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on the occasion of  
NABJ's 30th anniversary.  
Happy 30th anniversary, NABJ. Not an ending. A milestone.

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>KNIGHT RIDDER>

INFORMATION FOR LIFE

# Committed to the Cause



*A Salute to NABJ's Presidents  
Second Edition*

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BY  
**PAULA  
MADISON**  
PRESIDENT &  
GENERAL MANAGER  
KNBC-TV  
(LOS ANGELES)

When did I first learn of NABJ? It was back in the late '70s. I was an investigative reporter at The Syracuse (N.Y.) Herald-Journal and I was down. We had no black editors, no black folks on the desk, no black photographers. We only had two black reporters. I was down and I didn't see a future in journalism ahead. I wasn't groomed or trained to be an investigative reporter. I sort of stumbled into it by way of a great story. It was one of those stories that you can get only if you're connected to *the community*. And, it didn't hurt that I was in the right place at the right time. I enterprised it and it stayed an exclusive. It played on the front page, above the fold, off-and-on for months.

It happened fast, so fast that I had to teach myself how to work an investigation.

It was going well, but still I was down. I wanted some guidance — a steady hand and a listening ear — and I wanted it from an editor who I believed would believe in *me* and not think I was an affirmative action hire. Remember, this was the late '70s.

At my paper, there were certainly white reporters and editors who treated me fairly. I definitely had friends and colleagues among them.

But would I share with my editors my reservations about my *great story*? I was writing about black folks committing crimes, peddling drugs and worse. This organized gang executed another brother in cold blood. No, I kept my feelings about “pulling this scab off” to myself. I was a new reporter and it was the late '70s.

I felt almost hopeless. And then, Les Payne came to town.

He was a speaker at Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications and I wanted to see for myself this national editor at Newsday who was a brother. I went. I listened. I watched.

Reporters, students, faculty swarmed around Les at the end. I went to Les and told him I was inspired. Hopeful that there were more Les Paynes out there, I asked if there were more because I wanted to learn from them, too. And, what Les said next was lyrical: “The National Association of Black Journalists.”

He said “NABJ” and took my breath away. The National Association of Black Journalists! I ... was ... stunned. I'd never heard of it. Was it possible that there were actually enough of us to form a national organization?

NABJ, Les said, had held two earlier national conventions and the third annual would be in a few months in Washington at The Mayflower Hotel.

NABJ could have met on the moon and I would have gotten myself there. I was on a mission. I had to go to NABJ. I had to meet them — the black journalists.

By coincidence, I'd taken a graduate class with a visiting professor at the Newhouse School in 1974. A year later, he became NABJ's founding president, Chuck Stone, and expertly paved the way for the association to follow.

Over the next decades, I got to know Vernon Jarrett, who I'll always remember could bring an NABJ business meeting to complete silence when he took the microphone. We knew Vernon's wisdom and we waited silently for him to teach us.

Bob Reid was the first black network TV news producer I'd ever met. I was in print and didn't understand TV, so I listened when Bob spoke.

During Les' presidency, he spoke with passion about Africa. He kept Africa and the coverage of the continent on NABJ's front burner.

Merv Aubespin was the president under whom I served as national secretary. Merv honored his board by presenting each of us with a gold NABJ lapel pin. Merv designed them and had them made from the gold he'd had melted down from a cherished family heirloom.

Foreword

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Look for these profiles and  
learn more about NABJ on  
our Web site  
[www.nabj.org](http://www.nabj.org)

Al Fitzpatrick during his presidency wanted a national training academy to groom future managers and his legacy lives on through the commitment of the National Association of Minority Media Executives (NAMME).

DeWayne Wickham had the vision to continue to elevate NABJ's professionalism. DeWayne was the president who was as comfortable working in print as he was working on TV and he had the wisdom to organize a mini-conference in Jamaica between NABJ members and Caribbean journalists.

My dear friend Tom Morgan offered students better training and, therefore, more options as professional journalists. Tom championed the TV and newspaper Short Courses that have since prepared many student journalists for the future. They are editors, anchors, news executives and they have Tom to thank.

My dear sister-friend Sidmel Estes-Sumpter was a take-no-prisoners, charm-the-pants-off-you, outstanding president. Sidmel used her strategic powers and relationship-building skills to win NABJ friends in the media's corporate ranks.

Dorothy Butler Gilliam's skill and experience further enhanced our standing on a national level. I witnessed Dorothy's negotiating skills and remain in awe of this sister.

Arthur Fennell was a brilliant, collaborative president. Arthur's wisdom was evident when he formed his "kitchen cabinet" of advisors and leaders from throughout the membership. He demonstrated his excellent managerial skills during his presidency, while still doing his day job as a TV news anchor.

Vanessa Williams, like Dorothy, was from The Washington Post family of NABJ members. Her insight, fearlessness and wisdom kept NABJ on an even keel when we faced the possibility of pulling out of Unity '99.

My brother Will Sutton and I had long talks about who should be NABJ's next leader. I encouraged him to run and he exacted a promise: I had to join his campaign. As president, Will's tirelessness and passion for NABJ were phenomenal. I am honored to have served him.

Condace Pressley was our first president from radio. Her strong ties to the Radio Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) were evident as that organization worked with Unity to present annual awards for coverage of diversity.

And, Herb Lowe ... I watched Herb "grow up" in NABJ. More accurately, I got older and this young brother who called me friend and mentor just continued to grow. Herb brought his own wisdom and experience to NABJ, determined to carry on the legacy and do right by the "old heads." The brother is one of those old souls who has been here before. I know. I've seen him in action in industry boardrooms. His focus isn't about "what will they think of me?" He is all about "what's best for NABJ?"

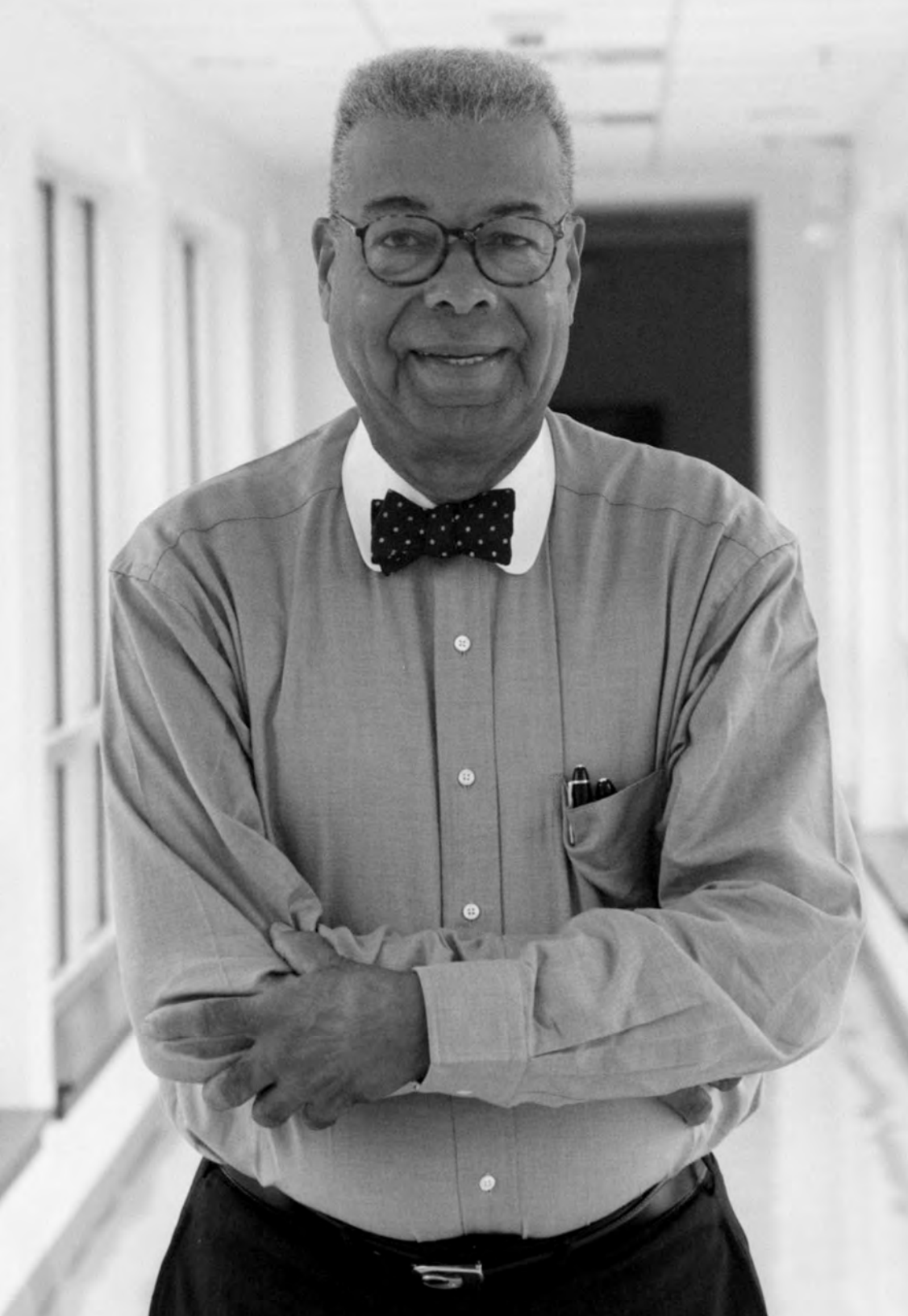
And, now, nearly 30 years after I first heard Les Payne say "NABJ," I can say I've never skipped a convention and I pray to the heavens that I never will. If not for you, my colleagues, and for these courageous, phenomenal presidents, I might not have had the fortitude to have a journalism career.

They've left us a legacy that must not be interrupted.

In this second edition of "Committed to the Cause," the 30th Anniversary Committee once again presents profiles and portraits of our presidents. Besides saluting them, the profiles superbly offer insight into our association's storied history.

For sure, there certainly still are countless young black journalists who, as I did long ago, seek advice, mentors and role models who look like them and who come from a shared experience. Today, though, they know of NABJ.

For that and so much more, we thank and honor our NABJ Presidents.



# C huck S tone

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“At the start, we were ridiculed, we were pressured, we were questioned by all sorts of people who never questioned anyone else’s right to come together in their own interests. We survived because we upheld the highest standards of our profession while maintaining our identity as black people.”

*Photograph by  
Robert Miller*





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Philadelphia Daily News*

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Jeannye Thornton  
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World Report*

#### TREASURER

Claudia Polly  
*NBC-TV*

Mal Johnson  
*Cox Broadcasting Corp.*  
(Elected 1976)

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Allison Davis  
*WBZ-TV*  
(Boston)

## STONE

Long before becoming NABJ's first president, Chuck Stone was a journalistic legend. He had edited three influential black newspapers — the New York Age, the Washington Afro American and the Chicago Defender. He had written two nonfiction books, "Tell It Like It Is" and "Back Political Power in America," and a novel, "King Strut." He had been Harlem congressman Adam Clayton Powell's chief administrative assistant and speechwriter.

As the now-defunct Washington Star put it in 1969, Stone was a "tough-minded militant" who "probably poured forth more angry rhetoric, ruffled more political moderates and simultaneously pacified and frightened more whites than most of (Washington's) other black leaders." He mellowed not one bit after becoming an outspoken columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News in 1971.

Enough of a firebrand to have worked with Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, yet with unassailable journalistic credentials, the sharp-tongued but affable Stone was superbly suited to be the first leader of an organization seeking to not only change the way the media would tell black America's story, but who was going to tell it.

Moreover, reaching that goal would require organizing the previously unorganizable — black journalists. They had been trying and failing for years to pull together a national group representing their interests.

"The challenge we faced was on two levels. Creating NABJ was black journalists' response to the Kerner Commission's call for improving the coverage of the black community," Stone recalled. "We set out to both increase black employment in the mainstream media and, just as importantly, to examine and analyze the institutionalized racism that plagued the reporting about black people in the mainstream media."

Stone used an acronym to evaluate stories: FEAT, for fair, even-handed, accurate and thorough.

"The mainstream papers just weren't living up to that standard," he said. "Even when they weren't making

# 1975-1977

serious factual errors, they weren't giving the complete picture of what was happening to blacks. That's what we had in mind."

As president of the Association of Black Journalists in Philadelphia, Stone led one of the well-organized local journalists' associations that came together as NABJ. Others included the Washington Association of Black Journalists, the Chicago Black Journalists and the Baltimore Black Media Workers.

But before NABJ could get off the ground, it had to define what it stood for. Stone had definite ideas about that.

"The one thing I insisted on was that we be called journalists, not media workers or some other euphemism," he recalled. "I said I wouldn't be part of any organization that called itself anything else. In a sense, it was a way of adding dignity and authenticity to our profession. I think choosing to call ourselves journalists helped to attract people to our ranks."

It is almost impossible to overstate the obstacles facing the 120 black journalists invited by the NABJ Interim Committee to meet at Washington Sheraton Park Hotel on Dec. 12, 1975. Only 44 actually signed the roster and paid dues, and thus became founding members. But they and many more showed up the next night for a dinner at which James Baldwin, Nikki Giovanni and Congresswoman Yvonne Burke of California spoke.

At the time, the best guess was that African Americans made up less than one-tenth of 1 percent of journalists at major newspapers. The percentage in the broadcast media was higher, about 4 percent, because the Federal Communications Commission insisted that television stations hire minorities.

Much of the media — typified by Herb Lipson, publisher of Philadelphia Magazine, who blasted the new organization in an editorial — bristled with hostility toward the very idea of a black journalists' group.

"Even some white journalists who were normally allies just did not see the professional imperative for a

## ESSAY

### BY

### PAUL

### BROCK

black journalists' organization," Stone recalled. "They claimed they saw a conflict of interest between the standards of the profession and our proclaimed ethnicity and gently speculated about our ability to be 'objective.'"

For some, the backlash was more than verbal.

One of NABJ's first regional directors, Sandra Gilliam-Beale, a television anchor in Toledo, Ohio, was frankly given the choice of resigning from the organization or losing her job. Some black reporters refrained from joining out of fear they would suffer the same fate. But many more, of course, defied the threats of their editors and news directors and joined.

That was largely because during two one-year terms as president, Stone worked relentlessly to establish NABJ as a national presence. He spoke out forcefully against the racially exclusionary hiring practices of the nation's major dailies. Speaking for NABJ, he castigated presidential candidates Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter for ignoring African American issues and concerns, and demanded that President Ford's Interior Secretary Earl Butz be fired for publicly telling a racially demeaning joke.

And he seemed to take particular glee in pointing out instances of biased reporting, such as the time when The Washington Post put a story about a black rape suspect on the front page on the same day it buried a piece about a white rape suspect deep in the metro section.

"We cited any number of specific instances of that kind of shoddy reporting," Stone said, "that showed how deeply racism was imbedded in the mainstream media. I used to drive (Post Executive Editor) Ben Bradlee crazy."

For all of his successes at calling attention to the media's failings, Stone failed to reach one group: major university journalism schools.

"They have still not done enough in attracting minority students and teachers to their classrooms," he said, "and the historically black colleges and universities cannot fill the void by themselves. Our efforts with the journalism schools while I was president of NABJ were mostly stonewalled by disinterest and subtle racism."

The continuing dearth of minority journalists coming out of "J" school, he added, means the American

Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) has a handy excuse for not hiring more minorities.

"They're once again saying they can't find any, and this time they're probably telling the truth," he said.

After stepping down from the presidency, Stone continued to break new journalistic ground.

Because of his reputation for integrity, he became a trusted middleman between Philadelphia police and murder suspects, more than 75 of whom "surrendered" to Stone rather than to the cops. He also negotiated the release of hostages five times — in a prison, a bank, a motel and two private homes. He became a leading critic of the city's first black mayor, W. Wilson Goode, for the 1985 Operation MOVE bombing that killed 11 people and wiped out an entire neighborhood.

In 1991, to the almost audible relief of Philadelphia politicians, Stone retired from daily journalism to accept the Walter Spearman professorship at the University of North Carolina School of Journalism and Mass Communication. (He has also held visiting professorships at Syracuse University and Trinity College in his hometown of Hartford, Conn., and was a John F. Kennedy Fellow at Harvard University's Institute for Politics.) He recently retired from UNC — sort of. He planned to keep an office there and focus on writing three more books.

As for the association, Stone said: "In my wildest dreams, I never thought NABJ would grow to have 3,500 members. I thought we'd have maybe two or three hundred. At the start, we were ridiculed, we were pressured, we were questioned by all sorts of people who never questioned anyone else's right to come together in their own interests. We survived because we upheld the highest standards of our profession while maintaining our identity as black people. We knew we had to be the best. We couldn't even afford mediocrity because we were under a microscope."

