality of the defendant "He's good with numbers. He answers questions quickly" and lays out the man's thoughts about the case. The reporter pulls no punches when discussing the other side of the story. He notes that "Others aren't so convinced Darling isn't a liar and a murderer" before going on to quote relatives of the dead wife. This reporter touched all bases in the story.

2nd: "Internet rape victim shares her story," by Mary M. Rall, Alaska Star. Comments: This was the second of a four-part series on the dangers young people face when using the Internet. This part stands out because it tells in chilling detail the story of Stephanie Hasbrouk, who began exploring chat rooms at age 12, then began to lose control of her life at age 15 when she started in-person meetings with her on-line friends.

3rd: "Matt Owens sentenced to 101 years," by Diana Haecker, The Nome Nugget.

Comments: This is a full account of what must have been a draining sentencing hearing that saw former Nome police officer Matthew Owens continue to maintain his innocence in the 2003 murder of a young woman he'd managed to lure into his patrol car. Appropriate weight was given to the thoughts of the victim's relatives, who were interviewed after the hearing. Mentioning that the victim's mother was planning to plant a tree to symbolize the beginning of the healing process added a nice touch.

HEALTH OR SCIENCE

Judge: Tom Paulson is the science and medical writer for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. He visited Africa for a month on a Knight Science Journalism fellowship to report on the impact of Bill Gates' philanthropic efforts to improve health care in the Third World. He has covered tsunamis and other major issues for the paper.

1st: "Roots of the Family Tree," by George Bryson, Anchorage Daily News.

2nd: "Restaurant Inspections Uncommon," by Kyle Hopkins, Anchorage Daily News.

3rd: "Bring Us Your Dead," by Amber Wilson, Sun Star.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Judge: Richard Aregood, retired Newark Star-Ledger managing editor, won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing at the Philadelphia Daily News in 1985.

General Comments: I'm very impressed by the overall quality of this year's entrants, from the thorough reporting of big issues in the bigger papers to the excellent personal touch on serious issues in the smaller ones. It was very difficult to make choices, but here they are:

Large Papers

1st: Jenny Neyman of the Peninsula Clarion. Comments: Excellently reasoned and marvelously written edits on important subjects from legislative misconduct to irrational tax exemption to maintaining balanced government even when oil money's involved.

2nd: Matthew Zencey of the Anchorage Daily News. His editorial on Medicare in Alaska was thorough, convincing and smoothly written; his made-up conversation with Don Young confirms that Alaskans and we on the Outside can agree; and the passion of his edit on heating aid for the elderly elegantly dismissed the opposition.

3rd: Rod Boyce of the Fairbanks News Miner. An exhaustive and very readable examination of oil and gas policy.

Honorable Mention:

Judge comment: I feel the need also to mention the excellent and well-written editorials of Mark Kelsey of the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman.

Small Papers

1st: Carey James of the Homer Tribune. Comments: Clearly stated and very convincing edits on subjects ranging widely from government ethics to tanker safety to wandering moose and bear.

2nd: Mary Rall of the Alaska Star in Eagle River. Comments: Deeply personal editorials that at the same time effectively address larger points on war, criminal justice and internet safety of children. That ain't easy.

3rd: Lori Evens of the Homer News. Calm, even-handed examination of issues that stir the public passion like placement of a homeless shelter, school funding and tax exemption.

BEST COLUMNIST

Judge: Nicole Brodeur, Seattle Times columnist

Large Papers

1st: Geo Beach, "Top O' The Planet," Tempest Media Productions. Comments: Beach's voice is strong and writing is clear and fiery and makes the reader pause to think. The privilege of commentary is not wasted on him.

2nd: Myrl Thompson, "Valley Voices," Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman. Comments: Thompson keeps an eye out for the everyman in a column that is cleanly written and

strong-voices. (One criticism: Watch the habit of quoting literature in the lede ... you have a month to think of one, so use it).

3rd: Joel Davidson, The Catholic Anchor. Comments: Warm voice, excellent structure. The column invites all readers to what could be a “Catholics only” space. Everyone can get something from the subjects that Davidson tackles in an engaging, to-a-person style.

Small Papers

1st: Rosemary Fitzpatrick, “The Kachemak Gardener,” The Homer News. Comments: Column is warm and engaging and human, but also teaches by example. I especially like the way Fitzpatrick connects gardening to life; a wedding, a visit with a neighbor. It’s nice. It stands out. It serves readers, and it connects them to the paper.

