



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS THE TOM AND PAT GISH AWARD

Recognizing exemplary rural journalists, providing examples for others to follow, is part of the mission of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues. As part of that effort, the Institute presents an award in honor of Tom and Pat Gish, *right*, who published **The Mountain Eagle** in Whitesburg, Ky., for more than 51 years. Tom died in November 2008; Pat has health issues but remains publisher, and their son Ben is editor. This year, the Gish family won the Eugene Cervi Award from the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors for consistently acting in the conviction that “good journalism begets good government.”



The Gishes have withstood advertiser boycotts, declining population, personal attacks and even the burning of their office to provide the citizens of Letcher County the kind of journalism often lacking in rural areas. “Tom and Pat are journalism heroes. They exemplify the courage, tenacity and integrity that is often necessary to render public service in journalism, especially in rural communities,” said Director Al Cross when announcing establishment of the award. The Gishes were the first recipients of the award, in 2005.



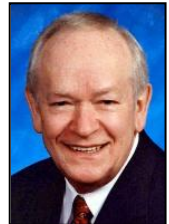
The Ezzell family of **The Canadian Record**, a weekly newspaper in Canadian, Texas, won the award in 2007. Pictured are Laurie Ezzell Brown and her mother, Nancy Ezzell, widow of Ben Ezzell, who established the Panhandle weekly’s reputation for courage, especially in national political controversies. The award was presented at the Institute’s National Summit on Journalism in Rural America. Ben Gish was among the judges who unanimously voted to make the award, saying “The Ezzells clearly demonstrate the tenacity, courage and integrity I’ve been privileged to witness, in growing up and working with my parents.”

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Retired publisher Al Smith, an Institute founder and chairman of the Institute's advisory board, said: "The story of this gutsy Texas family is as comparable to the Gishes of Kentucky as anyone could imagine." The Canadian Record has held local, state and national politicians accountable, fought political extremism, opposed unwise military adventures and helped protect the environment, often against organized and violent opposition.



The 2008 Gish Award went to James E. Prince III, *left*, and Stanley Dearman, *right*, current and former publishers of **The Neshoba Democrat**, a weekly newspaper in Philadelphia, Miss. The Democrat was recognized for its leadership, especially on civil rights and reconciliation over the last four decades.



Dearman and Prince were cited for their effort to bring to justice all the killers of James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, the civil-rights workers who were murdered in Neshoba County in July 1964. Seven Ku Klux Klan members and allies were convicted in the murders, though none served more than six years in prison. Another 11 were not convicted, and the case was not prosecuted by the state of Mississippi until the Democrat and the daily **Clarion-Ledger** in Jackson began their campaigns for justice. "It is testimony to the great good that a courageous newspaper can do," Cross said in presenting the award at a Mississippi Press Association convention.

The Tom and Pat Gish Award was not presented in 2009, but will be in 2010. We seek nominations that measure up, at least in major respects, to the records of previous winners. Nominators should send detailed letters to Director Al Cross at the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, explaining how their nominees show the kind of exemplary courage, tenacity and integrity that the Gishes demonstrated in their rigorous pursuit of rural journalism. Documentation does not have to accompany the nomination, but is helpful in choosing finalists, and additional documentation may be requested or required.

Letters should be postmarked by Sept. 1 and mailed to:

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