That attitude put NABJ on a solid foundation a quarter century ago and laid the groundwork for the organizational strength it enjoys today.

## Region I

Luix Overbea  
*Christian Science Monitor*

Sarah Ann Shaw  
*WBZ-TV (Boston)*  
(Appointed in 1976)

## Region II

Vince Sanders  
*National Black Network*

## Region III

Joe Davidson  
*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*

## Region IV

Mal Johnson  
*Cox Broadcasting Corp.*

DeWayne Wickham  
*Baltimore Sun*  
(Elected in 1976)

## Region V

Willie Riddle  
*Louisville Courier-Journal*

## Region VI

Sandra Gilliam-Beale  
*WHIO-TV (Toledo)*

Vivian Aplin  
*Cleveland Plain Dealer*  
(Appointed in 1976)

## Region VII

Norma Wade  
*Dallas Morning News*

## Region VIII

Sam Ford  
*WCCO-TV (Minn.)*

Jeanne Fox  
*Kansas City Times*  
(Appointed in 1976)

## Region IX

Sandra Dillard  
*Denver Post*

## Region X

Bob Hayes  
*San Francisco Examiner*



# Vernon Jarrett

---

“Now we have gotten so big, we have difficulty debating issues, taking a stand on issues. But NABJ is a great organization. I’m proud to be a part of it.”

*Photograph by  
Andre F. Chung*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Vernon Jarrett  
*Chicago Tribune*

#### VICE PRESIDENT

Allison Davis  
*WBZ-TV*  
(Boston)

#### SECRETARY

Linda Lockhart-Jones  
*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

#### TREASURER

Elaine Leaphart  
*KQV Radio*  
(Pittsburgh)

Mal Johnson  
*Cox Broadcasting Corp.*  
(Appointed in 1977)

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Roger Clendening  
*St. Petersburg Times*

There are many adjectives that describe Vernon Jarrett — courageous, pugnacious, aggravating, knowledgeable, loving, affectionate. But the one word that perhaps sums him up best is committed. Long before he became NABJ's second president, he was among a handful of black journalists who, as he put it, "agitated" for their own national organization. And he was among the 44 who in December 1975 put one on paper at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Well after Jarrett had "retired" from his several long-time media positions, he was far from leading a life of leisure before succumbing to cancer at age 85 on May 23, 2004. For example, he had become a columnist with the New York Times' New American News Syndicate, and a senior fellow at the Great Cities Institute of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Throughout his illustrious career, he often wrote about and spoke out on controversial issues. That character trait led him to the helm of NABJ, where he was a vocal leader who never backed away from a fight or a debate. At the founding meeting, he was among the group that felt strongly that NABJ should be an organization of working journalists, not of disc jockeys, public relations professionals and journalism professors.

He was among the 50 or so journalists who attended NABJ's first convention in Houston in 1976 and he was among the 300 or so who the next year convened in Baltimore.

Although a natural leader, he did not seek the presidency of NABJ.

He was drafted.

"Several people came to me and asked me to run," he said in an interview at his home on Chicago's South Side.

Adds Paul Brock, who knew Jarrett for many years and was instrumental in NABJ's founding: "Vernon was already well respected and had national credibility. That's what the organization needed at the time."

Possessing maturity, wisdom and that respect, Jarrett found his new post one of the most taxing of his career.

His first job as president was to heal the wounds left by vicious infighting over whether the newly forged NABJ constitution should be suspended to allow founding president Chuck Stone to serve a third term.

Jarrett, who was known for being fair, pulled the organization through that crisis and proved to be a committed leader. As noted in Wayne Dawkins' book, "Black Journalists: The NABJ Story," Jarrett "sacrificed a lot of time and personal funds in order to travel around the country, promote NABJ and encourage people to join."

And that was no easy task.

During that time, some black journalists were afraid or reluctant to join NABJ, which was being assailed by a few high-profile white media executives.

But that did not deter Jarrett, who has not known how to back down since being assigned to cover a race riot on his first day on the job at the Chicago Defender in 1946. The Paris, Tenn., native and graduate of Knoxville College was delighted to have his byline appear in the same publication as Langston Hughes and W.E.B. DuBois, the latter of whom he had the opportunity to spend time. Jarrett later studied at the University of Chicago and was a visiting professor of history at Northwestern University.

During the early days of NABJ, he was a syndicated columnist for the Chicago Tribune; he also hosted a show on WLS-TV and a radio program on a station owned by Johnson Publishing Co. His employers supported his work with NABJ and with the Chicago Association of Black Journalists, which he helped to officially found in 1976, though he had been hosting meetings even before NABJ's founding.

As president, he fought to establish NABJ's legitimacy.

As an active member of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), Jarrett attended a September 1977 media conference hosted by the Ford Foundation and the Gannett Urban Journalism Center at the United Nations. The 130 participants from several media organizations included about 20 NABJ members. It was

### ESSAY

### BY

### LYNN

### NORMENT

### Region I

Sarah Ann Shaw  
WBZ-TV  
(Boston)

### Region II

Vince Sanders  
National Black  
Network

### Region III

Joe Davidson  
Philadelphia  
Evening Bulletin

### Region IV

Monte Trammer  
Baltimore Sun

### Region V

Milton Jordan  
Charlotte Observer

Bob Reid  
NBC News  
(Appointed in 1978)

### Region VI

Ann B. Walker  
WCMH-TV  
(Columbus, Ohio)

### Region VII

Norma Wade  
Dallas Morning News

### Region VIII

Jeanne Fox  
Kansas City Times

### Region IX

Sandra Dillard  
Denver Post

### Region X

Karen Howze  
San Francisco  
Chronicle

one of the first meetings at which NABJ worked with white journalism groups to get blacks into mainstream journalism. At the time, blacks composed about 2 percent of newsroom employees.

Another milestone of Jarrett's administration was NABJ's first meeting with a U.S. president. In February 1978, 12 NABJ board members were among 29 black press representatives invited to the White House to meet with President Jimmy Carter and his cabinet. The meeting legitimized the organization to mainstream media executives.

NABJ's third national conference was held in Chicago in August of that year. Attendance grew to 500 and more than 300 NABJ members toured Johnson Publishing (home of EBONY and Jet magazines).

Jarrett recalls that publisher John H. Johnson told the group: "I never thought I would live to see this many black journalists in one room," though he noted that "we still have a long way to go."

Convention speakers included Andrew Young, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, who recently had created an uproar when it was revealed that he had been meeting secretly with Palestinian leaders in an effort to bring about peace in the Middle East.

Jarrett later wrote in his Chicago Tribune column: "Most of the (NABJ) standing-room-only audience were highly sympathetic and held a very high regard for Ambassador Young. He received a long and loud standing ovation before he spoke, and despite what several people considered his lengthy defense of the Carter administration, he was cheered as he left the ballroom."

The Chicago convention was considered a success for NABJ and a triumph for Jarrett. It was at this gathering that the first Frederick Douglass Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Mal Goode of ABC News.

During his second year, NABJ met in Washington, D.C. Again, Jarrett, with the help of his board, lined up a stellar array of heavy-hitting speakers, including baseball great Lou Brock, who at the time was embroiled in a dispute with organized baseball; Randall Robinson, who recently had launched TransAfrica, and U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.).

Jarrett chuckled when he told how he mistakenly introduced the senator as "the president of the United

States," the office for which he was a candidate at the time. "Everyone cracked up," he recalled. "I had to come back up on the stage and correct myself."

At that convention, the first journalist of the year award went to Acel Moore of The Philadelphia Inquirer and Les Payne of Newsday.

Unlike some NABJ luminaries, Jarrett did not drop out of sight after his term ended. He proudly acknowledged that he had attended every NABJ convention, and he continued to be a strong advocate for black journalists to document current events and become scholars who can inform and enlarge our people. (Due to his background and vast knowledge of history, Jarrett's rhetoric often was peppered with historical figures and dates. In the early years he was deemed NABJ's unofficial historian.)

Over the years, Jarrett demonstrated an unwavering passion for encouraging and providing opportunities for black youth. One of his greatest contributions was the founding of the NAACP's ACT-SO (Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics), which had nearly 1,000 youth contestants at the 2000 NAACP convention in Philadelphia.

Jarrett earned generous heapings of respect, admiration and affection wherever he went, be that an NABJ conference, an NAACP meeting or any other gathering of socially conscience movers and shakers.

When asked to compare the NABJ of his term and today, he said there is none.

"The numerical strength and budget today are simply outstanding. Back then I paid for my own travel. When I was covering stories, I was also working for NABJ. I felt guilty about asking my employer to cover my expenses, and I rarely turned in expense reports to NABJ. Now we (NABJ) have gotten so big, we have difficulty debating issues, taking a stand on issues. But NABJ is a great organization. I'm proud to be a part of it."





# Bob Reid

---

“There was no  
point in the  
organization  
existing if we  
weren’t going to  
do some good.”

*Photograph by  
Hillary Shay*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

Bob Reid  
KNXT-TV  
(Los Angeles)

#### VICE PRESIDENT

Jeanne Fox  
*Kansas City Times*

#### SECRETARY

Karen Howze  
*Rochester Times-Union*

#### TREASURER

Mal Johnson  
*Cox Broadcasting Corp.*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Monte Trammer  
*Baltimore Sun*

## REID

The “firsts” started early for Bob Reid. At Miami-Dade Community College in 1966 he was elected the first black student government president of a predominantly white college in the South. That same year he became the first black reporter at The Miami Herald. In 1968, less than a month after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he joined Miami’s WTVJ-TV as the station’s first black reporter-cameraman. In 1976, he became the first black network-bureau chief when he took charge of NBC News’ Atlanta bureau.

And in 1979, Reid became not only the first broadcast president of NABJ, but also, at 32, its youngest leader. He inherited a nascent organization with no paid staff, no national office, no professional newsletter and a membership that fluctuated between 150 to 200, depending on who showed up at the national convention.

If Reid wanted things to get done, he had to do them himself.

If he wanted letterhead, he paid for it and was reimbursed by NABJ Treasurer Mal Johnson of Cox Broadcasting in Washington. If he wanted a newsletter, he wrote the stories and took the layouts to a local printer.

He juggled those NABJ tasks with the demands of his job as a field producer for NBC News — and his new marriage to actress Berlinda Tolbert, who played “Jenny” on “The Jeffersons.” Their photo in Jet magazine made Reid a bit of a celebrity, even to the somewhat jaded journalists of NABJ. But his move to Los Angeles to be with his wife complicated communications with NABJ board members who lived in the Eastern and Central time zones.

In 1980, for the second consecutive year, NABJ held its annual convention in Washington, D.C. Predictably, the lack of organizational structure within NABJ led to problems. In an eerie coincidence, it began on the same weekend that The Washington Post published “Jimmy’s World” by black reporter Janet Cooke. It was a sensational portrait of an 8-year-old heroin addict that

was later proven to be a fabrication.

Reid’s welcome address struck a critical note.

“We’re in the last quarter of 1980,” he said. “Twelve years since the assassination of Martin Luther King. Fifteen years since the Watts riot. Sixteen years since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Twenty-six years since Brown v. Board of Education. One hundred fifteen years since the Emancipation Proclamation,” he declared. “It is 1980 and the issues (facing black journalists) remain the same.”

There were also a host of logistical breakdowns.

“The 1980 convention in Washington was disastrous from an organizational standpoint,” Reid recalled. “Some panelists didn’t show up, and when contacted, said they had never been invited. We gave an award to Carl Rowan and he didn’t show up. I was sitting there and I resolved that, dammit, we were never going to do this again. I had to find the time to focus on the business of the organization because that was not going to be my legacy.”

Strengthening NABJ organizationally became Reid’s obsession in the remaining year of his presidency, even as he moved to a new job in charge of the investigative unit at KNXT-TV (now KCBS) in Los Angeles.

Reasoning that successful conventions were more likely to occur in cities with strong local

chapters, he proposed a constitutional change to encourage local black journalists’ organizations to affiliate formally with NABJ. He also proposed an amendment to set up a NABJ education foundation to solicit donations for scholarships. Though the treasury held only \$5,000 to \$6,000, he pushed for awarding a scholarship.

“There was no point in the organization existing if we weren’t going to do some good,” he said.

Another amendment would allow NABJ to set up a national office in a location other than Washington, D.C.

“I really thought we needed an office, but we weren’t big enough or wealthy enough to support one. Either somebody would have to give it to us like a

# 1979-1981

ESSAY

BY

GAYLE

POLLARD

TERRY

foundation or we would have to go to a major media organization.”

A NABJ task force led by Vice President Jeanne Fox, along with Secretary Karen Howze, Parliamentarian Monte Trammer and a regional director, Ben Johnson, recommended establishing an office at a university, as other nonprofit groups had done.

With the help of Jay Harris, then at Northwestern University, Fox lined up financial support, and recommended Florida A & M University in Tallahassee. Reid supported the plan, but it was rejected at a business meeting at the 1981 Louisville convention.

In addition, Reid founded — and wrote most of the stories for — NABJ News, the predecessor of the NABJ Journal. He created what are now called NABJ’s Salute to Excellence Awards for outstanding coverage of the black community. He said he wanted a merit award that would gain the stature of a Pulitzer or Peabody so organizations, in order to win them, would set out to cover the black community.

“There was some discussion of whether white journalists could win it,” he said. “I felt strongly that they could. In my mind, I wouldn’t feel upset if all the top awards went to white people. The most important goal was to get the white editors and all the media to think it was important enough to cover our community in an outstanding way that would receive recognition from NABJ. Then the awards would mean something.”

The awards also helped to make the Louisville convention a huge success.

The journalist of the year award went to Robert C. Maynard, the first black publisher of a major metropolitan daily, The Oakland Tribune, where he was also editor; and to Max Robinson, Midwest anchor for ABC News and the first African-American network anchor.

The lifetime achievement award went to Lerone Bennett Jr., author, historian and senior editor of Ebony Magazine.

Robinson also spoke at the awards banquet.

At that same gathering, the first NABJ scholarship for \$1,000 was awarded.

“The Kentucky convention,” said Reid, “represented the start of the modern era of NABJ.”

That convention attracted a large turnout and

featured the first professional convention souvenir program book with advertisements. It also made money. The treasury held more than \$9,000 when Reid turned over the organization to the next president, Les Payne.

Reid, who has earned three national Emmys for documentaries, was vice president of production for the Discovery Channel before running the Discovery Health Channel as executive vice president and general manager from 2001-2004. He then left Discovery to become an executive media consultant. His past clients include Black Family Channel.

Currently, Reid is working as acting executive vice president and general manager for The Africa Channel, a new television network aiming to bring the best African produced programming to American audiences. The network was to begin rolling out around the country in September 2005.

That will be three months shy of NABJ’s founding meeting — and Reid still feels much like a proud parent.

"Sometimes looking at NABJ over the years is like watching your baby and wondering if it is going to be all right," he said.

His pioneering efforts to strengthen NABJ left the organization much better off than he found it.

## Region I

Sarah Ann Shaw  
*WBZ-TV* (Boston)

## Region II

Les Payne  
*Newsday* (Melville, N.Y.)

## Region III

Tyree Johnson  
*Philadelphia Daily News*

## Region IV

Isaiah Poole  
*Black Enterprise*

Gale Perkins  
*WRC-TV* (Washington)  
(Elected 1979)

## Region V

Merv Aubespain  
*Louisville Courier-Journal*

## Region VI

Jim Ascendio  
Ben Johnson  
*Detroit Free Press*  
(Appointed in 1980)

## Region VII

Ken Smith  
*WFAA-TV* (Dallas)

## Region VIII

Denise  
Johnson-Graddick  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

## Region IX

Sandra Dillard  
*Denver Post*

## Region X

Sharon McGriff  
Marilynn Bailey  
*Oakland Tribune*  
(Appointed in 1979)





# Les Payne

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“Our first three presidents had credibility as journalists and national reputations that gave them the clout to deal with the media titans eyeball to eyeball, steel against steel. It was important not to lose that authority.”

*Photograph by  
Suné Woods*

## 1981-1983

For Les Payne, concerns such as NABJ's bank account, national office and paid staffers were hardly paramount when he served as the fourth president of the all-volunteer, hand-to-mouth organization.

"If members persisted in such administrative minutia as getting their membership cards on time," Payne recalled, "I told them to vote for my opponent. The vanguard group was foundering and I felt it needed at least one more tough-minded, overachieving president with stature in the industry and, as (Marcus) Garvey put it, 'A man of big ideas.'"

That description fit Payne to a tee.

A winner of one Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the heroin trail, Payne had a second Pulitzer for his reporting on South Africa overturned without explanation in 1978. He had just been named *Newsday's* national editor and he was also a columnist.