2nd: Bill Smith, “Bay View,” Homer Alaska Tribune. Comments: Strong, sensible views in a style that both packs a punch and offers to buy you a beer. Readers get a stiff talking to, are urged to action and get just the facts. It’s a nice mix.

3rd: Mary Lochner, “Life in the Box,” The Northern Light. Comments: Smart coverage of what is often, indeed, the “boob tube.” Very thoughtful and reasonable. Occasionally, the writing is a little too high-minded, and points are made over and over. But readers can take a lot from the column, and think about it long after.

BEST SPORTS COLUMNIST

Judge: Jim Moore, Seattle P-I sports columnist

1st: Andrew Cremata, Skagway News: Fish This! Yukon Ramblings. Comments: I just really liked his writing style and how descriptive he was. I felt like I was there with him.

2nd: Sean Pearson, Homer Tribune: Mariners bid farewell to Blake’s gridiron guidance. Comments: Again, liked his style, too, and I felt like I got to know who this coach was in one column.

3rd: Sean Pearson, Littlest athletes often play toughest games. Comments: Read like a blog, and there’s a certain appeal to that these days. I enjoyed his mindless meanderings, though the writer still managed to stay on topic.

BEST SPORTS NEWS REPORTING

Judge: Anita Ralstin and Paul Logan

Large Papers

1st: “Playing the Recruiting Game” by Matias Saari, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. Comments: Matias did a find job in explaining the difficulties recruiting athletes to the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

2nd: "Beloved Football Coach Dies" by Danny Martin of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. Comments: Danny did good work on the coach obit, touching all the bases in telling the man's life story.

3rd: "On Track for Football" by Jeremiah Bartz of Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman.

Small Papers

1st: "UAA Women's Hockey to Skate Again" by Jessica Allman of The Northern Light.

2nd: "Alumnus to Coach Lady Seawolves" by Rachael Fisher of The Northern Light.

3rd: "Dawson Dismissal" by Andrew Cremata of The Skagway News.

BEST SPORTS GAME/EVENT STORY

Not available as of press time.

BEST SPORTS FEATURE

Jason Quick, Oregonian

1st: "Playing Tough," by Kevin Klott, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: A clear-cut choice. Not only did Klott glean vivid anecdotes, but his piece was set apart by his reporting - I think I counted 17 sources. That reporting painted a deep and vibrant piece that made me stop and get a cup of coffee to warm up. Reporting the history of outdoor hockey was a nice touch, and spoke to the depth of Klott's reporting. I wonder, though, if a follow-up piece is in order about how the 20-below rule is widely ignored. A solid, solid, piece that was accentuated nicely by the layout (love the shot by Marc Lester of the frost-covered eyelashes of player Mary Carlson). It all combined to make this an easy first-place choice.

2nd: "Unalakleet girl at East thinks big," by Brian Singler, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: A good job at revealing the quirky personality of Tweto, but I couldn't help thinking this could have been a better story with more reporting. What about interviewing the parents? And I wanted to know more about her abrupt departure from Unalakleet's regional volleyball team. What does that school think of her bailing? And was she as well-liked there? Also, her living on her own deserved more than just a reference to watching a scary movie by herself. Seems like that could have been explored more. That being said, I left this piece feeling like I knew Tweto, which is a primary goal of a feature.

3rd: "Hampton pushes herself to limits in pool," by Adam Raeder, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. Comments: Raeder is obviously a good interviewer - he got great stuff from Hampton - but I was turned off by the lead. A little hokey. A better intro would have been to lead with the near-drowning as a youth. Also would have liked to hear from her parents and their impressions of her rise from beginner to standout - maybe that has been

a consistent character trait throughout her young life. But again, Raeder's ability to get his subject talking in such a revealing and frank way set this apart from other entries.

Small Papers

1st: UAF graduate shares Iditarod experiences, expectations, by Hannah Guillaume, The Northern Light. Comments: A gripping lead easily set this story apart from the competition. How could anyone stop reading after that harrowing tale? A good job at identifying the crux of a conflict/struggle and playing it up.

