When APA board president Fred Wulfekuhler of Paragould asked the leaders of both the Oklahoma and Texas Press Association who they recommended to manage the Arkansas Press Association back in 1979, they both came up with the same name – University of Texas professor C. Dennis Schick.

“At the first meeting of the board, I told them I needed a secretary and my wife needed to work,” Dennis said. “Since 9 of the 11 members worked with their wives, it was hard for them so say no. From then on Jan and I worked as a team.”

For the next 25 years, the Schicks devoted their working days (and many weekends and evenings) to making the newspaper business in Arkansas better, despite the challenge of changing times. They made lifelong relationships with other newspaper families, and to this day enjoy getting together with friends like Patsy and Jay Jackson, retired publisher of the Van Buren County Democrat in Clinton.

“So many of us traveled together to National Newspaper Association meetings,” Dennis recalled. “We got to know each other and their families; we watched their children grow up.”

The Schicks have three children and four grandchildren who all live in the Little Rock area. During the APA years, the children often could be found with their parents stuffing convention packets or making plaques.

They coordinated two APA conventions each year until their 2004 retirement. Dennis and Jan worked with excellent APA committees to develop locations from West Memphis to Eureka Springs and Hot Springs to Little Rock. They pulled in keynote speakers from Miss America to Razorback football coach.

Don’t miss Brenda Blagg’s FOIA workshop at the APA SuperConvention

Mark your calendar now for the Arkansas Press Association 2018 SuperConvention June 27-30 at the Inn of the Ozarks in Eureka Springs.

Brenda Blagg, who has been advocating for the Freedom of Information Act since it became law in 1967, will be a featured speaker the last day of the convention. “We put her on the same day as the editorial awards so that more reporters can hear her talk on FOIA,” said Ashley Wimberley, APA executive director.

A student at the University of Arkansas when the FOIA passed, Blagg’s professors gave her an appreciation of what FOIA meant for Arkansans. “It is not just a tool for reporters,” she said. “Every Arkansas citizen can use the same rights to public information.”

Blagg is now a freelance writer and syndicated columnist in Fayetteville. From how the use of public records enhanced her reporting to how she dealt with public bodies meeting secretly, she’ll share lessons learned in a half century.

“Attending APA meetings is useful for reporters defending FOIA in the long-term,” she said. “It is good to get to know publishers from around the state because those publishers can sometimes stop local legislators from supporting bad bills to weaken the law.”

Blagg has been a member of the Arkansas FOI Coalition and was a part of a statewide effort in the late ‘80s to audit compliance. Reporters, editors and other volunteers made in-person requests. “It was a great experience to see how different county, city and state agencies responded to those requests,” she said. “It is not always as easy as you think to get a record.”

Convention registration materials will be mailed and included in this newsletter, the Arkansas Publisher Weekly, in coming weeks.
ANF seeking golf hole sponsors for annual tourney

The Annual Arkansas Press Association (APA) Golf Tournament, benefiting the Arkansas Newspaper Foundation (ANF), will kickoff this year’s convention on Wednesday, June 27 at Holiday Island Country Club in Eureka Springs. The tournament, chaired this year by Bob Moore of the Carroll County News in Berryville, will begin with a noon lunch followed by a 1 p.m. shotgun start. Trophies will be awarded on Friday, June 29 during the convention luncheon.

To raise additional funds for ANF, the foundation is again seeking a sponsor for each golf hole. Sponsorships are $100 per hole, and there are currently five remaining.

“This is a great way to support ANF’s educational efforts, and some are using it as a way to honor or pay tribute to those who have impacted our industry,” said ANF Executive Director Karen Brown.

Those currently sponsoring a hole include: UAMS, Sheridan Headlight, The Times-Dispatch in Walnut Ridge, Northwest Arkansas Newspapers, the Stone County Leader in Mountain View, WEHCO Media, the Nashville News-Leader in honor of Louie and Jane Graves, The Daily Record in Little Rock, Neal and Ashley Wimberley, Jay and Patsy Jackson, the Magie Family in honor of Cone and Betty Magie and Ron and Nancy Kemp in honor of Ashley Kemp Wimberley.

For information about becoming a hole sponsor, email Karen Brown at arknewspaperfoundation@gmail.com. Golf team registration packets will be mailed out in the coming weeks.

Dennis and Jan Schick
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Lou Holtz to build attendance and chose topics for 8-12 workshops a year that included instruction on the newest trends and technologies.

“One memorable event was a luncheon in the rotunda of the Capitol celebrating the 125th Anniversary,” said Jan. “People loved the food and the festivities. Dennis dressed as a town crier and handed out a special newspaper.” The event also served as the premiere of a 20-minute film about community newspapers.

Of their many accomplishments during the 25-year stint, Dennis mentioned these:

- APA owns its own building at 411 South Victory in Little Rock, the second building purchased in his tenure. Prior to his arrival, APA rented offices.
- A Freedom of Information hotline was developed for APA members to call with questions.
- A Freedom of Information Coalition was formed to protect the law.
- A no-cost legal hotline was established to answer members’ legal questions.
- APA’s staff lobbied at the State Capitol on behalf of issues important to members.
- Annual receptions with the APA board and sitting governors so that they could talk one-on-one.
- Helping newspapers keep up with rapidly changing technology.

Today, Dennis and Jan spend a lot of time on choir and other activities at Lakewood United Methodist Church in North Little Rock. Dennis renewed his interest in magic, an activity of his childhood, during an APA trip to New Orleans. He uses his journalistic talents to edit the international magic newsletter, The Linking Ring.

They both say that there is always something that needs doing inside or outside the home where they’ve lived for 38 years. “You work so you can retire and do nothing. So, it’s okay if, once in a while, Jan and I can’t remember accomplishing anything that day,” Dennis said.

Those who know them well, will know those days are few. Dennis still works occasionally for the National Newspaper Association and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. He’s always looking for writing projects – especially those that pay. He still gets up and reads the newspaper each morning and believes there is a major role for newspapers in the lives of our communities.

“Newspaper people in general are hardworking, love their community, love what they do and work hard to put out good newspapers that serve their communities,” Schick said. “We were proud to be a part of that.”

One week left for APA board at-large nominations

There is one more week for at-large nominations to the APA Board of Directors; the window closes April 26, as per the APA constitution and bylaws. Three APA members have been nominated by the nominating committee process and are published in a separate article in this week’s Arkansas Publisher Weekly.

APA members may nominate themselves or others to be included on the annual ballot. To make an at-large nomination, letters of recommendation from three APA member newspapers in good standing are required. At-large nomination letters need to be submitted to the APA by the April 26 deadline.

Ballots in the annual election will be mailed May 11.
Let Us Know

We want to know about your new hires, retires and promotions!
Send your staffing changes to info@arkansaspres.org to be updated online and included in our weekly bulletin and monthly newsletter.

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