Despite a crushing personal workload, Payne adopted an ambitious global agenda.

"I had not really intended to run," Payne said. "I had three kids, this new demanding job, and the column. But our first three presidents, Chuck Stone, Vernon Jarrett and Bob Reid had credibility as journalists and national reputations that gave them the clout to deal with the media titans eyeball to eyeball, steel against steel. I ran because I felt it was important not to lose that authority."

"A lesser journalist in those early years would have meant a lesser president and our demands would have been laughed out the door. I pushed hard for NABJ members to connect with journalists in Africa, the Caribbean and the rest of the diaspora. The bureaucrats could come later."

In addition to putting Africa on the group's agenda, Payne counts these other achievements of his administration:

- Achieving 501c tax status for NABJ under the IRS tax code, which allowed contributors to make tax-free donations for the first time.

- Initiating the NABJ summer internship program by raising \$30,000 and placing five students in newsrooms in 1983.

- Enlisting NABJ in the Ida B. Wells Award program that granted \$10,000 in scholarships and each year honors a worthy newspaper executive.

- Allotting funds for the initial computerization of NABJ's membership roster.

- Establishing in 1982 the first annual Thumbs Down Awards for the year's "Most Objectionable News Story."

- Inviting the first African diplomat to address NABJ, at the 1982 convention in Detroit.

And, of course, he spoke out, clearly and unflinchingly, on mainstream journalism's shameful failure to detail the assault on African-American interests that took place during Ronald Reagan's first term.

"The media," Payne declared at the 1982 convention, "is not sufficiently reporting about the Reagan administration's assault on blacks and the poor in colleges, high schools, the military, on the assembly lines, the maternity wards, and those standing idly on the boulevards, in the alleys, and on the tiers of the republic's Atticas and San Quentins."

Now midway through the second Bush presidency, Payne could say similar things about the media that seem content to correct their own test papers — and NABJ, which, in his view, has grown fat from the compromising milk of the same offending media organizations it was founded to correct.

"We've lost that protest component, the critical impulse that brought us into existence following the riots of the 1960s," Payne said. "It demanded that



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*Louisville Courier-Journal*

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*Louisville Courier-Journal*

#### TREASURER

Mal Johnson  
*Cox Broadcasting Corp.*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Karen Howze  
*Newsday* (Melville, N.Y.)  
(1981-1982)

#### IMMEDIATE PAST

#### PRESIDENT

Bob Reid  
*KNXT-TV*  
(Los Angeles)

### ESSAY

BY

DERRICK

Z.

JACKSON

### Region I

Sarah Ann Shaw  
*WBZ-TV (Boston)*

Gayle Pollard  
*The Boston Globe*  
(Appointed 1982)

### Region II

Audrey Edwards  
*Essence*

### Region III

Elmer Smith  
*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*

### Region IV

Catherine Pugh  
*African American News*

### Region V

Douglas Lyons  
*U.S. News & World Report*

### Region VI

Ed Willis  
*Indianapolis Star*

Lynn Norment  
*Ebony*

### Region VII

Alexis Yancey George  
*WFAA-TV (Dallas)*

Warren Bell  
*WYLD Radio*  
(New Orleans)  
(Elected in 1982)

### Region VIII

Denise  
Johnson-Graddick  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

### Region IX

Rhona Williams  
*Mountain News Channel* (Colorado)

### Region X

Marilynn Bailey  
*Oakland Tribune*

newspapers and television stations increase their black numbers, improve their coverage and treat blacks fairly in the newsrooms. We've made progress, albeit insufficient, but I think we've been co-opted."

A prime example: in 1985 NABJ gave its first \$2,500 W.E.B. DuBois lectureship to former Boston Globe Editor Thomas Winship — who at the time was serving as an expert witness for the New York Daily News against four African-American journalists who had sued the paper for racial discrimination. With Payne as the plaintiffs' expert witness and strategist, a six-person jury, in *Hardy v. the Daily News*, convicted the newspaper of promotion discrimination, the only American paper so convicted of racism.

The problematic trend continues to this day.

"We tend to gag on a gnat and swallow a camel," Payne said. "Which is to say that we attack soft targets such as Pat Buchanan, yet misguidedly praise President Clinton despite his corrosive policies with regards to black people. We have to be more discriminating, more mindful of journalism that is racially offensive. We also have to avoid conflicts of interest.

He adds: "Some presidents, for example, have used the platform to give their bosses special NABJ awards. We've got to find the nerve to criticize even our own papers when they offend. During my administration, I gave the initial 'Most Objectionable News Story' award to the L.A. Times story on the 'Marauders.' It was a foul and terrible series that stereotyped black and Hispanic gangs. I attacked the series, even though the L.A. Times owned *Newsday*."

Now New York editor at *Newsday*, Payne has worked tirelessly to make sure that high potential black talent is promoted fairly. Despite grumbling from *Newsday's* union and some disgruntled white journalists, Payne at one point had Morris Thompson (later Mexico City correspondent for Knight Ridder) assigned as his Mexico City bureau chief; Marilyn Milloy, later a senior editor at *Heart & Soul* magazine, running *Newsday's* Atlanta bureau; and myself as chief of the paper's New England bureau.

More than two decades after his presidency, the independence of NABJ weighs heavily on Payne's mind.

He believes that both the organization and its members must work with a passion on a dual track to become great journalists without neglecting group interests.

One potential step, said Payne, would be building a NABJ clearinghouse for creative action, "where someone like a Charles Ogletree (the Harvard University law professor) could come in and listen to substantive cases of racial unfairness." He also wants a legal defense fund for members who must resort to civil suits to redress their grievances.

"We can't exist by simply persuading people to be nice," admonished Payne, who was the inaugural professor for the Dave Laventhol Chair that Times Mirror Inc. endowed for \$1 million at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

"The media will remain at rest on the matter of fairness unless it is acted upon by an external force such as the courts. Now, you can't sue everybody, but we have to pose an alternative plan of action to these organizations that we petition to do better. Most of our journalists are still working stiffs, beat reporters, on-camera reporters, mid-level editors, who are often intimidated by the structure they face. It's difficult to protest against bosses who have to teach you the craft."

However, Payne insists, fairness demands it.

"The country is so deep in its denial about race that these companies don't seem to have a clue about what constitutes racial fairness in the city room.

"NABJ must forego politeness and force the necessary changes by whatever means. Creating true fairness is not going to be easy. However, it is the impulse that brought NABJ into existence and we need to spit on our hands and get on with it again."





# Merv Aubespain

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“What it has always been about with this organization is not forgetting why we formed. The bottom line remains jobs, training and promotions.”

*Photograph by  
Durell Hall*



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Paula Walker  
*WFAA-TV (Dallas)*

#### TREASURER

Thomas Morgan III  
*The New York Times*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Marillynn Bailey  
*Oakland Tribune*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST

##### PRESIDENT

Les Payne  
*Newsday*  
(Melville, N.Y.)

## AUBESPIN

Merv Aubespín has spent a lifetime defying the odds, summoning, seemingly at will, a compelling spell of vision, compassion, persuasion and energy to create possibilities where few would have dared to imagine them.

Not surprisingly, a hallmark of Aubespín's term as NABJ president (beginning with a narrow election victory over a highly favored candidate) was significantly raising the profile of the organization, while greatly expanding its membership while lending it a more prominent presence in national and international arenas. In a sense, NABJ became truly progressive under Aubespín's guidance and careful consensus building.

In short order, Aubespín established the organization's first national office. It was housed in a modest space in the building that was home to The Courier-Journal, the regional newspaper based in Louisville for which Aubespín worked more than 30 years as an artist (long ago he had designed NABJ's familiar logo), reporter and administrator. He even hired a part-time secretary to do clerical work and answer NABJ's telephone, simple yet essential tasks for an organization being transformed from a relatively small, insular group into a large, professional one.

To further mark and ensure that transformation, Aubespín worked with NABJ's new treasurer, Thomas Morgan III, to hire the organization's first financial auditor. He stepped up publication of the NABJ Journal, turning it into a quarterly. He also traveled 100,000 miles, visiting, as he said, "every chapter I could and going everywhere I was invited."

The founder and twice-president of the Louisville Association of Black Communicators was, as he is still fond of saying, creating NABJ "family."

To this day thousands of young journalists affectionately refer to the gregarious, bespectacled man with a friendly round face and silver hair as "Uncle Merv." He remains a popular mentor and college lecturer.

# 1983-1985

Almost right away, and not without controversy, Aubespín began forging visible alliances between NABJ and the organizational and corporate leadership of mainstream media. All the while he tried to allay fears of members troubled that NABJ, which was largely founded to challenge white media to open its newsrooms and boardrooms to black journalists, might be getting too cozy with those better kept at arm's length.

His strategy, he recalled recently, was sound: "I wanted to get white media leadership to involve itself in NABJ so it could establish some relationships and we could all be less confrontational."

As a result, he said, "For the first time white editors and news directors and white media leadership — with their financial resources — came together with NABJ and its mission."

Supporters and critics agree that NABJ was forever changed by the infusion of white media interests and money.

At Aubespín's first NABJ convention as president, in 1984 in Atlanta, the gathering had grown to 1,000 participants. That amount was three times the attendance of the New Orleans convention the previous year and included 750 black journalists. And the scale of workshops and receptions, some of which were underwritten by major corporations, had grown decidedly grand. In some ways downright opulent.

And NABJ had become a news story, heavily covered by local and national press.

In 1984 David Hawpe was among the first large wave of white editors invited to attend a NABJ convention. Hawpe, who was then managing editor of The Courier-Journal, remembers feeling apprehensive about openly participating in the meeting of black journalists.

"I really didn't know whether it would be viewed as appropriate for me to be there," he said. But in the end, he looked to Aubespín and "like it's been true so many times with my relationship with him, I had to trust his judgment and I went."

#### ESSAY

#### BY

#### MICHEL

#### MARRIOTT

Hawpe was hardly alone. The newsroom and corporate leaders of such publications like The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune and The Wall Street Journal also were present.

Hawpe, now a vice president with the Courier-Journal and director of its editorial page, said his involvement with NABJ that began with Aubespín has provided an opportunity to meet many African-American journalists from all over the country.

"My horizons have expanded in all directions in terms of knowing people, really knowing them, so I could call them up and talk comfortably with them, share concerns with them and seek advice from them," he said.

The new relationships often worked both ways.

Aubespín gained influence in the mostly white American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), leading to new programs, such as its minority job fair and the "flying short courses" that practically parachuted newsroom professionals into predominately black college classrooms for short, yet intense instruction in the ways of American journalism.

Walter Middlebrook, formerly associate editor for recruitment at Newsday and an NABJ board member under Aubespín, remarked: "Merv was probably the first populous president of NABJ. He brought a lot of disparate factors together under his watch."

And Aubespín proudly notes that his board, composed of many members who did not vote for his presidency, was able to make NABJ decisions without a dissenting vote.

"He has an uncanny ability to make people feel comfortable, relaxed, and then he strikes with his agenda," Michael Days, editor of the Philadelphia Daily News and a former NABJ board member, said of the Aubespín's leadership. "He's a motivator."

Aubespín's personal history is a journey in continually pushing himself as well as others to achieve, to make a way even when there did not appear to be a way.

Born in Opelousas, La., Aubespín in 1958 graduated from Tuskegee University in Alabama. Shortly after, he moved to Louisville to teach industrial arts at a junior high school in a poor section of the city's

black community. He landed a job at The Courier-Journal as a staff artist in the fall of 1967.

When race riots erupted in Louisville the following summer, editors desperate to cover the violence looked for someone who could enter the scene and report what he saw with relative safety. At the time the newspaper's reporting staff was all white and some had been threatened in the city's riot-torn sections. Without training or a journalism background, Aubespín volunteered, and reported back what he observed.

In 1971 he attended a special minority journalism program at Columbia University in New York to further establish and refine his reporting and writing skills. The next year, Aubespín became a staff writer at the newspaper, covering a variety of local beats, including civil rights and public transportation. In 1981 he was a key participant in conceiving and completing an award-winning, weeklong series that detailed the state of life for blacks in Louisville.

In 1985 Aubespín became The Courier-Journal's associate editor for development, responsible for staff development, recruiting and operating the newspaper's intern program. In recent years he laid the groundwork that led to the creation of the American Copy Editors Society (ACES) and was named to the Kentucky Journalists Hall of Fame.

Aubespín has also been a frequent lecturer and guest faculty member for such groups as the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Institute for Journalism Education (IJE). And he has helped lead groups of journalists throughout Africa and Central America as part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Considering his years as NABJ president, Aubespín said he "feels good, very good. What it has always been about with this organization is not forgetting why we formed. The bottom line remains jobs, training and promotions."

## Region I

Gayle Pollard  
*The Boston Globe*

Carmen Fields  
WNEW-TV (New York)  
(Appointed in 1984)

## Region II

Betty Winston Bayé  
*Mt. Vernon Daily Argus*

Wayne Dawkins  
*The Courier-Post* (N.J.)  
(Elected in 1984)

## Region III

William W. Sutton Jr.  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

## Region IV

Charlene Williams  
WTOP-AM (Washington)

## Region V

Douglas Lyons  
*U.S. News & World Report*

## Region VI

Larry Olmstead  
*Detroit Free Press*

Lynn Norment  
*Ebony*  
(Appointed in 1984)

## Region VII

Ruth Allen Ollison  
KXAS-TV (Dallas)

## Region VIII

Walter Middlebrook  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

## Region IX

Rhona Williams  
*Mountain News Channel*  
(1983-1984)

## Region X

George Davis  
KOMO-TV (Seattle)

Pam Moore  
KCBS-TV  
(Los Angeles)  
(Appt. 1984 & 1985)

Don Williamson  
*San Diego Union*  
(Elect. in summer 1985)





# A Fitzpatrick

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“I had a great career,  
no major  
disappointments.  
Whatever I could do  
for others, I tried to  
do that. That was a  
great satisfaction  
for me.”

*Photograph by  
Gary J. Kirksey*



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Al Fitzpatrick  
*Knight Ridder*

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*The Courier-Journal*  
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Ruth Allen Ollison  
*KDAF-TV (Dallas)*

Sheila Brooks  
*Dallas Morning News*  
(Appointed in 1986)

#### TREASURER

Thomas Morgan III  
*The New York Times*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

William W. Sutton Jr.  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Merv Aubespín  
*The Courier-Journal*  
(Louisville)

**N**ABJ found a home both literally and figuratively when Al Fitzpatrick took over in 1985. During his term, the organization moved into its first permanent headquarters and hired its first paid executive director.

Though membership in NABJ had grown significantly since its founding in 1975, it had been a back-pocket operation whose officers ran the organization from their home bases, shifting the association's records around the country as administrations changed.

Fitzpatrick put an end to those vagabond ways. Soon after his election in Baltimore that August, he began raising money to set up a centralized office. He raised \$700,000 — including \$100,000 from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and \$75,000 from the Gannett Foundation — to put NABJ on a business footing.

"Actually, (getting the funding) wasn't as tough as you might think," Fitzpatrick recalled. "The foundations are tighter today with their restrictions about how they distribute their funds. Support for minority organizations was far greater then than it is now."

With funding in hand, Fitzpatrick convinced the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) to make room for NABJ at its Reston, Va., headquarters. That put NABJ in house with two of the most powerful voices in the newspaper industry, ANPA (now the Newspaper Association of America) and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE).

When NABJ's first executive director, Dennis Schatzman, a Pittsburgh public school administrator, left after six months, Fitzpatrick reached out to a friend, Carl Morris, to take over. Morris stayed for three years and helped Fitzpatrick transform NABJ into a highly effective member organization.

As a veteran news executive, "Al had more management experience than most (of NABJ's earlier presidents)," Morris recalled. "He was well known and

respected in the industry, which was vital, and he was able to shake the money tree."

Beyond that, said Morris, Fitzpatrick's congenial personality helped to unify the NABJ board.

"He was one heck of a genial guy," Morris said. "He knew how to get along with people and get them to work together. It was marvelous the way he worked with them and got them going in the same direction, with the same purpose."

Fitzpatrick helped to draw greater attention to NABJ within the industry by parlaying his new position as Knight Ridder's director of minority affairs, to which he had been named in January 1985.

"It was kind of like a marriage in one sense,"

Fitzpatrick said. "The goals of NABJ and the goals at the job I had at Knight Ridder ... were identical almost. I was dealing with diversity, the recruitment, hiring and development of minorities at Knight-Ridder. Being president of NABJ put me in position to run into a lot of the top, talented African Americans, which helped me in my job."

NABJ's membership grew during Fitzpatrick's administration to 1,000. NABJ scholarships also enhanced, increasing from five for \$1,000 each to 10 for \$2,500 apiece.