2nd: "Play hard, study hard," Nate Raymond, Sun Star. Comments: Nice reporting and decent way to get into a story that is relevant and important in college athletics. Nice job of digging to get the GPA numbers, not just for this year, but year's past. Still would have liked more input from the athletes themselves; it was a little heavy on the coaches and administrators. But overall, a creative way to get into what could have been a boring numbers piece.

3rd: "M's linemen ready for big game," by Ben Stuart, Homer News. Comments: A clever story idea about a little publicized facet of football, but I thought the best stuff was buried and not developed. Remember, this is a feature, so reveal the subjects. I want to know "Razmo's" personality, why they call Fielding "Hambeano", etc. It's probably well known these guys are big and make up one of the biggest lines in school history, so tell us what, and who, is behind those facemasks and pads. Are some of them shy? Rugged? Are they standouts in the classroom? I don't know much more about these guys than when I first started reading the story. It was good, but could have been better with more questions about their personalities.

BEST ARTS COVERAGE

Judge: Douglas McLennan, editor, ArtsJournal

Large Papers

1st: "Composer Captures Alaska's Rhythms," Mike Dunham, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: A great sense of how a nationally prominent composer used unusual materials in a soundscape.

2nd: "My Neighbor's Tree," Jenny Neyman, Peninsula Clarion. Nice, lyrical story that brings a quiet perspective to a story that wasn't obvious.

3rd: "Out of Stock: Are Video Stores being Ditched for Online Rentals?" Korry Keeker, Juneau Empire. Comments: This is a story that is being done in many places, but it's a good overview of a significant cultural trend.

BEST SUSTAINED COVERAGE

Judge: Julius Strauss, Atwood Chair, University of Alaska Anchorage

Large Papers

1st: Lisa Demer and Richard Mauer, Anchorage Daily News, for assorted stories on Mark Avery, Rob Kane and their company Security Aviation. Comments: Very thorough investigative series on a complex but fascinating case. Extremely well-researched and well-written.

2nd: Margaret Friedenauer, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, for Iraq coverage of Stryker Brigade. Comments: Gives a good taste of the daily travails of US soldiers in Iraq. Reporter deserves commendation for putting herself in danger to cover a story of local importance.

3rd: Wesley Loy, Anchorage Daily News, for Prudhoe Bay problems. Comments: Good consistent coverage of an important story. Gets under the skin of the various investigations.

Small Papers

1st: Michael Armstrong and McKibben Jackinsky, Homer News for Eruption of Augustine Volcano. Comments: Interesting topic covered very well, nicely written pieces and extremely informative both for locals and non-locals. Good research.

2nd: Ben Stuart, McKibben Jackinsky, Michael Armstrong, Homer News for Jay Darling Murder Trial. Comments: Gripping account of an interesting case. Vivid style keeps the reader engaged. Very good read.

3rd: Diana Haecker, The Nome Nugget, Jane Doe 2 vs Catholic Church. Comments: Good effort covering an important topic. Not always the clearest of writing styles but reporter has evidently put a lot of time and effort into this series.

BEST SERIES

Judge: Julie Sullivan, Oregonian reporter, former Frontiersman and Spokesman-Review. Sullivan shared reporting duties on the INS story that won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

1st: "New Faces, New City" by Julia O'Malley, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: Exhaustively reported stories that manage to capture the poignancy, struggles and ascension behind the change in Anchorage's demographics. O'Malley's stories are warm, intimate, surprising and an important record of change.

2nd: "Accidental Dinner" by Peninsula Clarion staff. Comments: The reporters slice apart the news in plain sight: motorists who hit moose and in doing so, provide color, costs and perspective on the chaos. Fine local reporting that looks so smart because it focuses on one experience that connects an ever more diverse community.

3rd: "Eating Local" by S.J. Komarnitsky, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: Komarnitsky's wonderful idea and accessible experiment challenges readers to think of their place on the food chain and steers readers into the risks and rewards of eating local. A universal reader because...everybody eats.

Small Papers

1st: "Warming Issue Heats Up" by Layton Ehmke, Homer Tribune. Comments: Ehmke vividly explains the complicated stories of climate change in what feels like a simple walkabout tour of Kachemak Bay. He makes it a journey that is accessible and important. His prose is clear and specific, sources excellent and most importantly, he shows, not tells in vivid examples. It's a series that shows other reporters how to tackle a huge complicated issue.

