

St. Petersburg Times, The Washington Post Win Pulitzer Prizes

Two SNPA member newspapers – the [St. Petersburg Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#) – were honored with Pulitzer Prizes on Monday.



From left: Lane DeGregory, staff writer; Paul Tash, chairman, CEO and editor; Bill Adair, PolitiFact editor; and Neil Brown, executive editor.



Gene Patterson, chairman, CEO and editor 1978-1988, was on hand to congratulate the staff of the Times. Andy Barnes, chairman, CEO and editor 1988-2004, sent a note saying that he "couldn't be more proud." Paul Tash, the paper's current leader, gave credit to Nelson Poynter, chairman, CEO and editor from 1938-1978, for handing down his incredible legacy of journalistic excellence and the Times' independence.

The St. Petersburg Times was recognized with the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in National Reporting for its fact-checking Web site, PolitiFact, as well as the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in Feature Writing for a story about a feral child living in deplorable conditions who was rescued and adopted.

The Washington Post was awarded the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for a series of op-ed columns written by Eugene Robinson about the 2008 presidential campaign.

National Reporting

Created by the St. Petersburg Times in August 2007, [PolitiFact](#) launched this unique Web site to separate fact from falsehood in the claims made during the 2008 presidential campaign. It is led by PolitiFact Editor Bill Adair and is the first reporting effort created for the Web to win a Pulitzer Prize.

The site features a Truth-O-Meter that scores the truthfulness of specific claims by the presidential candidates. More than 865 findings have been published on <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/> and in the Times.

Journalists and researchers from the Times fact-checked the accuracy of many speeches, TV ads, interviews and other campaign claims and communications. PolitiFact is bolder than previous journalistic fact-checking efforts because the editors make a call, declaring whether a claim is True, Mostly True, Half True, Barely True or False. There is a special category for the most outrageous claims called "Pants on Fire."

In January 2009, PolitiFact relaunched, debuting another unprecedented journalistic effort by tracking President Obama's campaign promises and measuring the progress of his presidency.

The staff compiled 514 promises for a new feature called the "Obameter" that tracks the progress of the new president's agenda and provides the audience with an up-to-the-minute report card.

PolitiFact received the 2008 Excellence in Online Journalism Award from the National Press Foundation and was a finalist in the Washington reporting category of the Scripps Howard Foundation's National Journalism Awards.

Feature Writing

The feature writing award went to Times' staff writer Lane DeGregory, whose special report on Danielle in "The Girl in the Window" generated more response than any piece of journalism ever published on the Times Web site [Tampabay.com](#), and perhaps as much as any story told in the modern history of the St. Petersburg Times. DeGregory posed the question: Could love and caring make up for a lifetime of neglect?

First 100 Days

[PolitiFact](#), the 2009 Pulitzer Prize winner for national reporting, will kick off its coverage of President Obama's first 100 days this week.

In 2005, police were called to a house in Plant City, Fla., to investigate a case of child neglect. What they found, DeGregory wrote, was a tiny creature “curled on her side, long legs tucked into her emaciated chest on top of a torn, moldy mattress thrown on the floor...Flies picked at her face. Insect bites, rashes and sores pocked her pale skin. Though she looked old enough to be in school, she was naked – except for a swollen diaper.”



Victory, exemplified by Marty Petty, publisher and executive vice president of the St. Petersburg Times.

The little girl was Danielle, whom the child welfare system came to know as the feral, or wild, child. She apparently was never taught to speak, never nurtured. She had never seen a doctor, never been to school. There seemed little hope that she would ever have a normal, dignified life.

The story begins with Danielle’s discovery, continues with her adoption by a brave and supportive family, and ends in a searing interview with the birth mother. To read the amazing story, go to <http://www.tampabay.com/specials/2008/reports/danielle/>.

DeGregory won first place in the feature writing category of the National Headliner Awards for a body of work that included "The Girl in the Window."

“These two Pulitzers showcase the absolute commitment of the St. Petersburg Times to both Web-based journalism and narrative storytelling,” said Executive Editor Neil Brown. “By deploying our staff in an intelligent and heartfelt pursuit of separating campaign rhetoric from the truth, we pushed ourselves, our peers and even the candidates themselves to a new level of accountability.

“Lane DeGregory’s beautifully told story touched our audience in so many ways and raised awareness about child neglect, foster care and abuse investigations,” Brown said.