With his two-year NABJ presidency completed, Fitzpatrick wasn't looking for another challenge. But Morris had other ideas.

He was organizing a new group, the National Association of Minority Media Managers (NAMME) and persuaded Fitzpatrick to become its founding chairman in 1991. That organization's goals — developing executive talent and diversifying the management ranks of all media — fit Fitzpatrick's diversity mission. NAMME's membership ranges from circulation home delivery managers and city editors to publishers and TV station managers. One of NAMME's key programs is the Albert E. Fitzpatrick Leadership Development Institute, a four-day program designed to expose participants to all aspects of the media business.

### ESSAY

BY

JOHN

L.

**DOTSON JR.**



## Region I

Carmen Fields  
WBZ-TV (Boston)

## Region II

Wayne Dawkins  
*The Courier-Post*  
(New Jersey)

## Region III

Michael Days  
*Wall Street Journal*

## Region IV

Jackie Greene  
*USA Today*

## Region V

Al Johnson  
*Charlotte Observer*

Mike McQueen  
*Miami Herald*  
(Appointed in 1986)

## Region VI

Lynn Norment  
*Ebony*

## Region VII

Alexis Yancey  
WFAA-TV (Dallas)

## Region VIII

Denise Johnson  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

## Region IX

Leroy E. Williams Jr.  
*Rocky Mountain News* (Denver)

## Region X

Pam Moore  
KCBS-TV (L.A.)  
  
Gayle Pollard  
*Los Angeles Times*  
(Appointed in 1986)

Taking charge has been a trait of Fitzpatrick's lengthy career, which dates back to the mid-1950s. He was the seventh of 12 children of an apostolic minister in Elyria, Ohio, a western suburb of Cleveland. Unlike three of his brothers who became ministers, Fitzpatrick got the reporting bug in high school while working as a part-time sports reporter for the local newspaper in Elyria. He spent six years in the armed forces, then earned a journalism degree from Kent State University in 1956.

He then landed a job as a reporter on the state desk at The Akron Beacon Journal — but for the first 18 months, his editor refused to send him out on a story. The reason: "I was the only black in the building when I was hired at The Beacon Journal," he said. "And for 10 years, I was the only African American in the newsroom."

He finally persuaded his editor to assign him a beat, covering an Akron suburb. It was the first step in a historic climb up the career ladder.

Fitzpatrick moved through several jobs, including writing a farm column. After five years, he became assistant state editor, then assistant news editor, and then in 1970, he was in the news editor's chair, directing the coverage of the Vietnam War protest at Kent State at which four students were killed by the National Guard. The Beacon Journal's extraordinary coverage of that tragedy won the Pulitzer Prize for Spot Reporting. In 1990 NABJ presented Fitzpatrick with a medallion for his contribution to the prize.

In 1973, Fitzpatrick was named managing editor of The Beacon Journal, the first African American to run a major metro newsroom. He was promoted to executive editor in 1977. Two years later, he moved up again, to coordinator of minority affairs for Knight Ridder, a position he held while still based in Akron. In 1985 he moved to corporate headquarters in Miami as minority affairs director and in 1987 was promoted to assistant vice president.

In that role Fitzpatrick's latent evangelical zeal came to the fore. In addition to advocating for more minorities as president of NABJ, he campaigned within Knight Ridder for greater involvement of non-whites at all levels of the company. Among his innovations:

- Adding a diversity goal to Knight Ridder's Management by Objective (MBO) bonus program.
- Creating a corporate internship program that

offered editors a year's funding for promising new minority hires.

- Launching the Knight Ridder minority management development program, which helped minorities with high potential to create plans to reach their career goals.

• Creating the Knight Ridder minority scholarship program, which offered graduating high school seniors \$5,000 scholarships for each of their four years of college, plus a summer internship at a Knight Ridder newspaper each year. More than 80 Knight Ridder scholars were named before Fitzpatrick retired in 1994. many of them remain employed at Knight Ridder.

- Setting up two-year Knight Ridder scholarships for juniors and seniors at four historically black colleges. The one at Morehouse College in Atlanta is given in Fitzpatrick's name.

Now retired and living in Akron again, Fitzpatrick was continuing to champion diversity as chair of Coming Together, a non-profit organization that seeks to improve race relations. The effort was started by The Beacon Journal as part of its Pulitzer Prize-winning series on race in the Akron region. Three years later, when it was transformed into a non-profit community organization, it seemed only fitting that Fitzpatrick, the former Beacon Journal executive editor, be named its chairman.

Fitzpatrick, who was also teaching courses in journalism and diversity at Kent State University, has won many awards through the years. But he is proudest of his Frederick Douglass Lifetime Achievement Award from NABJ and the Ida B. Wells Award, presented by the National Conference of Editorial Writers, National Broadcast Editorial Association and NABJ for his lifetime achievements in journalism.

"I was in love with the newspaper business; it was always a dream of mine," Fitzpatrick said. "I had the opportunity to get into the business and grow. I'm very grateful for that. I had a great career, no major disappointments. Whatever I could do for others, I tried to do that. That was a great satisfaction to me."



# D<sub>e</sub>Wayne W<sub>ickham</sub>

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“It’s not enough for media managers to voice a commitment to the hiring and promotion of African-American journalists. Anything short of real gains is an empty promise.”

*Photograph by  
Hillery Shay*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

DeWayne Wickham  
*Gannett News Service*

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ BROADCAST

Pam Moore  
*WBZ-TV (Boston)*

#### VICE PRESIDENT/PRINT

Gayle Pollard  
*Los Angeles Times*

#### SECRETARY

Sheila Brooks  
*WTTG-TV (Washington)*

#### TREASURER

Thomas Morgan III  
*The New York Times*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

William W. Sutton Jr.  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Sam Fulwood III  
*Atlanta Journal &  
Constitution*  
(Appointed in 1989)

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Al Fitzpatrick  
*Knight Ridder*

## WICKHAM

For DeWayne Wickham, the third time was the charm. After losing bids for the NABJ presidency in 1977 and 1985, he won the 1987 election — by the widest majority in NABJ history. He inherited the leadership responsibilities of an organization whose basic structure had been firmly established by his predecessors. His task: to move us forward into areas that were largely uncharted by NABJ.

The early losses fueled Wickham's drive to lead the organization, and he won in 1987, he says, because he was "the best-prepared candidate."

In the four years before, he attended every regional and national board meetings but one — the board meeting prior to the 1987 national convention, which coincided with the weekend he married his wife, Wanda, the owner of a Baltimore-based public relations and production company.

Wickham made a personal commitment to visit local chapters and meet both print and broadcast journalists and black college students. In his travels across the country, he was also instrumental in bringing new chapter affiliates into the NABJ fold. By 1987, he knew the membership and its concerns, as well as the board's strengths and weaknesses.

Besides being well prepared, Wickham rose to the presidency with specific goals for NABJ. He had a burning desire to grow the membership and increase opportunities for its members, helping them to advance in their workplaces and linking them to other employment opportunities. Under Wickham's leadership, NABJ strongly challenged the industry's notion of workplace opportunities.

When employers said, "We can't find any qualified blacks," Wickham saw it as a problem of demand, not supply, and rejected the notion of newspaper and television associations conducting more studies. He urged media organizations to hire more people rather than limiting their diversity efforts to investing in more scholarship and internship programs.

# 1987-1989

He calls it a "diversity rip-off" for news organizations to limit their diversity efforts to giving \$25,000 to \$30,000 for scholarship. Many times, he says, it's how they buy time to continue their bad employment practices.

"The truth of the matter is that they're giving you less money than it costs to hire an employee with salary and benefits," Wickham says. "If they do what's right, they show their commitment to diversity."

The recent decision by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) to abandon its Year 2000 diversity goals underscores his assertion that, when it comes to really supporting diversity, the industry has not put its heart or its money where its mouth is.

"It's not enough for media managers to voice a commitment to the hiring and promotion of African-American journalists," Wickham says. "Anything short of real gains is an empty promise."

Wickham brought a new level of independence to the NABJ presidency. Rather than tethering to media organizations the way others had been accused, he got up close and personal in challenging industry leaders to create more opportunities for NABJ members.

He even had the nerve to bite the hand that fed him.

Early in his presidency Wickham, a columnist for Gannett and USA Today, complained at the low level of funding that the Gannett Foundation (now the Freedom Forum) gave to NABJ. While some managers at Gannett were upset, the foundation soon increased its funding to NABJ.

Wickham brought his look-you-in-the-eye and shake-your-hand style to raising funds for the organization, joining NABJ regional directors on visits to the Knight Ridder Foundation, the Times Mirror Foundation, the Gannett Foundation and the Chicago Tribute Foundation to strengthen relationships and increase awareness of NABJ's role in the industry.

He also took many of his board members to

## ESSAY

BY

SHEILA

BROOKS

meetings with publishers of major metropolitan newspapers and general managers of television stations in major markets. The result: financial support for NABJ conventions, scholarships and internships increased substantially, along with the organization's reputation as a force to be reckoned with.

In addition, Wickham has donated thousands of his own dollars to support NABJ scholarships, both at the national and local levels.

One of his biggest challenges as president, Wickham says, was to get NABJ's financial house in order and get the organization to operate within a structured budget, and he also instituted board approval of budgetary matters. He upgraded NABJ's financial review process to a formal annual audit to ensure a sophisticated method of checks and balances. The newly instituted financial management systems resulted in the 1988 convention netting what was then the largest profit in our organization's history, approximately \$190,000.

Not only did Wickham raise more money for NABJ than any previous president, but he also left the organization with a greater net profit at the end of his two-year tenure.

Money wasn't the only thing that grew under his leadership.

Membership more than doubled. According to the first-ever published membership report compiled by the national headquarters in October 1987, NABJ had 845 members. When his term ended in August 1989, the total was 1,939.

Wickham's vision helped create what became Unity: Journalist of Color and the first Unity convention in 1994. He created the Council of Presidents for a second tier of leadership within NABJ that combines expertise with institutional memory. He led the move to computerize the organization's balloting process to make national elections more efficient, and he expanded what had been an awards reception into the full-fledged ceremony that highlights each year's conference. And the gospel brunch that he created as 1985 convention chair has become a favorite mainstay.

"DeWayne Wickham always had a vision for NABJ and he helped us move to a new level," said Pam Moore, former NABJ vice president-broadcast and anchor at

KRON-TV in San Francisco.

"He was very focused and directed about what he wanted our organization to accomplish," she said. "He helped us gain national standing as a professional organization. He helped to get our operational systems working in a more businesslike fashion. He really helped us grow up. And he helped to build NABJ into a position of respected leadership, both in print and broadcast, throughout this industry."

The man's strong no-nonsense leadership style drew mixed reviews. Some who weren't part of the process complained that he was a dictator. But most board members say he was effective throughout his tenure and every motion he introduced was approved.

"Wickham's unique leadership style was to make each meeting the most productive it could be," says John Hanson, a former board member who is general manager of the Longhorn Radio Network in Austin, Texas. "In doing so, he provided you with all the information you needed to make a knowledgeable decision. He expected you to have read the information before the meeting. If you hadn't, there was hell to pay!"

A natural leader, Wickham also founded the Trotter Group, a coalition of black newspaper columnists. The group has been called upon by the White House for consultations with Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman and then-United Nations Ambassador and future Secretary of State Madeline Albright.

The fire for leading others into change still burns brightly in Wickham, as does his love for and commitment to NABJ and black journalists.

Besides writing his column, he is now director of the Institute for Advance Journalism Studies at North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro.

His advice to future NABJ presidents?

"To be true to our founding convictions," he says. "We have steered away from those founding principles. We have not made them the centerpiece of our efforts as much as we should have."

## Region I

Carmen Fields  
WGBH-TV (Boston)

## Region II

Wayne Dawkins  
*The Courier-Post*  
(New Jersey)

## Region III

Vanessa Williams  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

## Region IV

Jackie Greene  
*USA Today*

## Region V

Sidmel  
Estes-Sumpter  
WAGA-TV (Atlanta)

## Region VI

Lynn Norment  
*Ebony*

## Region VII

John L. Hanson Jr.  
*University of Texas at Austin*

## Region VIII

Gregory B. Freeman  
*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

## Region IX

Leroy E. Williams Jr.  
*Rocky Mountain News* (Denver)

## Region X

Michelle Battle  
*Savannah State College*





# T homas M organ III

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“I struggled with how to represent NABJ without embarrassing the organization but while also being true to myself. I was elected as a black journalist, not a gay one.”

*Photograph by  
Suné Woods*

## 1989-1991

BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

## PRESIDENT

Thomas Morgan III  
*The New York Times*

VICE PRESIDENT/  
BROADCAST

Callie Crossley  
*ABC News*

## VICE PRESIDENT/PRINT

Denise Johnson  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

## SECRETARY

Sheila Brooks  
*WTTG-TV (Washington)*

## TREASURER

Jackie Greene  
*USA Today*

## PARLIAMENTARIAN

Jackie Jones  
*New York Newsday*

IMMEDIATE PAST  
PRESIDENT

DeWayne Wickham  
*Gannett News Service*

From a chair at his dining table, Thomas Morgan III was hunched over, culling water-stained NABJ Journals from a milk crate at his feet, then smoothing the furled edges with his fingertips.

The journals were what he could salvage when the basement of his Brooklyn brownstone flooded, he explained in his slow, deliberate baritone. The vocal inflection and pace owe partly to genetics. But, years ago, he began cultivating the measured voice to mask his stammering speech.

However inaudible, the stutter had always made him self-conscious. And it left him unconvinced that, even with his smarts and pretty black boy looks, he could finagle a career in TV news.

"I was petrified then about talking in public, and I am petrified now," said Morgan, a 20-year newspaperman until retiring in 1994, largely to concentrate on his personal fight against AIDS.

He won NABJ's presidency in 1989 in New York City, after serving six years as national treasurer. In a simmering face-off, he beat his primary opponent, Ruth Allen Ollison, then a television news executive from Texas whom supporters hoped would be NABJ's first female chief.

The gender divide was just one issue that year. Morgan's homosexuality proved another. At least a few NABJ faithful wondered aloud about whether a gay president would be a pox on the public face of what is the nation's largest organization of journalists of color.

"It was painful," Morgan said. "I struggled with how to represent NABJ without embarrassing the organization but while also being true to myself. I was elected as a black journalist, not a gay one."

A clear majority of voters handed him the job. Flush with whatever extra time being in Harvard University's 1989 class of Neiman fellows afforded him and whatever clout his gig with *The New York Times* might have generated, he went about his agenda.

As treasurer, Morgan believed he'd already passed muster. When he took that job, NABJ's financial records, literally, were in shoeboxes and the membership roster a collection of index cards. He hired a black-owned accounting firm to conduct the first of what would become annual audits. The next treasurer was handed a \$1 million stock portfolio.

If each president builds on the legacy of previous ones, Morgan said he took his cues on management style from Merv Aubespain. "Uncle Merv" had a way of making everyone feel important. So Morgan made a habit of conferring individually with NABJ board members, just as Aubespain had.

Among Morgan's accomplishments was setting up NABJ's national office, with Aubespain and former president Al Fitzpatrick acting as key advisors on that. Morgan focused on helping journalism students and expanding programs for professionals as membership soared.

A student newspaper, *The Monitor*, already was in place at annual conventions. Under Morgan, a similar project for student broadcasters was created. At black colleges, his administration established mentoring

and training projects, including "Short Courses."

He established NABJ's relationship with the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, and conferred with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund about NABJ's own legal workshops on such matters as media libel and First Amendment rights.

The Morgan-led board created NABJ's Hall of Fame and the Ethel Payne Fellowship for black journalists to travel to Africa for several weeks of research. (Their writings have been published by their own news shops and in the *NABJ Journal*.) And the first international conference of black journalists — an idea introduced by former NABJ presidents Les Payne and DeWayne Wickham — kicked off in Jamaica during Morgan's tenure.

With the board's backing, he refused convention

## ESSAY

## BY

## KATTI

## GRAY

## Region I

Carmen Fields  
WGBH-TV (Boston)

## Region II

Sheila Stainback  
WPIX-TV (New York)

## Region III

Cornelius F. Foote Jr.  
*American Society of  
Newspaper Editors*

## Region IV

Sidmel Estes-Sumpter  
WAGA-TV (Atlanta)

## Region V

Dorothy M. Tucker  
WBBM-TV (Chicago)

## Region VI

Dwight Lewis  
*The Tennessean*  
(Nashville)

## Region VII

David R. Squires  
*The Plain Dealer*  
(Cleveland)

## Region IX

Gregory B. Freeman  
*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

## Region X

Anasa P. Briggs-Graves  
*Graves Communications*  
(San Diego)

## Student Representative

Roland S. Martin  
*Texas A & M University*

jobs fair booths to the CIA and FBI. Older NABJ members had remembered that the government agencies may have used journalists and other people to destabilize or spy on blacks in America and Africa.