2nd: "Living on the Edge" by Carey James, Homer Tribune. Comments: Carey James provides terrific explanatory journalism and context in her pieces on the Ring of Fire with a fine ear for quotes and perspective. Teachers all of the state have clipped this piece for science class.

3rd: Iditarod Coverage, by Diana Haeker, Nihls Hahn, The Nome Nugget. Comments: Diana Haeker and Nihls Hahn sustain their enthusiasm, expertise and lively writing throughout this single event, pushing with strong sources and descriptive writing right to the end.

BEST HEADLINE WRITING

Judge: Toby Smith, Albuquerque Journal

1st: Mark Kelsey, Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman. Comments: "Sermon" and "Ho Ho" very good, subheds too. Alliteration in "Logo" nice to see once in a while. "Settlers Bay" works well, though marred by use of "home" in main and subhed. "Pros and Cons" good but not a zinger, likely because story not easy to explain.

2nd: Tony Hall, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: "Rainbow" is well done, as is "Model Citizen," for its clever double meaning. "Ungulates Afoot" a head-scratcher. "Grease lightening" is OK, if a bit strained, and subhed only confuses the issue. "Noxious weeds" appreciated for the care that went into it. The headline reminds all copyeditors that short, inside wire stories are just as important as staff-written covers.

3rd: Gary Black, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: This group of headlines would have scored better if the editor did not repeat words, often complete phrases, found in the ledes of the stories beneath them. That's a no-no in headline writing. Still, the editor has the ability to grab a reader's attention. "Gravel" and "Pine" work well, "Collision" is a decent attempt, though use of a preposition to end the first line is bothersome. "Denali" doesn't really tell reader much, nor does Frankenstein headline.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

Judge: John Trever has been the editorial cartoonist at the Albuquerque Journal since 1976. His cartoons are distributed by King Features Syndicate to more than 350 daily newspapers. Among his awards are honors by the Society of Professional Journalists, the Free Press Association and the Overseas Press Club.

1st: “Ted Stevens & ANWAR... Smoking a Whole Pack” by Jamie Smith, Ester Republic

Comments: Clear messages with strong visual metaphors and some nice ironical twists. Bold graphics with effective use of grey tones. Despite some lapses into scatology, a strong entry, particularly “Ted Stevens & ANWAR” and “Smoking a Whole Pack.”

2nd: Cartoons by “Toe” by Tony “Toe” Newman, Juneau Empire. Comments: Newman’s cartoons offer a light touch with some whimsical humor, effective layouts and simple graphics. Provides helpful written explanations of local cartoons to out-of-state judges.

3rd: “School Funding...Conservative Base” by Mike O’Meara, Homer News. Comments: Simple, uncluttered graphics; clever word-plays, as in “School funding cost differential.”

BEST SECTION

Judge: Jim Springhetti, longtime member of the Oregonian’s award-winning presentations staff, former Frontiersman editor.

Large Papers

1st: Anchorage Daily News “Play.” Comments: Fabulous use of art and typography. Easy to navigate and read. Design is highly dynamic, but avoids looking cluttered. A first-rate entertainment section.

2nd: Juneau Empire “Hooligan.”

No third.

Small Papers

1st: The Homer Tribune “Weekender.” Comments: It captures the excitement of Homer with photos and story selection. Seems to cover local happenings broadly, thoroughly and with style.

2nd: Kodiak Daily Mirror “The Looking Glass.”

3rd: Alaska Star “Alaska Military Weekly”

BEST WEEKLY

Judge: Nigel Jaquis, Pulitzer prize-winning investigative reporter for Willamette Week in Portland, Ore.

1st: The Anchorage Press. Comments: The Press presents a thoughtful, skeptical appraisal of what matters in the state’s biggest city and why readers should care.

2nd: The Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman. Comments: Well-designed, crisply edited and clearly written, the Frontiersman provides readers with a comprehensive take on local and state issues.

3rd: The Northern Light. Comments: This student publication outclassed professional entries with its attention to the reader-grabbing elements that too many stories lack: enterprise and conflict.

BEST ILLUSTRATION

Judge: Rick Nease, art director, Detroit Free Press

1st: "Dive Right In," Michael Plett.

2nd: "Feeding Fallout," Scott Hughes.

3rd: "Toilets Get No Respect," Stephanie D. Johnson.