Times staff writer John Barry also was honored as a Pulitzer finalist in feature writing for his series on Winter the dolphin, who was rescued and fitted with a prosthetic tail. It is a story on the mysterious connection between man and dolphin. For more, go to <http://www.tampabay.com/specials/2008/reports/winter/>

The 2009 Pulitzer Prizes are the 7th and 8th in the history of the St. Petersburg Times, and the first time the newspaper has received more than one Pulitzer in the same year. This year only two newspapers won more than one Pulitzer – the Times and the New York Times, which won five.

Commentary

The coveted commentary prize was awarded to Robinson, Washington Post associate editor and columnist, for commentary that chronicled, analyzed and anticipated Barack Obama’s presidential election. To read his columns, [click here](#).

“From Gene’s early January column from Iowa ‘No Longer Unimaginable’ when he first believed that a black man might be elected president, to his Nov. 6 column, ‘Morning in America’ when he told us how Obama’s election felt to a man who grew up in

The fact-checking Web site created by the St. Petersburg Times will begin its most sweeping summary of the president’s top campaign promises.

“By using old-fashioned journalism and the new tools of the Web, we can provide a fresh perspective on his first 100 days,” said Bill Adair, PolitiFact editor.

The coverage includes a special page that summarizes Obama’s Truth-O-Meter ratings since he took office, his progress with his top 25 promises and articles that analyze his accomplishments. It can be found at <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/100-days/>.



From left (standing): Fred Hiatt, editorial page editor; Eugene Robinson, columnist; Marcus Brauchli, executive editor; and (sitting): Vince Bzdek, deputy assistant managing editor of news desk.

segregated South Carolina, Gene chronicled last year's amazing election with intelligence, wit, humor and sensitivity," said Fred Hiatt, editorial page editor. "We congratulate Gene and are honored that the Pulitzer Prize Board has recognized his incredible work as a columnist."

Robinson is syndicated by The Washington Post Writers Group and his twice-weekly column appears in nearly 140 newspapers across the country.

The Washington Post also was named a finalist in five categories:

- Explanatory Reporting: Robert O'Harrow Jr. and Brady Dennis for their vivid, richly documented explanation of why AIG, the insurance industry giant, nearly collapsed and what lessons the crisis holds for the nation's policymakers.
- National Reporting: Amy Goldstein and Dana Priest for their relentless exploration of America's network of immigration detention centers, melding reporting and computer analysis to expose sometimes deadly abuses and spur corrective steps.
- International Reporting: Staff for its sensitive and moving examination of how females in the developing world are often oppressed from birth to death, a reporting project marked by indelible portraits of women and girls and enhanced by multimedia presentations.
- Editorial Writing: Charles Lane for his succinct and insightful editorials on the nation's economic collapse, zeroing in on problems and offering solutions with a steady voice of reason.
- Feature Photography: Carol Guzy for her powerfully intimate coverage of the perils and sorrow of childbirth in Sierra Leone, where women face the world's highest rate of maternal mortality.



Donald Graham, chairman of the board, congratulates Eugene Robinson.



Eugene Robinson addresses the newsroom, with Executive Editor Marcus Brauchli looking on.

SNPA member newspapers also were Pulitzer Prize finalists in six additional categories:

- Public Service: St. Petersburg Times – For "PolitiFact," its fact-checking initiative during the 2008 presidential campaign that used probing reporters and the power of the World Wide Web to examine more than 750 political claims, separating rhetoric from truth to enlighten voters. (Moved by the Board to the National Reporting category.)
- Breaking News Reporting: Staff of [Houston \(Texas\) Chronicle](#) – For taking full advantage of online technology and its newsroom expertise to become a lifeline to the city when Hurricane Ike struck, providing vital minute-by-minute updates on the storm, its flood surge and its aftermath.
- Local Reporting: Brendan McCarthy, Michael DeMocker and Ryan Smith of [The Times Picayune](#), New Orleans, La. – For their multifaceted examination of a murder case that showed deep understanding of the community, its social ills and the often frustrating path to justice.
- International Reporting: Rukmini Callimachi of [Associated Press](#) – For her in-depth investigation of the exploitation of impoverished children in West and Central Africa who are often traded like animals by adults who prize their labor.
- Breaking News Photography: Staff of Associated Press – For its haunting chronicle of death, destruction, heartbreak and renewal when an earthquake devastated Sichuan, China.
- Feature Photography: Sonya Hebert of [The Dallas Morning News](#) – For her empathetic portrait of palliative care in a Texas medical center as terminally ill patients cope with the end of their lives.

For complete information about the 2009 Pulitzer Prizes, [click here](#).

SNPA eBulletin 4-23-09