But Morgan's singular regret was giving the New York Daily News, its workers on strike back then, NABJ's membership list. Not that such a move was unprincipled to him, Morgan said, but it was untimely and not very smart.

"I was called all kinds of names. Traitor. Uncle Tom," he said. "When the dust cleared, a number of black journalists still wanted to work at the Daily News. We should not be in the business of telling anyone where to work."

Especially when most every newsroom had fallen short in its treatment of minorities. The New York Times and Washington Post, among others, had settled similar lawsuits out of court.

All of the activity still served a purpose.

"I really wanted to raise our national visibility. And if you run a Lexus-Nexus search for the years 1989 to early 1991 you will find more mentions of NABJ then than during any previous period," he said.

Where Morgan might have fretted over his nagging impediment, some who watched him saw a black man standing squarely and upright, his cultivated speech a distinguishing mark, his New York Times' stamp a plus for an organization steadily out to raise its profile and power.

"He brought discipline. He went out and raised money. He brought that New York Times order to the place," said NABJ's first president Chuck Stone, the former Philadelphia Daily News columnist.

Said Sheila Stainback, a former New York broadcaster and a regional director on Morgan's board: "Tom was a tremendous conciliator. He had people violently opposed to his presidency. Some were on the board. He worked well with them, and he did not antagonize. He had some very subtle ways of bringing people together."

One in a trio of sons born to a postal worker father and schoolteacher mother in suburban St. Louis, Morgan said he had been a storyteller as long as he could remember. A high school English teacher told him he could write. A stint on his high school paper

under his belt, he headed off to the University of Missouri on a ROTC scholarship. Upon graduation, he gave his requisite service to the U.S. Air Force, serving as an information officer under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. He left the military in 1975 and hooked his first reporting job at The Miami Herald. Before landing in New York, he spent six years at The Washington Post.

To the left of the doorway of the home he shares with partner Thomas Ciano, an architect and low-income housing developer, hang frames of Morgan's first Page 1 stories from The Herald and The Times, where he also was assistant metro editor.

Today, Morgan is hoping NABJ will forge ahead in ways that make NABJ more familial.

In early 2005, he braved a snowstorm to attend a NABJ board of directors meeting at a hotel across from LaGuardia Airport in New York.

He commended the board for its service and remarked on how much NABJ had blossomed.

"We knew everybody in the business. We knew everybody in the organization," Morgan said of the early 1980s. "Now look at us. The organization has grown and that's a wonderful thing."

Still, gay and lesbian members still feel constrained, he told the board, just as it was to consider a proposed task force for them.

Morgan recalled a prior convention where he tried to organize such a task force.

"Three people showed up and they took their name badges off before they came through the door because they wanted no one to know their names," he said. "Not much has changed since then."

After vigorous debate the board created the task force the next day.

Which helps Morgan smile even more about NABJ's evolution.

"You can't turn on the TV these days without seeing one of the NABJ babies on the screen," he said a few years ago. "I am very proud of that. To know that when I became treasurer, we had 300 members and now we have (4,000), I am very proud of my role. I spent 10 years on that board and I am very, very grateful for my service."





# Sidmel Estes-Sumpter

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“Having served on the board, I said who is gonna continue to serve and give guidance? There have been so many good men, and I stress men, who have led this organization. I figured I could do it.”

*Photograph by  
Joey Ivansco*





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

Sidmel Estes-Sumpter  
*WAGA-TV (Atlanta)*

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ BROADCAST

Sheila Stainback  
*WPIX-TV (New York)*

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ PRINT

Dorothy Butler Gilliam  
*The Washington Post*

#### SECRETARY

Vanessa Williams  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

#### TREASURER

Jackie Greene  
*USA Today*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Jackie Jones  
*Philadelphia Daily News*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Thomas Morgan III  
*The New York Times*

## ESTES-SUMPTER

When Sidmel Estes-Sumpter became president in 1991, it seemed improbable that it had taken so long for NABJ to elect a woman leader. Women had always held important positions on the national board and in local chapters, and they comprised 60 percent of NABJ's membership.

The door was bound to open eventually. But Estes-Sumpter, an outspoken southern broadcaster, didn't just open it, she smashed it open.

"With Sidmel, it was what you see is what you get. There was no middle ground with her. She is very bodacious," said Wayne Dawkins, formerly associate editor at *The Daily Press* in Hampton Roads, Va., and a former Region II director.

"She took no prisoners," said Contrace Pressley, who was elected NABJ president a decade after Estes-Sumpter. "If you didn't do what you were supposed to do, she would get in your face and tell you about it. But you weren't mad about it. It may have frustrated you, but it also challenged you."

Watching Estes-Sumpter, at least on this cloudy day in Atlanta, it is hard to separate the legend from the person. The only thing she worries about is getting home. Her sons, Joshua and Sidney, are in baseball tournaments and she must be there. Her husband, Garnett Sumpter, who is also a coach, is stressed as he tries to fill out the lineup card. She is calm, though there's no telling what would happen if the umpire blows a call.

Estes-Sumpter laughs about her image as president.

"As I have grown older I have learned enough to temper my aggressiveness," said the executive producer for "Good Day Atlanta" at WAGA-TV (Atlanta). "But I am sure I pissed off a lot of people along the way."

Her roots in NABJ date back to joining the Atlanta Association of Black Journalists in 1982. "But I wasn't

involved in it much," she admitted. "At the time, it was a group that would get together for a happy hour. I saw it as more of a social organization than a professional one."

Her opinion changed two years later when Atlanta hosted the national convention.

"I consider 1984 a milestone. It took us to national prominence," she said. "That was the point where I said I have got to do more to make a difference in this industry."

She jumped back into the local chapter, serving as vice president, then president, before moving up to the national level and serving four years as NABJ Region IV director.

The national presidency was the next logical step.

"Having served on the board, I said who is gonna continue to serve and give guidance? There have been so many good men, and I stress men, who have led this organization. I figured I could do it. I knew that I had worked hard for the organization and had a proven track record. I felt my track record was enough for me to be elected."

Estes-Sumpter was only the second woman to seek NABJ's top job in its 16-year history. Thomas Morgan III had beaten Ruth Allen Ollison, a television news executive in Dallas-Fort Worth, in 1989.

"For me, it wasn't an issue," Estes-Sumpter said. "I never ran because I wanted to be the first woman president. It was an afterthought."

Her candidacy became a rally cry for many, but she also met resistance on all fronts, based on professional and personal stereotypes. For one, although she didn't embrace it as a campaign slogan, she was a woman and faced jealously and male chauvinism.

"I didn't see anything overt," said Dawkins, author of "Black Journalists: The NABJ Story." "Some of the older men may have grumbled to themselves. But they knew if they were going to mess with her, they were going to suffer the consequences."

Estes-Sumpter was reared in the South; most of the other NABJ presidents had hailed from the Northeast. She was a broadcaster; most of the other presidents were in print. At the time only a third of NABJ's membership was in broadcasting.

"I didn't know how difficult the election would be," said Estes-Sumpter, whose opponent, Roy Johnson of Sports Illustrated, was well-known and popular. "My service record was tremendous, but I had taken it for granted."

The other major topic of conversation was Estes-Sumpter's weight, as some NABJ members wondered if the public would take her seriously.

"The most hurtful part was that I was the victim of fat discrimination. A lot of my sisters were talking about me like a dog," she said. "That hurt me more than anything. I felt that that was a personal attack."

Elected at age 36 in Kansas City, Estes-Sumpter brought a spark to the organization that hadn't been seen before.

For the first time, Ebony Magazine listed NABJ — specifically Estes-Sumpter's name and photograph — among its top 100 black organizations.

"I made it into Ebony, so I knew we had arrived," she said. "But I think the primary thing that I brought to the organization was more fire, which is kind of esoteric. I was a lot more in your face, aggressive, challenging, demanding."

Her defining moment came in 1993 at the Houston convention, when she crossed paths with Bushwick Bill, the diminutive rapper who was an opening-session panelist on rap music.

At one point during the panel discussion, Bushwick Bill said the only women he ever knew, including his mother, were "bitches and ho's."

Estes-Sumpter was just outside of the conference room and didn't actually hear the comments. But she did see women suddenly streaming out of the meeting room. She glided through the hushed room and went straight to the stage — and to the rapper.

"I walked into the session, disrupted it, got control of the mike and told him that that kind of behavior and language is unacceptable here," Estes-Sumpter recalled.

"As a black woman, I demanded their respect."

Bushwick Bill humbly apologized.

Any doubts about Estes-Sumpter were put to rest.

"It was classic Sidmel," said Dawkins. "She didn't blink."

Estes-Sumpter spent much of her second year as president preparing to return to Atlanta in 1994 for the first "Unity" convention of 6,000 black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American journalists.

For her, it was like coming full circle.

"The success of '94 was due to the Atlanta Association of Black Journalists," said Estes-Sumpter. "That was my proudest moment for NABJ and for me personally — to pull off a totally awesome convention. I still get chills thinking about it. That convention will always be special for me."

Years later, Estes-Sumpter is still outspoken about NABJ. In particular, she wants the organization to own its headquarters building, provide more internships and scholarships and rely less on corporate sponsorship.

"We get a lot of support from the media organizations," she said. "If I am gonna slam somebody in one breath and ask for money in the other, something isn't right."

Looking at Estes-Sumpter scramble to get home to watch her kids play in a baseball game coached by her husband, you kind of believe her when she says her bark is worse than her bite.

"When I got elected, I proved that women were and will be co-equal with our brothers and were just as capable of performing any type of task," she said. "Sex is not an issue anymore. People vote for the best candidate. It doesn't matter whether you are a man, woman or gay."

## Region I

Gregory Moore  
*The Boston Globe*

## Region II

Arthur Fennell  
WCAU-TV  
(Philadelphia)

## Region III

Cornelius F. Foote Jr.  
*American Society of  
Newspaper Editors*

## Region IV

Roderick Hicks  
*Birmingham  
Post-Herald*

## Region V

Dorothy M. Tucker  
WBBM-TV (Chicago)

## Region VI

Dwight Lewis  
*The Tennessean  
(Nashville)*

## Region VII

James Campbell  
*Houston Chronicle*

## Region VIII

Sharon Stevens  
KSDK-TV (St. Louis)

## Region IX

Marcia Pledger  
*Las Vegas  
Review-Journal*

## Region X

Betty Keller Anderson  
*Seattle Times*

## Student Representative

Simone Joye  
*Urban Journal  
The Bronx, N.Y.*



# Dorothy Gilliam

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“NABJ will put you  
on your knees in  
prayer and that’s a  
good place to be.”

*Photograph by  
Hillery Shay*

# 1993-1995

When Dorothy Butler Gilliam stepped into the time-tested job of NABJ president, she brought a different kind of portfolio. Like her predecessors, she had been a pioneer in her newsroom, the first black woman reporter at The Washington Post.

By the time she took the helm of NABJ, its challenge, in her view, had broadened: From enlarging the African-American presence in the news media to mounting an all-encompassing, often controversial push for inclusion in the newsrooms of Hispanic, Asian and Native American journalists.

Everyone had a story to tell, she believed, and black journalists had a responsibility to champion their right to tell it.

Her stance would provoke intense debate within NABJ — but grabbing onto a fight was almost second nature for Gilliam, the daughter of an A.M.E. minister who grew up in segregated Memphis and Louisville. Early on she committed herself to journalism, starting at the Louisville Defender, then Jet magazine — then to The Post, where for more than three decades she was a strong voice and magnetic presence as a reporter, editor and columnist. After directing the Young Journalists Development Project, an in-house partnership with local schools, Gilliam moved on in 2003 to help train high school journalism advisors nationally as a fellow at the George Washington School of Media and Public Affairs.

Bringing other minorities into the news business, and fighting for multi-dimensional portrayals of all minorities has long been one of Gilliam's passions.

In the mid-1970s she joined the board of The Institute for Journalism Education (IJE), an organization founded by Robert C. Maynard, Nancy Hicks and others to train minorities for reporting and editing jobs. IJE immediately set out to persuade the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) to

make editorial staffs reflect the nation's diversity by 2000. Gilliam served as IJE board chairman for eight years.

A tall, striking woman, Gilliam knew how to use her prominence as a journalist to further NABJ's goals.

"She was an icon among the print members, and she was an icon in the industry," observes Sidmel Estes-Sumpter, who preceded Gilliam as president. "She was able to open doors to news executives who knew and respected her as an icon."

Gilliam had also developed her own strong voice.

"One of the transformations of my career and life was column writing," says Gilliam. "I was going from objectivity to the new journalism, which demands expressing an opinion in column writing. My voice emerged and my issues emerged — race, education, African-American achievement, media and politics."

As NABJ's print task force chairman in 1991-92, Gilliam supervised "L.A. Unrest and Beyond," the survey of African-American journalists' views about the urban disturbances that broke out after the acquittal of the police officers who beat

Rodney King.

As vice president-print, she helped organize protests against the New York Daily News when it fired two-thirds of its African-American reporters, including all the black male reporters. She also coordinated "Muted Voices," the first survey that detailed the crisis confronting mid-career black journalists who felt stuck and disrespected in their newsrooms.

As NABJ president, she had a long list of objectives — securing new funding for the organization, ensuring members were on the cutting edge of digital technology, boosting the number of African-American managers on both the editorial and business side, and mentoring young journalists.

Yet the main preoccupation of her presidency became preparation for the 1994 Unity convention, the

ESSAY  
BY  
JACQUELINE  
E.  
TRESCOTT



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

Dorothy Butler Gilliam  
*The Washington Post*

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ BROADCAST

Sheila Stainback  
*WPIX-TV (New York)*

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Jackie Jones  
*Philadelphia Daily News*

#### SECRETARY

Vanessa Williams  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

#### TREASURER

Jackie Greene  
*USA Today*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Angelo Henderson  
*Detroit News*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Sidmel Estes-Sumpter  
*WAGA-TV (Atlanta)*



## Region I

Gregory Moore  
*Boston Globe*

## Region II

Arthur Fennell  
*WCAU-TV (Philadelphia)*

## Region III

Barbara Ciara  
*WVEC-TV (Norfolk)*

## Region IV

Roderick Hicks  
*Birmingham Post-Herald*

## Region V

Monroe Anderson  
*WBBM-TV (Chicago)*

## Region VI

Clyde Hughes  
*The Blade (Toledo)*

## Region VII

Vince Johnson  
*WFAA-TV (Dallas)*

## Region VIII

Sharon Stevens  
*KSDK-TV (St. Louis)*

## Region IX

Marcia Pledger  
*Las Vegas Review-Journal*

## Region X

Andrea Ford  
*Los Angeles Times*

## Student Representative

Jayne Bradford  
*The Muskegon Chronicle* (1994)

LaChris Jordan  
*The University of Washington* (1995)

first-ever joint meeting of African American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian American journalists.

There were fierce debates about NABJ's role in Unity.

Some felt that NABJ should not dilute its strength as the largest faction by joining with the others. Others felt that Hispanic and Asian journalists were making headway at blacks' expense.

There were deep-seated historical differences with the other groups. The National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) threatened to pull out of the confab. The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) group resented locating the meeting in Atlanta in part because of the lingering racism of the Atlanta Braves insignia.

Gilliam's strategy was to get everyone to talk. She convinced the McCormick Foundation that a retreat with each group's representatives would iron out differences. After wrestling personally with these issues for more than a decade, Gilliam was convinced there were much common ground among the groups.

"It had taken a lot of work to bring me to the place of accepting diversity as a focus of my energy. Bob Maynard had always thought it was important to work through and forge relationships and find common issues," says Gilliam. "Later in Unity I saw the attitudes I had in the 1970s. But by that point I had worked through the emotional, historic and intellectual issues and saw the need for Unity."

When Unity was over, Gilliam says she had renewed respect for her colleagues.

"I came away with so much respect for black journalists. The understanding of what this country is about, that we have to be strong as individuals but yet participate in coalitions."

The Gilliam years, she had hoped, would also be a time for reflection on the organization's objectives and achievements, especially at the 20th anniversary convention in Philadelphia.

But the contemplative tone she wanted to set was almost derailed by public fights over whether the group should take a position on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The founding member of the Philadelphia

Association of Black Journalists was charged with murder of a white police officer and condemned to death after a controversial trial.

Securing a new trial for Abu-Jamal became a heated cause for some NABJ members. Others believed just as passionately that such advocacy was inappropriate for a journalistic organization.