BEST PAGE LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Judged by Presentation Editor Mark Edelson, News Project Designer Nicole Bogdas and Designer Mike Perkins of The Palm Beach Post. Mark Edelson was named Newspaper Picture Editor of the Year seven times, and he's been the lead picture editor or designer for the Post team that has earned numerous awards from the Poynter Institute, Pictures of the Year, and National Press Photographers Association.

Large Papers

1st: "Your chance to be a dancing fool" by Scott Hughes, Juneau Empire. Comments: The designer demonstrates good organizational skills in crafting a presentation that is clean, informative and easy to navigate. There's a great deal of information on the page, yet the page doesn't feel cluttered. (It should be noted, however, that there were some reservations about the readability of the screened type in the section on Salsa.)

2nd: "Dressed for Success" by Jenny Neyman and M. Scott Moon, Peninsula Clarion. Comments: The headline talks about layering being key in winter wear; the judges felt the designer/s did a good job of layering the typography and ordering the photography to make the page attractive AND convey information. The photos of hands were effectively used to create a vertical element for the page.

3rd: "Going Buggy" by Jenny Neyman, Peninsula Clarion. Comments: The page is graphically striking, led by the decision to run the microscopic shot of a mayfly "monster-size." And though so much body text reversed out of a black background usually doesn't work, here the type was sized appropriately to take advantage of good reproduction that insured legibility. The kerning of the caption for the mayfly picture was a bit awkward, but overall the page was a success.

Small Papers

1st: "8 seconds of adrenaline" by Amber Wilson, Sun Star. Comments: The page is restrained, clean and organized well. There's a bit of a problem with the pictures as displayed not supporting the headline (the dominant clown photo doesn't address the adrenaline surge), but we were willing to overlook that. The series of small photos

touches on a variety of aspects and helps the reader get a feel for what's going on at the rodeo.

2nd: "A special sanctuary" by Gianna Ridgeway, Catholic Anchor. Comments: The designer took advantage of informative, graphically simple and appealing photographs to build a page that in its simplicity echoes the subject matter.

3rd: "Tartan tradition" by Stephanie D. Johnson, Alaska Star. Comments: The page exhibits some good choices of photos and the headline treatment was creative. A bit of restraint (perhaps less plaid decoration) and more white space (or in this case black space) would have helped the pictures stand out more effectively.

BEST GRAPHIC

Judge: Steve McKinstry, Graphics Director, The Oregonian

No awards given.

BEST SPOT PHOTO

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "Juneau Fire," by Michael Penn, Juneau Empire. Comments: A clear winner, nicely layered and great composition.

2nd: "Firefighter and Child," by John Hagen, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Unexpected surprise from a wreck scene.

3rd: "Tanker aground," by Al Grillo, AP. Comments: Simple storytelling in this graphic photo.

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International.

1st: "Garnie vs. Murkowski," by Diane Haecker, The Nome Nugget

2nd: "Augustine Blows," by Michael Armstrong, Homer News

3rd: "Police Officer Injured," by Mary Rall, Alaska

BEST GENERAL NEWS PHOTO

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "Close call," by Eric Engman, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Nice light, moment and composition. Once again, a clear winner in this category.

2nd: "Welcome Home," by John Hagen, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Just a solid news photo, hard to beat this great moment.

3rd: "Veteran," by Eric Engman, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Wonderful seeing, looks over-photoshopped, costing it a place or two in the rankings.

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International.

1st: "Moving On," by Betsy Lund, Kodiak Daily Mirror

2nd: "Welcoming," by Brain Lepley, Alaska Post

3rd: "Denali Delivery by John Pennell, Alaska Post

BEST ARTS PHOTO

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "Singer," by John Wagner, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: By far the best entry in a very weak category consisting of three entries.

2nd: "Wearable Art," by Michael Penn, Juneau Empire

3rd: "A little coaxing," by Hall Anderson, Ketchikan Daily News

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International.

1st: "Qaluyaarmuit dancers," by Greg Lincoln, The Delta Discovery

2nd: "Steppin Out Dancers," by Klas Stople, Petersburg Pilot

3rd: "Billinton in Visqueen Gown," by Monique Musick, The Ester Republic

BEST PICTURE STORY

Large Papers

Judges: Photo editor Doug Parker and staff photographers Eliot Kamenitz and Sean Gardner, The New Orleans Times-Picayune

1st: "Bird Flu," by Sam Harrel, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Easily the best entry. Great mix of lenses produced details and overalls that fully communicated the story.