After intense debate, the NABJ board decided in executive session to take no stand on the matter, which led some critics to charge that NABJ's leadership was out of touch with black folk. In the aftermath Gilliam commissioned a report about the debate, but it was never released due to a disagreement within the board.

In this episode and others, some thought Gilliam was too much a lady, a Southern lady at that, too prone to compromise when she met opposition. Looking back, Gilliam acknowledges that her term did bring "me face to face with my weaknesses and strengths. As a preacher's daughter I had never thought about kicking ass publicly. I had respect for people. And my style was not in-your-face enough for some people."

But there is no doubt that Gilliam's quiet strengths enhanced NABJ's institutional stability.

Under her leadership, the organization received grants from the Ford Foundation, the Freedom Forum, and the McCormick Foundation, funding programs that gave black journalists more tools to compete in an increasingly competitive industry.

"I left an organization that was financially healthy. We earned money from Unity and Philadelphia," she says.

The controversies that flared during her tenure, she says, provided a learning experience, however painful, that did not dim her optimism or her passion for change.

"NABJ will put you on your knees in prayer," she says, "and that's a good place to be."



**A**rthur

**F**ennell

---

“If this organization was lifted up to a position of power, and people could see its members’ intellect and the prestige, then we could better meet some of the goals that we had been struggling for years to obtain.”

*Photograph by  
Hillary Shay*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

Arthur Fennell  
WCAU-TV (Philadelphia)

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ BROADCAST

Sharon Stevens  
KSDK-TV (St. Louis)

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ PRINT

Vanessa Williams  
*The Washington Post*

#### SECRETARY

Herbert Lowe  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

#### TREASURER

Rodney Brooks  
*USA Today*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Angelo Henderson  
*Wall Street Journal*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Dorothy Butler Gilliam  
*The Washington Post*

## FENNELL

He was a sharecropper's son and black college graduate from South Carolina who had become a polished, articulate and charismatic television anchor at WCAU-TV in Philadelphia.

Yet in the months before Arthur Fennell became NABJ's first "on-air" president, only six years after attending his first convention, he was still unknown to many longtime members. Fennell had been a chapter leader in two cities and a two-term regional director. But his was the first unopposed presidential campaign since the early years, so there were questions.

Would he be all style and no substance? Which direction would he take the association? Could he handle the pressure?

Two years later — after moneymaking conventions in Nashville and Chicago, a new NABJ Media Institute, a renewed bond between the national board of directors and membership, a headquarters relocation and consistent national exposure — Fennell had erased all doubts.

His board was filled with several new members, including five of whom he had to appoint because of vacancies. But Fennell used finely honed interpersonal skills to transform a climate of mistrust and hostility into enthusiasm and consensus.

"Arthur was a great president," said Monroe Anderson, formerly director of station services and community affairs for WBBM-TV in Chicago and the Region V director on Fennell's board.

"He had this very laid-back ability to get people to do things for the organization without browbeating them or threatening them," added Monroe, also a former longtime print journalist and veteran observer of Windy City politics.

"You wanted to help Arthur out. It was the way he phrased things, the way he explained why he needed your help on something." Not only was Fennell ready, Anderson said, he was "camera ready."

That would prove to be crucial as NABJ took to the national stage.

# 1995-1997

Six months into his term, Fennell held a news conference in New Orleans, with his board of directors and several chapter presidents standing with him, to say the city risked losing a future NABJ convention because of Louisiana's new executive order limiting affirmative action.

Later that year, in Nashville, Fennell shared the stage at different times with Vice President Al Gore; Bob Dole and Jack Kemp, the 1996 Republican presidential ticket, and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. (A photo of Fennell and Dole ran on the front page of the New York Times.) That same week, Fennell was again on stage during the annual NABJ awards ceremony, which for the only time was taped for later national broadcast on Black Entertainment Television (BET).

The next year in Chicago, Fennell walked on stage with Bill Clinton in one of NABJ's most profound national moments. Marking the only time a U.S. president visited a NABJ convention, Clinton delivered a policy address on education as members beamed and CNN carried it live.

But Fennell wasn't just a figurehead. He could be tough, willing to stand up against the most intimidating foes to fight for NABJ members.

When the Fruit of Islam (security team) insisted on body-searching members before letting them into the plenary session to hear Farrakhan, the president went into the bowels of the convention center and found the minister. Interrupting an interview of the minister by NABJ students, Fennell told him the event would be cancelled if his bodyguards didn't desist.

In Chicago, the Secret Service demanded that Fennell scale back the Newsmaker Luncheon in both time and tables so they could sweep the hotel ballroom for Clinton and set up space for the press.

Fennell refused to compromise the convention for Clinton's visit. He argued that key NABJ awards were to be given at the luncheon and that the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Geronimo Pratt, who had recently been freed after years of wrongful imprisonment in California, were to speak.

## ESSAY

### BY

## HERBERT

## LOWE

"He handled that masterfully," said JoAnne Lyons Wooten, NABJ's executive director at the time, who participated in the negotiations. "A lot of people would have backed down when the advance team for the president of the United States had taken a position. This was not something they were asking. They said the tables have to go and Arthur would not have it. He was an advocate for members. He had their interest at heart."

There were blips on the national screen, for sure.

Farrakhan berated black journalists for shying away from him back in their newsrooms, and news reports afterward highlighted the minister calling them "slaves" for white-owned media. And some veteran NABJ members criticized the "soft questions" offered Clinton by hand-picked NABJ members during a Q&A session following his address. Many were particularly disappointed that Clinton was not asked about a U.S. apology for slavery, a hot topic in the news at the time.

Some members also felt that Fennell shied away from challenging media executives about increasing newsroom diversity.

A self-described sports nut and golf addict, Fennell responded to such criticism as par for the course for TV anchors, and for NABJ presidents. Still, he admits concentrating on increasing NABJ's profile and leaving it stronger for his successors.

"My theory was, if this organization was lifted up to a position of power, and people could see its members' intellect and the prestige, then we could better meet some of the goals that we had been struggling for years to obtain," he said unapologetically.

Make no mistake, however, the Fennell administration did tackle meaty issues. He assembled an editorial board of respected print journalists to address such concerns as newsroom diversity, media coverage of Africa and the CIA's role in supplying drugs to black neighborhoods. The board's views were published as a syndicated column, "NABJ Speaks," under his byline in many black newspapers and even some mainstream publications. The editorial board also contributed to the NABJ Journal, which was revamped from a newsletter into a magazine.

"Arthur did an excellent job in making sure we were out front on a lot of issues that were of concern to us as black journalists and to us as black people," said Paula

Madison, a former NABJ board member who is president and general manager of KNBC-TV (Los Angeles).

A prodigious fund raiser, Fennell also strived to expand NABJ internally. Many point to the NABJ Media Institute as one of his hallmarks.

Inaugurated with a chapter-leadership seminar in January 1998, and supported by foundation and industry funding, the institute affords black journalists training and discussion on, among other things, civic journalism, business writing, computer-assisted reporting and management. It also showed that NABJ could better serve its members year-round.

NABJ moved its national office from Reston, Va., to the University of Maryland at College Park, Md., during Fennell's term. He actually wanted to move the headquarters to Baltimore, where NABJ could have had its own building, but the board opted for the university to save money and because its facilities ensured beginning the institute sooner.

Executive Director Wooten credited Fennell with supporting her efforts to revamp the association's financial record keeping. Many noted that Fennell's administration was rare in that it did not have strife between the president or executive committee and the executive director.

"Arthur allowed me to do my job," Wooten said simply.

Fennell was more interested in looking long term. He appointed a multi-tiered committee of veteran members to produce a five-year strategic plan. It focused on finance, fund raising, marketing, programs, membership services, the national office, local chapters, technology and governance.

"I was determined to use them," Fennell said of the many longtime and new members who served on committees and task forces.

"I never had the illusion that as one man I needed to be a cure-all. I wanted to be the catalyst. For me, ego was never a big part of it. I never cared who got the credit. What I cared about was we got the job done."

Fennell left WCAU shortly after stepping down as NABJ president to start his own media consulting company. He is now managing editor/anchor of Comcast Network, a regional news show in Philadelphia.

## Region I

Victoria Jones  
WHDH-TV (Boston)

## Region II

Mark Griffith  
CBS News (New York)

## Region III

Barbara Ciara  
WVEC-TV (Norfolk)

## Region IV

Condace Pressley  
WSB-AM (Atlanta)

## Region V

Monroe Anderson  
WBBM-TV (Chicago)

## Region VI

Clyde Hughes  
The Blade (Toledo)

## Region VII

Vince Johnson  
WFAA-TV (Dallas)

## Region VIII

Glenn Rice  
Kansas City Star

## Region IX

Tamara Banks  
KGWN-TV (Denver)

## Region X

Osker Spicer  
The Oregonian

## Student Representative

Rolanda Trina Terrell  
Grambling State University





**V**anessa

**W**illiams

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“I was always  
aware that I was  
representing black  
journalists, and I  
always wanted to  
do so with dignity  
and excellence.”

*Photograph by  
Dudley M. Brooks*

## 1997-1999

BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

## PRESIDENT

Vanessa Williams  
*The Washington Post*

VICE PRESIDENT/  
BROADCAST

Sharon Stevens  
*SDK-TV (St. Louis)*

VICE PRESIDENT/  
PRINT

Robin Stone  
*Essence*

## SECRETARY

Herbert Lowe  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

## TREASURER

Rodney Brooks  
*USA Today*

## PARLIAMENTARIAN

Robin Washington  
*The Boston Herald*

## IMMEDIATE PAST

## PRESIDENT

Arthur Fennell  
*WCAU-TV (Philadelphia)*

Vanessa Williams confounded her critics by doing her homework, by steeping herself in NABJ's history and by understanding, deep in her soul, that while it's impossible to win every battle, when the cause is right, a leader must not be afraid to fight for what she believes in.

She may be remembered not simply for taking NABJ to a higher level in a variety of concrete ways, but for taking the position that the strongest defense that journalists of color could make of affirmative action in 1999 was to rip a page out of the sacred book of Montgomery 1955.

As NABJ president, Williams fought to convince the troops to withdraw from the second Unity convention in 1999. It was to be held in Seattle, the largest city in a state that had voted only a few months before to outlaw the use of affirmative action in government hiring, state contracts and university admissions. She argued that the \$20 million that the four largest associations that represent journalists of color would spend at the convention was not just nickels and dimes, but leverage.

Withdrawing their money from an anti-affirmative action state would send a message to the people of Washington, Williams reasoned — the same message that Montgomery's black masses delivered when they walked rather than be forced to ride in the back of the bus. It was a lesson she had absorbed since childhood in segregated St. Petersburg, Fla.

She battled over the Unity convention as if she could hear the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. whispering in her ear something he was heard to say many times: "Some of us must bear the burden of trying to save the soul of America."

In the end, Williams lost the battle over Unity.

Though some members of her board and the other journalists' associations agreed that protesting

Washington State's anti-affirmative action stance was important, they felt it was too late to withdraw from the convention. They didn't want to risk the association's hard-earned money, and potentially provoke lawsuits for broken contracts.

Williams, who served more years on the national board than any other NABJ member, never wavered in her views. But she gracefully accepted defeat.

And why wouldn't she?

She reminded all of us that NABJ was born in the spirit of protest, to speak truth to the powers that be in the news media, not accommodate itself to injustice. By taking a principled position, Williams performed an invaluable service to NABJ and the industry in general.

She provoked discussions, debates and history lessons that many younger journalists never knew, and that some veterans seem to have forgotten.

The battle of Seattle was the climax of Williams' term, but far from her only achievement.

Articulate and forceful, she was one of NABJ's most visible presidents.

The first convention of her term, in Washington, D.C., in 1998, wasn't only a financial success, but with 3,500 registrations set a new attendance record.

Williams was a strong fund raiser who pushed NABJ's scholarship endowment to nearly \$1 million.

Donors included The Philip Graham Foundation, associated with The Washington Post, which gave \$50,000. But she also hit up close friends in the association when she knew that they could afford to dig a little deeper. Several members generated even more for scholarships by paying at least \$1,500 each for special editions of a print by the legendary artist Jacob Lawrence.

The NABJ Media Institute also prospered on Williams' watch, thanks to substantial gifts, such as \$150,000 from the Knight Foundation, as well as grants

## ESSAY

## BY

## BETTY

## WINSTON

## BAYÉ

### Region I

Victoria Jones  
WHDH-TV (Boston)

### Region II

Roxanne Jones  
ESPN The Magazine

### Region III

Robert Pierre  
The Washington Post

Bonnie Newman Davis

Richmond Times

Dispatch

(Appointed in 1999)

### Region IV

Condace Pressley  
WSB-AM (Atlanta)

### Region V

Monroe Anderson  
WBBM-TV (Chicago)

### Region VI

Courtis Fuller  
WLWT-TV (Cincinnati)

### Region VII

Warren Bell Jr.  
WYLD Radio (La.)

### Region VIII

Glenn Rice  
Kansas City Star

### Region IX

Tamara Banks  
KWGN-TV (Denver)

### Region X

Daryl Strickland  
Los Angeles Times

### Associate Representative

Linda Florence Callahan  
North Carolina Central University

### Student Representative

Cynthia George  
University of Florida

from the Pew Center for Civic Journalism and The New York Times.

There was also plenty of controversy, especially on NABJ's board.

Williams wasn't one to rant and rave, and when others did, she'd listen for a time, and then say what became famous last words, "Put it in writing!"

There were complaints that Williams lacked patience with people who weren't quick to grasp her vision.

Indeed, as one member put it, "Vanessa was real cranky."

Some board members felt alienated by her brusque style.

"If Vanessa respected your abilities, there was never a problem, but if she didn't respect you, you were dead," one person said.

The complaints were off-target.

Williams didn't shape her visions in isolation, but in collaboration with a "kitchen cabinet" of past presidents, national officers and rank-and-file members. They didn't always share her views, but their cogent arguments in opposition, in fact, helped Williams to sharpen her own thoughts.

Longtime NABJ member Roy Campbell, a former reporter at The Philadelphia Inquirer, where Williams was a reporter for many years before joining The Washington Post in 1996, admits that he wasn't always "taken" with her.

However, he's since discovered, "She stands for something."

Moreover, he said, "I learned from Vanessa that you don't always have to agree, and don't always have to share someone's vision, but you do have to have the ability to see beyond your differences."

The funny thing is that Williams — a former chapter president, regional director, secretary and vice president — never aspired to be president.

"I was content to be a member," she said, "because I know that I don't have a lot of patience, and I don't suffer fools gladly. But I care a lot about NABJ, and people came to me and said, 'You can do this.'"

As they say, the rest is history.

Looking back on her term, Williams, now an editor at The Post, says: "I took my task seriously and I learned a lot about myself. The whole experience with Unity was the most painful thing that happened. I know that I upset some people. I know it hurt, but I felt that we couldn't say nothing. I guess the thing that hurt me most was that initially some people seemed afraid to deal with it, and that hurt because we have no business being afraid — not with all our ancestors have risked so that we could work for these news organizations.

"Whatever I did," she continues, "I was always aware that I was representing black journalists, and I always wanted to do so with dignity and excellence. I was always concerned about how my actions and words reflected on the membership, and I think that is what leadership is about; it's about elevating the organization."

Williams did more than that.

She lifted us all.



# W illiam W. S utton Jr.

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“If there were a few NABJ folk who wanted me to come, I'd go. I'd always say how can I connect with NABJ folks and see what is on their minds.”

*Photograph courtesy of  
The News & Observer*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

William W. Sutton Jr.  
*The News & Observer*  
(Raleigh, N.C.)

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ BROADCAST

Condace Pressley  
*WSB-AM* (Atlanta)

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ PRINT

Herbert Lowe  
*Newsday* (New York)

#### SECRETARY

Gregory Lee  
*The Washington Post*

#### TREASURER

Glenn Rice  
*Kansas City Star*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Robin Washington  
*Boston Herald*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Vanessa Williams  
*The Washington Post*

## SUTTON

When William W. Sutton Jr. met NABJ's first president back in 1977, the seeds were sown then for him to become the association's 13th chief executive officer two decades later.

Sutton had just graduated from Hampton University and was attending his first — NABJ's second — convention. He had a decision to make: either take his first full-time reporting job or head off to law school. Chuck Stone was not only NABJ's founding president, he was even then a larger than life presence and a journalistic icon. But there he was, standing in front of his room at the down-on-its-luck Lord Baltimore Hotel in Baltimore, reviewing Sutton's resume and clips.

Stone urged the young Sutton to forget about more schooling — and to get moving, to get in the game because both journalism and NABJ needed him. “Awed by his presence, commitment and energy, I followed his advice,” Sutton wrote in 1999.

Indeed, he did.

When Sutton announced that he would run for president those of us who had worked closely with him were not the least bit surprised. He had largely done for many others what Stone had done for him.

In the process, Sutton had become an unyielding champion for diversity and inclusion.

A former national parliamentarian for the group, he had become one of NABJ's most vocal and visible representatives.

His rise into more than a few high-level newsroom positions had not quieted his zeal. He had been both managing editor and editor at the Post-Tribune in Gary, Ind., and held a number of high-ranking posts at The News & Observer in Raleigh, N.C., before resigning in June 2005.

Announcing his intention, and then being elected NABJ president in 1999, was really just the natural next step.

“Because of his tenacity, his passion I got

# 1999-2001

involved,” said Vanessa Williams, an editor at The Washington Post.

She went from wondering why she should commit time and effort to following him as president of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists in the late '80s, to years later preceding him as national president.

“Will and I didn't always agree on NABJ policy, but I never questioned or doubted his sincere love for black journalists,” Williams said.

His love for black journalists was so evident during his tenure that Sutton was certainly one of the most-traveled presidents. He clocked more than 85,000 air miles, meeting with black journalists in every location and every venue imaginable, from regional meetings in Quad City, Iowa, to quick huddles with members during layovers in airports across the country.

“If there were a few NABJ folk who wanted me to come, I'd go,” Sutton said. “I'd always say how can I connect with NABJ folks and see what is on their minds.”

That practice was calculated, said Herbert Lowe, who served as vice president-print during Sutton's administration and became NABJ president in 2003.

“Will very much returned the focus to the chapters,” Lowe said.

At the same time, Sutton also insisted that NABJ hold chapters accountable in meeting the requirements for formal affiliation. To know Sutton is to know that he is a stickler on detail.

Sutton also was insistent on creating skills-based training so that both members at the beginning of their careers and others at mid-career could properly adjust to the ever-changing job market, Lowe said.

Sutton's strategy to see and be seen by NABJ's membership, as well as provide much-needed services seemed to resonate. During his tenure, the organization's membership swelled for the first time to more than 3,300.

In addition, Sutton's steeliness on two of NABJ's core mission issues — helping journalists of African descent get jobs and keep jobs — kept him constantly

## ESSAY

### BY

## MICHAEL

### DAYS



encouraging and cajoling the industry's leadership. He was often quoted in the industry's trades and beyond.

In fact, when in 2001 the American Society of Newspaper Editors' annual newsroom employment census found that the number of journalists of color had declined for the first time in 23 years, Sutton was particularly strident, representing our interests without trepidation.

"I simply don't understand why so many top editors are so willing to mouth the right words but go into their offices and do the same things," Sutton said then. "If this were an advertising, circulation or a general revenue problem, I'm sure more people would be paying attention and there would be more positive results."

Still, Sutton's influence on NABJ, before and during his presidency, was not without its share of controversy.

Sutton, along with Juan Gonzalez, cooked up the idea for an umbrella group that would represent all journalists of color when the two were competing City Hall reporters in Philadelphia back in the late '80s. Sutton worked for the Philadelphia Inquirer; Gonzalez covered the hall for the Daily News and would later become president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

Since then, Sutton has been steadfast in his belief that NABJ should be a proactive partner in the alliance called Unity: Journalists of Color, and that journalists of color are more powerful when they work together for change.

But between the first such meeting in Atlanta, in 1994, and the second in Seattle, in 1999, there was vocal debate about the worth of Unity. In fact, Williams wondered publicly about its worth during her NABJ presidency.

Walter T. Middlebrook, now a deputy Long Island editor for Newsday and a former NABJ board member, supported former Essence magazine editor Robin Stone in her hotly contested race to succeed Williams. Still, Middlebrook admires Sutton for his consistent posture on the Unity movement.

"I have to give Will credit," Middlebrook said. "When others wanted to pull us out, Will stood firm."

On other matters — such as Sutton's push to reduce the number of positions on the national board

and a financial crisis fueled by too many unfunded programs and a rocky and unforgiving stock market — Sutton doesn't shrug responsibility for some of the missteps.

History, no doubt, will be the ultimate judge.

In fact, his push for a smaller board was purely strategic. Early on in NABJ's history most board members would pay their own freight to board meetings and other events. By the time Sutton became president most companies had backed off that commitment and, more often than not, NABJ was paying board members' expenses.

Sutton freely admits that he pushed for a smaller board partially to reduce NABJ's administrative costs.

"When I first proposed it, you would have thought I was the devil," he said with a laugh.

Apparently, enough NABJ members bought his message and voted in 2004 to reduce the number of board members from 9 to 14.

"Because I love the organization so much I know we needed to make significant change," Sutton said. "I was looking beyond my term for NABJ's future success. I was always looking for the longer-lasting impact."

Even with the challenges, Sutton contends that he has been blessed by his "once in a lifetime opportunity."

## Region I

Janet Davenport  
*The Hartford Courant*

## Region II

Patrick Riley  
*Freelance (New York)*

## Region III

Bonnie Newman Davis  
*Virginia Union Univ.*

## Region IV

Mike Woolfolk  
*WACH-TV*  
(Columbia, S.C.)

## Region V

Joanne Williams  
*WITI-TV (Milwaukee)*

## Region VI

Robert Vickers  
*The Plain Dealer*  
(Cleveland)

## Region VII

Cheryl Smith  
*KKDA-AM (Dallas)*

## Region VIII

Delma Francis  
*Star Tribune*  
(Minneapolis)

## Region IX

Tamara Banks  
*KWGN-TV (Denver)*

## Region X

Lynne Varner  
*Seattle Times*

## Associate Representative

Meta Mereday  
*NY/NJ Minority Purchasing Council*

## Student Representative

Dená McClurkin  
*Clark Atlanta University*



**C**ondace

**P**ressley

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“If there is something of which I am especially proud, it was being able to represent the organization well when folks were looking at us and not saying particularly nice things about African-American journalists.”

*Photograph by  
Ian Irving*

## 2001-2003

BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

## PRESIDENT

Condace Pressley  
WSB Radio  
(Atlanta)

VICE PRESIDENT/  
BROADCAST

Mike Woolfolk  
WACH-TV  
(Columbia, S.C.)

VICE PRESIDENT/  
PRINT

Bryan Monroe  
Knight Ridder

## SECRETARY

Gregory Lee  
The Washington Post

## TREASURER

Glenn E. Rice  
The Kansas City Star

## PARLIAMENTARIAN

Sharyn Flanagan  
USA Today

IMMEDIATE PAST  
PRESIDENT

William W. Sutton Jr.  
The News & Observer  
(Raleigh, N.C.)

As you might expect from a president known for her down-to-earth attitude, when Condace Pressley tells the story of how she came to lead the National Association of Black Journalists, the tale begins during a dinner with friends.

Then serving as vice president-broadcast, Pressley was breaking bread with past president Vanessa Williams and some others after a serious meeting in January 2001. With no funds to fly the full NABJ board into the area, top officers had gathered in Greenbelt, Md., to discuss the group's deteriorating financial status, and the numbers were sobering.

A budget deficit of more than \$300,000. Double-digit drops in membership. Program costs that often exceeded funding sponsorships. A pattern of spending without adequate planning or control. And a downturn in the stock market that led to tremendous losses in NABJ's investment portfolio.

With an NABJ presidential election looming, the group needed a chief executive who could take quick control — targeting money-losing programs and financially unsound practices regardless of who championed them.

Williams had a blunt question: Would Pressley run for the job?

"She was very complimentary, saying . . . sometimes you don't choose when it's time to serve, the time chooses you," said Pressley, speaking by telephone from her office at WSB-AM in Atlanta, where she serves as assistant program director. "At the time, I was very much about not getting into the stress and drama and focusing on my career. But true leaders . . . they are chosen. Sometimes, they don't get to make the choice."

As it turns out, Pressley took the helm as NABJ's 14th president during a time of intense change both inside and outside the organization. Over her two-year term, she would face the challenge of erasing NABJ's massive deficits and creating new internal systems for

spending and programming, while training new leaders within the group. Meanwhile, NABJ also weathered attacks from anti-diversity author William McGowan, fallout from the New York Times/Jayson Blair scandal and the splintering of the Chicago chapter into two acrimonious factions.

Pressley's strategy: Get back to basics. Don't spend more money than you have. Teach every official how the organization works. Meet deadlines. And keep members informed of everything done in their name.

"I was a very basic, 'block-and-tackle' kind of a leader," she said, noting the football analogy. "(NABJ) never really wrote down anything. And if we did, we didn't put it some place where people could find it. So one of my primary objectives was codifying practices and procedures and making sure we did what we said. I brought an ability to say no."

Later in 2001, before Pressley was elected president, a coalition of nearly 100 notable NABJ members — including Williams and former NABJ presidents Sidmel Estes-Sumptner, Chuck Stone and Thomas Morgan III — circulated a letter to members warning of budget deficits and calling for a financial oversight committee to take control.

Noting that participation in the 1999 Unity conference in Seattle and the 2000 national conference in Phoenix had depleted the group's financial resources, the coalition suggested a financial oversight committee and demanded better fiscal responsibility. That was a mandate which wasn't lost on Pressley once she started in the president's position.

"Her mantra was, 'Under promise and over-deliver,'" said Glenn Rice, a reporter at the Kansas City Star who served as treasurer under Pressley. "When she spoke, you knew she thought about it first. Condace was not going to be one of the rah-rah types, yelling at the top of her lungs. She was a genuine Southern lady."

Pressley's changes ranged from refusing to extend

## ESSAY

## BY

## ERIC

## DEGGANS

## Region I

Robin Washington  
*The Boston Herald*

## Region II

Sarah J. Glover  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

## Region III

Bonnie Newman Davis  
*Freelance*

## Region IV

Ernie Suggs  
*Atlanta  
Journal-Constitution*

## Region V

Randy Bullock  
*P.R. Networks Inc.*

## Region VI

Stephanie Jones  
*The Commercial Appeal  
(Memphis)*

## Region VII

Cheryl Smith  
*The Dallas Weekly*

## Region VIII

Natalie Y. Moore  
*Detroit News*

## Region IX

Venita Hawthorne James  
*The Arizona Republic*

## Region X

Lynne Varner  
*Seattle Times*

## Associate Representative

Meta Mereday  
*Marketing & Media  
Consultant*

## Student Representative

Tiffany Black  
*University of  
North Carolina*

# NABJ REGIONAL DIRECTORS 2001-2003

deadlines for early convention registrations to requiring board members to get approval for any airline ticket costing more than \$300. Board members were asked to take responsibility for projects such as planning the national convention or running the Media Institute. And regional conventions which failed to earn money were curtailed or eliminated.

Rice said NABJ officers were encouraged to keep in mind the group's average member: a 25-year-old female working at a mid-to-small size newspaper with three to five years experience.

"I thought our conventions were too long, we didn't charge enough and programming was a big issue," he added. "If you're going to spend five days of your vacation going to a convention, you'd better give people something."

Eventually, NABJ's budget would go from serious deficits to a \$250,000 surplus. Pressley's one regret? Failing to raise enough revenue to replace the \$400,000 in long-term savings NABJ spent after the Phoenix convention to meet its budget deficits early in the crisis.

"For two years, being president of NABJ was the equivalent of working two full-time jobs, each of which required 80 hours of work a week," Pressley said. "But I believe very strongly in flawless execution, and made sure we delivered on what we said we were going to do."

Of course, Pressley's challenges as president ranged beyond fiscal matters.

She can't remember when she first heard about the young, black man fired from the New York Times for high-profile plagiarism. But by the time she had run the media gauntlet to respond to racial implications of the Jayson Blair scandal, Pressley had appeared on CNN, MSNBC, C-Span, National Public Radio, ABC's Nightline and beyond.

"NABJ was definitely the flavor of the month for two or three weeks," noted Pressley, who issued two press releases and made scores of appearances to insist that Blair's transgressions were not enabled or glossed over by any misguided attempt at affirmative action at the Old Gray Lady.

"If there is something of which I am especially proud, it was being able to represent the organization

well when folks were looking at us and not saying particularly nice things about African-American journalists," she said.

Pressley's roots in NABJ run deep.

A member since 1987, she joined the organization one year after coming to WSB as a reporter/anchor — a position she earned straight from the University of Georgia's broadcast journalism program, where she earned a bachelor's degree. As she advanced at WSB, from producer to assistant news director to assistant program director, she also worked hard for NABJ, serving two terms as a regional director and one term as vice president-broadcast. She also served as treasurer for Unity: Journalists of Color for its 2004 convention.

Pressley's career has also served as an example of how service to NABJ can help acquire skills that bring achievement in the workplace. She readily admits that serving as a regional director helped build her confidence to seek management positions at WSB. Similarly, the fiscal planning skills and discipline that she learned as an assistant news director helped her develop strategies for guiding NABJ through some of the most challenging times in its history.

"I believe strongly in NABJ as an organization, and I wanted whatever I did to be about the organization," Pressley said. "It wasn't about me, and it's not important to me that I get credit. What was more important to me was that the leadership team feel good about their experience and we secure the future of our organization."



# Herbert Lowe

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“It wasn’t just me. I had an extremely committed, extremely smart and together board of directors. On this board there was very little friction. It was not about who was in charge. Everybody bought into NABJ365.”

*Photograph by  
Jason Miccolo Johnson*





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### PRESIDENT

Herbert Lowe  
*Newsday* (New York)

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ BROADCAST

Barbara Ciara  
*WTKR-TV* (Norfolk)

#### VICE PRESIDENT/ PRINT

Bryan Monroe  
*Knight Ridder*

#### SECRETARY

Sarah J. Glover  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

#### TREASURER

John Yearwood  
*The Miami Herald*

#### PARLIAMENTARIAN

Melanie Burney  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Condace Pressley  
*WSB Radio*  
(Atlanta)

## LOWE

It took losing to make Herbert Lowe a winner. In 2001, the rap on Lowe, then NABJ's vice president for print, was that he was unfocused and lacked a clear agenda for an organization facing a fiscal crisis. The former two-term national secretary admits he concentrated more on helping Will Sutton, the embattled, outgoing leader than on his own presidential campaign.

"I prepared myself to govern instead of preparing to win," Lowe said. "When I lost it was a huge shock."

But the loss turned out to be a good omen.

"As a member I saw how the organization was communicating with the membership," he said. "I felt that NABJ was powerful and influential, but we didn't let people know what we were doing."

After healing his wounds, and supported by his wife, Mira, an editor at *Newsday* and NABJ committee leader, Lowe tried again. He reached out to friends and members who gave him a ton of advice on not just how to get elected, but to be a really effective president.

"He listened. Too bad more of us don't do that," said Monte Trammer, president and publisher of *The Star-Gazette* in Elmira, N.Y., a close advisor to Lowe and finance committee chairman during his term. The former NABJ parliamentarian told the candidate to focus on one or two important issues, rather than compiling a list. "Pick something you want to be proud of at the end," he said, "and make sure the organization serves its members. For whatever reason somebody decides to join NABJ, they should be able to look back and say, 'My money was well spent.'"

Lowe came back with a two-pronged agenda aimed at making NABJ a year-round association, and less so convention-oriented, and also to take it back to its roots: Fighting for the hiring, development and promotion of black journalists and calling out those in and out of media who maligned them.

# 2003-2005

He sought the counsel of NABJ's past presidents and, after his election, had several speak to the board of directors and chapter leaders to provide insight and institutional memory.

"Herb Lowe has proven to be a more effective president than even his optimistic supporters expected at the outset," said past NABJ President Les Payne, the New York editor at *Newsday*, where Lowe works as a courts reporter in Queens.

"Vernon Jarrett, our second president, was not the only one to warm to Herb's leadership, sensing in him not only a fire to move NABJ ahead, but also a will to keep it rooted," Payne said. "Herb has focused his energy on keeping the graph line of black employment in media trending upward."

One of Lowe's best moments as president, several members said, was meeting with NBC News President Neal Shapiro in late 2004, after new "Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams said that journalists have bigger concerns than newsroom diversity. With Paula Madison, president of KNBC-TV (Los Angeles) and a former NABJ

secretary, past NABJ President Sidmel Estes-Sumpter and former NABJ Vice President-Broadcast Sheila Stainback also at the table, Lowe pressed the network news president for increased commitment to diversity. Some say what Shapiro promised has yet to be seen, but many members applauded Lowe's just getting in the boardroom with him and taking a stand.

Lowe also achieved "NABJ365," that is, keeping NABJ before members and the industry daily.