2nd: "Salmon Harvest," by Klas Stulpe, Associated Press. Comments: Good, solid journalist photographs told the story well.

3rd: "Village Erosion," by Al Grillo, Associated Press. Comments: A good selection of photos on an important story.

Small Papers

Mark Holm, Photo Editor, Albuquerque Tribune

1st: "VSC Swim Meet," by Klas Stolpe, Petersburg Pilot. Comments: Our feeling was that this photographer did a good job of varying the perspective and looking for some not-so-expected views of a swim meet. Good seeing.

2nd: "Play Ball," by Klas Stolpe, Petersburg Pilot. Comments: This was a fun, heart-warming look at some mini baseball players. Shot exclusively with a long lens, the subjects were cleanly isolated for impact. Some wider, off-the-field antics might have helped vary the perspective a bit. Nice job.

3rd: "Role Players," by John Pennell, Alaska Post. Comments: This was a nice, visual account of an elaborately staged training exercise. Photographically, the pictures are well executed. While it's a well-rounded sampling of the "performance," scenes and moments "behind the scenes" might have helped reveal the actual personalities behind the roles they were playing. This discussion prompted the question: "Is your task as a photojournalist to produce pictures that look like realistic scenes from a training film, or to report on the experience of the participants?"

BEST SPORTS PHOTO

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "My Ball," by Al Grillo, AP. Comments: Peak action cropped aggressively give us the first place winner.

2nd: "Bike," by John Wagner, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: Different than your usual sports action photo.

3rd: "Bull's Revenge," by Al Grillo, AP. Comments: Tighter crop would have led to higher finish, good moment.

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International.

1st: "Two Foot Kick," by Greg Lincoln, Delta Discovery

2nd: "Close Finish," by Greg Lincoln, Delta Discovery

3rd: Mystery entry - no title, caption or credit. Picture was of a football player in air. If you think you took this photo, see contest officials.

BEST SCENIC PHOTO

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "Eagle," by Brian Wallace, Juneau Empire. Comments: Wow, heck of a picture and moment.

2nd: "Cold Run," by Al Grillo, AP. Comments: Very close call for first, photo really evokes the lonely mood and bitter cold.

3rd: "Morning tide," by Klas Stolpe, AP. Comments: Just a beautiful scene, nice light & composition.

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International.

1st: "Two Captains," by John Wagner, Extreme Alaska

2nd: "Snow Falling on Driftwood," by Michael Armstrong, Homer News

3rd: "Trumpeter Swans," by Klas Stolpe, Petersburg Pilot

BEST PORTRAIT

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "Nap," by Eric Engman, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Very non-traditional for the portrait category, but works....

2nd: "Bugle," by John Wagner, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: Good, clean composition of a quiet moment.

3rd: "Photographer," by Sam Harrel, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Best of the rest wins third

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International (POYI).

1st: "Firefighter Ross Imbler," by Rosie Milligan, Sun Star

2nd: "Laura," by John Wagner, Extreme Alaska

3rd: "At Last," by Brian Lepley, Alaska Post

BEST FEATURE PHOTO

Large Papers

Judges: Brad Loper, Photo Editor; David Woo, Photo Editor; Chris Wilkins, Assistant Director of Photography, Dallas Morning News. The Dallas Morning News won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photos.

1st: "Final Tribute," by Jim Lavrakas, Anchorage Daily News. Comments: Clear winner, nice layering and moment pulls this photo to first place.

2nd: "Hay," by Sam Harrel, Fairbanks Daily News Miner. Comments: Beautiful photo, would have placed well as a scenic as well.

3rd: "Randy Johnson kisses first king," by Bob Martinson, Anchorage Daily News
Comments: Funny photo, really made us chuckle down here in Dallas.

Small Papers

Judge: Janet Reeves, Director of Photography, Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky Mountain News won first place in the 2006 Pictures of the Year International (POYI).

1st: "Frosty Jogger," by John Wagner, Sun Star

2nd: "Hungry Humpbacks," by Ron Loesch, Petersburg Pilot

3rd: "Eating Disorder," by Layton Ehmke, Homer Tribune