The NABJ Web site was redesigned and regularly updated with news about the association and industry, and members received more frequent "E-blasts." The long dormant Hall of Fame was resurrected and 17 new members inducted. The stagnant Salute to Excellence Awards ceremony was pulled from the convention and transformed into a wondrous fall gala.

NABJ also released a newsroom stylebook aimed

## ESSAY

BY

JACKIE

JONES

at better coverage of black America; promoted a "census" of top black editors; earned and executed grants from the Ford Foundation, Knight Foundation and CNN; erased a \$100,000 debt, improved its investment portfolio, and helped send 11 members overseas for international reporting experience.

Lowe's administration also managed to get all but three of its nearly 50 affiliated professional chapters audited, and the membership to adopt a constitutional amendment to reduce the board of directors from 19 to 14 members after the 2005 election.

All that, the increased advocacy and the hugely successful Unity 2004 convention in Washington helped swell NABJ's membership to a record 4,700, or 43 percent more than when Lowe took office. Many were proud when Ebony rushed to profile him and NABJ with a full-page magazine feature after Unity.

"He said 'NABJ365' and he really did make that his mission," said Melanie Burney, the parliamentarian on Lowe's board, and like him a past president of the Garden State Association of Black Journalists. "He definitely raised the profile of NABJ."

A Camden, N.J., native and Marquette University graduate who worked at five newspapers before Newsday, Lowe traveled from his home in Brooklyn extensively on behalf of NABJ — often with his wife, who served as chairwoman of NABJ's 30th Anniversary Committee. He attended all eight NABJ regional conferences held during his term while also visiting chapters and representing the association at various events in more than 30 cities in 18 states.

"Herb has made good on his campaign pledge to make the organization more activist," said Richard Prince, NABJ's longtime media monitoring committee chairman. "He reached out to others within the organization, even those who opposed his candidacy, when warranted. He wanted to make NABJ 24/7 and seems to have achieved that."

Still, no president's reign is untarnished.

Lowe earned criticism for his handling of a meeting with administrators at Hampton University over perceived intimidation of student journalists, and for pulling the 2006 convention out of Detroit.

Tensions between NABJ and Hampton were simmering after school officials confiscated copies of

the Hampton Script after student editors refused to publish an administrator's letter on the front page. A settlement was reached, but some students still felt intimidated on campus, saying it adversely affected their journalism training. Lowe led a NABJ delegation to Hampton to meet with the university's president, William Harvey, and communications school dean, Tony Brown, and others. The meeting went badly for NABJ, which refused to reveal its sources.

"Although NABJ was criticized for going into the meeting unprepared, (Herb) was willing to put NABJ on the side of African-American journalism students who said they were feeling intimidated," Prince said.

Board members and many observers agreed that moving the 2006 convention to Indianapolis was tough, but necessary. Condace Pressley, Lowe's predecessor as president, took some of the blame.

"My team announced the decision (to go to Detroit) before all the I's were dotted and the T's crossed in the contracts and it wasn't in the best interest of our members — and it was left for Herb's team to fix," she said.

Still, Lowe avoided the contentiousness that plagued other presidents.

"Some have quarreled with Herb's choice of issues, such as early in his presidency, when NABJ denounced the Naples Daily News columnist who wrote his column in what he considered rap-talk," Prince said. "But the idea there was to send a signal that NABJ is watching. The membership seems to have approved."

Lowe notes that the Naples paper's editor publicly apologized after NABJ weighed in, just as a trade magazine did after the president complained when a cover story about children following parents into journalism ignored black journalists.

"I'm pleased that we spoke out and took a stand and that led to some positive conversations," said Region III Director J. Elliott Lewis, a freelance broadcast journalist serving his first board term.

Lowe said of his administration's success: "It wasn't just me. I had an extremely hard-working, extremely smart, extremely committed and together board of directors. On this board there was very little friction. It was not about who was in charge. Everybody bought into NABJ365."

## Region I

Neal Scarbrough  
*ESPN.com*

## Region II

Rachelle Dickerson Christie  
*The Star-Ledger*  
(Newark, N.J.)

## Region III

J. Elliott Lewis  
*Freelance*

## Region IV

Ernie Suggs  
*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

## Region V

Marsha J. Eaglin  
*Christian Community Health Center*  
(Chicago)

## Region VI

Stephanie Jones  
*The Commercial Appeal*  
(Memphis)

## Region VII

Russell LaCour  
*Tulsa World*

## Region VIII

Vickie Newton  
*KMOV-TV (St. Louis)*

## Region IX

V.W. Vaughan  
*Arizona Daily Star*

## Region X

Jerry McCormick  
*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

## Associate Representative

Angela McClendon  
*San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau*

## Student Representative

Caleb Wilkerson  
*Louisiana State University*

# Remembering Vernon Jarrett

‘He was indeed one of a kind.’ • June 19, 1918 – May 23, 2004

“Vernon Jarrett and I go back more than 50 years. We were very close friends and I will miss his wonderful, irreverent sense of humor. He was more than a multitalented journalist. ... He endowed all of us with professional credibility and, true to his crusading background, was a relentless fighter against racism in the majority media. Yet by writing a popular column in one of America's 10 largest newspapers, The Chicago Tribune, he was paradigm of excellence. The words of Francis Bacon, the 16th century philosopher, sums Vernon up: 'If a man be gracious and generous to strangers and his heart is not an island cut off from other lands, but joined to all continents, he is a citizen of the world.' Vernon was a magnificent citizen of the world.”

**Chuck Stone**  
NABJ President  
1975-1977

“Among Vernon's lasting legacies, which I have tried to embrace, are the following: Always remain true to your principles, be willing to stand up for the truth and never forget that you earn the right to criticize through hard work in the trenches, not as spectator on the sidelines. It was in that spirit that I accepted Vernon's call to run for NABJ president all those years ago. Now that Vernon is no longer able to personally remind us of our mission as an organization and our duty as black journalists, we'll have to rely on our own consciousness and our own voice. Maybe if every single one of us takes up his baton, we'll be half as effective as our now departed guiding spirit. Surely his legacy will be fulfilled through every young journalist who remembers his name and embraces the truths of which he spoke so forcefully and elegantly.”

**Bob Reid**  
NABJ President  
1979-1981

“Through NABJ — and all the others, especially Trotter — Vernon force-fed a generation of journalists the lessons of Russwurm, Sojourner, Wells, Douglass, Trotter, and God knows W.E.B. DuBois. Vernon went young enough into journalism, but like Satchel Paige, and for the same peculiar reason, he hit the major leagues at the turning of his leaves. At 51, he became the first black columnist at the Chicago Tribune. Still, as an enfant terrible on Chicago radio and TV, Vernon sustained a triple-threat career for more than three decades. He is gone away now, Vernon Jarrett, and we are all on our own. 'Research,' I can still hear him imploring the Trotter Group, with that nasal, Tennessee lilt. 'You can't write a column without hours and hours of research.' I can think of no better way to honor Vernon than to grab a book and spend an extra hour each night at the lamp.”

**Les Payne**  
NABJ President  
1981-1983

“I'm filled with sadness because we've lost a pioneer. And also a dear friend. Vernon was special. He was unique and he was indeed one of a kind. He loved black journalists, black people and (NABJ), and he was always willing to give the young folks and a lot of the older folks a history lesson on the pioneers who came before us and made a difference. I considered him a mentor, as well as many others within our organization, and his support during my presidency was extremely important as we attempted to take the organization to another level. He will be sorely missed. But the world will know that he passed by.”

**Merv Aubespain**  
NABJ President  
1983-1985

“Vernon Jarrett was a great journalist and humanitarian. He never minced his words when he discussed African American issues or the direction of NABJ. I respected him for that. He will be missed because he was a true soldier on the battlefield for equality and fairness.”

**Al Fitzpatrick**  
NABJ President  
1985-1987

“Vernon Jarrett was more than my friend and mentor. He was my bridge to a time long past — my link to the legendary black journalists of the Harlem Renaissance era. Like Langston Hughes and W.E.B. DuBois ... Vernon was a race man. He used journalism as a way of ensuring that the achievements of blacks would never be forgotten, and the struggles of blacks would never be ignored. More than just a journalist, Vernon was also an historian whose late-night stories about the places he'd been and the people he'd met were told with the rhythmic voice and unquestionable authority of a griot. His departure from this life leaves a gaping hole in the ranks of those men and women who are true champions of our race.”

**DeWayne Wickham**  
NABJ President  
1987-1989

“No one could ever clear a public meeting of mendacity like dear Vernon Jarrett. Vernon was fearless and taught me early on that right is might. I'm sorry now that I never told him that I considered him a mentor to me. From him, I learned passion toward NABJ. He showed me what NABJ could be and, what it ought to be. Aside from NABJ however, Vernon loved his people. Everything he wrote or spoke about exhibited an abiding love for black folks, especially the young. A titan has passed and his influence will be felt for many years.”

**Thomas Morgan III**  
NABJ President  
1989-1991

“I celebrate the life of my friend, mentor and inspiration ... Vernon Jarrett. His uncompromising, fearless voice and thirst for excellence made him an icon in our industry. He inspired me as a student at Northwestern and continued to be my close confidant and running partner through my NABJ days. I will miss Vernon. But his spirit and fire will continue to live through me.”

**Sidmel Estes-Sumpter**  
**NABJ President**  
**1991-1993**

“He was steeped in the past even as he embraced the future. His enthusiasm for procuring opportunities for black youth was part of my inspiration these past few years as I’ve worked to involve more news media companies as partners with high schools in order to attract more minorities into journalism. Vernon encouraged, loved and challenged us. He made us proud to be African Americans and journalists. I loved and admired him. I’m happy that his spirit will live on in all of us whose lives he touched — but especially in those black youth who might never have had opportunities to succeed had it not been for this race man who loved so deeply.”

**Dorothy Butler Gilliam**  
**NABJ President**  
**1993-1995**

“Here was a man equally skilled and effective in print, radio and television in communicating matters of critical importance to our people and our community. His unwavering dedication and commitment to our industry knew no boundaries — and he was ours. Vernon was NABJ’s keeper of the flame. He applauded our successes and scolded our failures, but like a good parent, he kept his arms around us and always let us know that we mattered. I’ll remember him not only as a warrior for our cause but as a prolific journalist and educator whose power and passion have shaped more public opinion and motivated more minds than we’ll ever know. I loved him and will miss him dearly.”

**Arthur Fennell**  
**NABJ President**  
**1995-1997**

“I will never forget the time during the banquet at the Philadelphia convention that Vernon swept up everyone in the packed ballroom to join him in conjuring up the spirits of W.E.B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells, William Monroe Trotter and other great ancestors. He began clapping and urged the audience to join him. ... Some members would later say how moving the experience had been. Vernon was always reminding us, if not haranguing us, to uphold NABJ’s intellectual, cultural and activist roots. Sometimes we did that and Vernon was so proud of us; sometimes we didn’t and Vernon loved us anyway. The next time we gather, we won’t have to conjure up Vernon’s spirit. He will already be with us.”

**Vanessa Williams**  
**NABJ President**  
**1997-1999**

“Vernon Jarrett was a lion of a man, protective of his beloved NABJ and NAACP as if each and every one of us was one of his cubs. Like a proud lion, he had strong beliefs about what was right, what was wrong and how we should fulfill our duties to the organization and each other. Like a proud lion, he would roar because he knew he would be heard, because he knew he would get attention for a just cause and, yeah, sometimes, for effect. Like a proud lion, he wouldn’t show his caring, loving, tender side to just anyone until they had proven that they were committed to the cause and committed to his people. But caring, loving and tender he was. I feel fortunate to have earned some of his love, to have sat with him to discuss matters large and small and to have gained a great appreciation for a strong dedication to our people. Vernon may have left this world. But because of the many lives he touched and the many times he roared on behalf of me and so many other black journalists and black folk, he’ll never be forgotten. And he’ll always be remembered as an aggressive agitator who used the camera, pen and microphone to make his points heard loud and clear as he sought change for the betterment of all mankind, but, frankly, particularly for we black folk.”

**William W. Sutton Jr.**  
**NABJ President**  
**1999-2001**

“Vernon Jarrett was like the grandfather I never had. I so looked forward to seeing him at convention because he’d greet me with a big, warm bear hug and plant a sloppy, wet kiss on my cheek. Then he would school me about the history of NABJ. I am honored to count him among my mentors. He knew to call in the early evening, as the day was winding down to tell me about DuBois and the NAACP. We’d talk about NABJ and black journalists and he’d lament how so few of our members really know our history, and how the conventions had become more showbiz than substance. Vernon loved NABJ and wanted so much more for us! Vernon Jarrett was not only the conscience of NABJ; he was also the soul of NABJ. The man may be gone, but his spirit lives in those whom he touched. We owe it to his legacy to share his spirit and convictions with those who were not so blessed.”

**Condace Pressley**  
**NABJ President**  
**2001-2003**

“NABJ meant everything to Vernon Jarrett, and he meant all that and so much more to NABJ. Just as important, what Vernon meant to black journalists, meant to black America, meant to America, meant to journalism, meant to Chicago, meant to the world will never be forgotten. There simply can be no overstating his legacy.”

**Herbert Lowe**  
**NABJ President**  
**2003-2005**



**BETTY WINSTON BAYÉ**

is a columnist for The Courier-Journal in Louisville who served as NABJ's vice president-print from 1985-1987.

**PAUL BROCK**

is a former journalist who served as NABJ's first executive director.

**DUDLEY M. BROOKS**

is assistant managing editor for photography at The Baltimore Sun and co-editor of the photo documentary, "Songs of My People."

**SHEILA BROOKS**

is president and chief executive officer of SRB Productions in Washington, and served as NABJ's secretary from 1986-1991.

**ANDRE F. CHUNG**

is a staff photographer at The Baltimore Sun.

**WAYNE DAWKINS**

is a former NABJ Region II director who wrote and self-published "Black Journalists: The NABJ Story."

**MICHAEL DAYS**

is editor of the Philadelphia Daily News, and served as NABJ's Region III director from 1985-1987.

**ERIC DEGGANS**

is president of the Tampa Bay Association of Black Journalists and a member of the editorial board of the St. Petersburg Times.

**JOHN L. DOTSON JR.**

is publisher emeritus of The Akron Beacon Journal.

**HILLERY SHAY**

is deputy photo director at the Pioneer Press in St. Paul, Minn., and a member of the NABJ Visual Task Force.

**KATTI GRAY**

is a feature writer and columnist at Newsday in New York and a former board member of the New York Association of Black Journalists.

**DURELL HALL**

is a staff photographer at The Courier-Journal in Louisville.

**IAN IRVING**

is a staff photographer at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

**JOEY IVANSO**

is a staff photographer at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

**DERRICK Z. JACKSON**

is an associate editor and columnist at The Boston Globe and former president of the Boston Association of Black Journalists.

**JACKIE JONES**

is a senior journalism lecturer at Penn State University and served as NABJ's parliamentarian from 1989-1993 and vice president-print from 1993-1995.

**GARY J. KIRKSEY**

of Kirksey Photo in Athens, Ohio, is a former co-chairman of the NABJ Visual Task Force.

**JASON MICCOLO JOHNSON**

is a freelance photographer based in Washington.

**MIRA LOWE**

is associate editor for recruitment at Newsday in New York, and chairwoman of NABJ's 30th Anniversary Committee.

**PAULA MADISON**

is president and general manager of KNBC-TV (Los Angeles) who served as NABJ's secretary from 1983-85.

**MICHEL MARRIOTT**

is a reporter for The New York Times. He won a NABJ Outstanding Achievement Award in 1981 for his work on the series "Being Black in Louisville: A Dream Deferred."

**ROBERT MILLER**

is a photo assignment editor at The News & Observer in Raleigh.

**LYNN NORMENT**

is managing editor of Ebony, a past NABJ regional director and a past president of NABJ's Chicago chapter. She chaired the 1997 NABJ convention in Chicago and NABJ's 25th anniversary committee.

**ERNIE SUGGS**

is a reporter at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution who served as NABJ's Region IV director from 2002-2005. He was a 1988 NABJ intern and a 1997 NABJ award winner for enterprise reporting.

**FRED SWEETS**

is a former photo editor and manager for The Associated Press and is the auctioneer for the annual NABJ Visual Task Force photo auction.

**GAYLE POLLARD TERRY**

is a features reporter at The Los Angeles Times who served as NABJ's vice president-print from 1987-1989.

**JACQUELINE E. TRESCOTT**

is a staff writer for the Style section of The Washington Post.

**JACK E. WHITE**

is a former national correspondent for Time magazine, who shared a NABJ Salute to Excellence Award (magazines over one million circulation) with two colleagues for a cover story entitled "Black Renaissance."

**SUNÉ WOODS**

is a former staff photographer at Newsday in New York.