



North Carolina Press Association – 5171 Glenwood Ave. Ste. 364 – Raleigh, NC 27612  
919-787-7443 - [www.ncpress.com](http://www.ncpress.com)

**TO: NCPA Member Editors**

**FROM: Clifton Barnes, NCPA Publications Editor**

**RE: Convention News Releases**

**Here are a series of releases containing news from the 132<sup>nd</sup> Annual NCPA Convention in Asheville. Feel free to use them as you see fit, and you can find photos on the NCPA Website: <http://www.ncpress.com>.**

**Contact me at (919) 787-7443 or [cliff@ncpress.com](mailto:cliff@ncpress.com) if you need more information.**



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### **Earl Scruggs is NCPA North Carolinian of the Year**

Earl Scruggs, the Cleveland County, NC native who became famous for defining the banjo's role in bluegrass, has been named the 2005 North Carolinian of the Year by the North Carolina Press Association. Scruggs was honored on Friday, July 22 during the President's Banquet at the NCPA 132nd Annual Convention at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville.

"Scruggs brings pride to North Carolina for a musical talent that spans nations and generations and for his devotion to his Tar Heel roots," NCPA Executive Director Teri Saylor said.

Scruggs burst onto the music scene in the 1940s playing with Bill Monroe's band but by the 1950s had joined with Lester Flatt to form The Foggy Mountain Boys, which would popularly be known in the 1960s as Flatt and Scruggs. The duo brought a new audience to bluegrass with its "Ballad of Jed Clampett" theme to The Beverly Hillbillies TV show. Scruggs later formed the Earl Scruggs Review with his two sons.

Perhaps Scruggs' most well-known song is "Foggy Mountain Breakdown," which was used in the film Bonnie and Clyde. Scruggs is also known for popularizing the three-finger playing technique, which allowed for smoother transitions. Most banjo players had previously used two fingers to play.

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**Scruggs is North Carolinian of the Year**  
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"My music came up from the soil of North Carolina, and I have been blessed that people in all parts of the world enjoy it," Scruggs has said.

The presentation at the NCPA Convention featured a multi-media presentation on Scruggs' life and musical legacy. Musician, singer-songwriter and sociologist Al Dunkleman presented a special program on the history of the banjo and entertained the crowd with some of Scruggs' famous tunes and a few he wrote himself.

The North Carolina Press Association began honoring its North Carolinians of the Year in 1993, when Elizabeth Dole received the first annual award. The award goes to an individual who reflects pride in North Carolina and who has brought honor and recognition to the state. Other recipients of this award have been Peggy Kirk Bell, Meadowlark Lemon, Rev. Billy Graham, Hugh Morton, William Friday, Bob Timberlake, Doc Watson, Dean Smith, Jeanne Robertson and Gen. Hugh Shelton.

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## **Haywood County Commissioner Wins First Amendment Award**

Mark Swanger, chairman of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners, was the 18<sup>th</sup> recipient of the William C. Lassiter first Amendment Award. The award was presented July 22 during the North Carolina Press Association's 132<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention, and honored Swanger for his commitment to keeping the citizens of Haywood County informed about their local government. The presentation was made in Asheville.

“Open and transparent government is not just good public policy; it can also be good politics,” Swanger said. “I believe voters are more inclined to have patience with an official they trust. They are more likely to accept a decision contrary to their view if they know the process was righteous. And they are more likely to vote for candidates they view as trustworthy.”

Swanger became a county commissioner three years ago and immediately took steps to make the board more accountable to the public and open up the decision-making process, according to the Smoky Mount News, which nominated him for the award.

In the nomination, the newspaper's editorial staff pointed out a number of open government measures Swanger proposed, which the commissioners implemented. Among them are the following:

- Videotaping and airing county commissioners meetings on local cable channels, and placing a videotape of each meeting in local libraries for residents without access to cable.
- Placing every item for discussion on meeting agendas – even controversial ones. The

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**Swanger is Lassiter Winner**  
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policy further stated that no item would be discussed or voted on unless it appeared on the agenda.

- Enacting a practice of delaying votes on controversial issues until the public had a chance to have input.
- Changing the county commission meeting times from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for one of the commissioners' two monthly meetings to make them more accessible to the public.
- Making public minutes of closed sessions.
- Enacting a policy of making all email correspondence among commissioners public

Mark Swanger, a native of Brevard, graduated from American University in Washington, D.C.

He spent 32 years with the FBI as the nationwide coordinator for organized crime and public corruption investigations. He also was in charge of FBI operations on the west coast of Florida.

Before becoming a county commissioner, Swanger was twice elected as chairman of the Haywood County School Board. He was elected as a county commissioner in 2002 and became chairman in 2004. Swanger also is the co-chair of the Haywood County Economic Development Commission.

He and his wife, Sue, have two children and two grandchildren.

The William Lassiter Award is an annual recognition of citizens who have demonstrated extra commitment to open government and First Amendment rights. It was instituted in 1988 in honor of William C. Lassiter, general counsel to the N.C. Press Association, who died in 1998. Lassiter represented NCPA for nearly 50 years. Nominations are accepted from the general association membership, and a committee appointed by the NCPA president, makes the final selections.



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### **NC Publisher Wins Inaugural Freedom of Information Award**

Tom Boney Jr., publisher and editor of The Alamance News in Graham, has won the inaugural Henry Lee Weathers Freedom of Information Award for his dogged battle for public records that went all the way to the State Supreme Court.

“We didn’t really intend to forge new legal ground two years ago when (we) challenged the Burlington City Council over what the newspaper considered an improperly closed meeting,” Boney said.

The council sued the newspaper in an effort to discourage this kind of scrutiny, thus beginning a long series of legal maneuvers. In September 2004, the North Carolina Court of Appeals ruled unanimously for the paper: that the city had no legal authority to initiate a lawsuit. The court ruled that open government laws are designed to protect citizen rights, not to be used against taxpayers who challenge a public body under those laws.

The city appealed, and the case went to the N.C. Supreme Court, which ultimately upheld the Court of Appeals ruling.

This first award was judged by the Virginia Press Association who, in announcing the winner, wrote: “In an age where publishers are consumed with the bottom line, this one recognized the importance of supporting the Open Meetings Law and put the newspaper’s resources behind the case. He was clear about his commitment, and that came through in the coverage. This newspaper’s actions and

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**Boney Wins Weathers Award**  
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coverage has set a high standard for NCPA's new Freedom of Information Award.”

The Weathers family established the award in memory of Henry Lee Weathers, former owner of The Star, in Shelby. Set up through the North Carolina Press Foundation, its purpose is to honor journalists or newspapers for exceptional work in advancing or upholding the cause of Freedom of Information, and to recognize excellence in reporting about access to government-held information, or the First Amendment.

It will be given to one or two papers for outstanding community service for First Amendment reporting each year.

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**Rip Woodin Elected NCPA/NCPS President**

Rip Woodin, of Rocky Mount, has been named president of the North Carolina Press Association. The NCPA membership elected Lambert to a one-year term during its annual business meeting at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville on July 22.

Woodin, publisher of The Rocky Mount Telegram, will also serve as president of North Carolina Press Services, the business and marketing subsidiary of the association. He succeeds Jennie Lambert, editor of The Star in Shelby. Woodin recently completed a term as vice president of the association and its subsidiary.

Woodin has served in a number of other leadership positions with the press association, including a three-year term on its board of directors and a term as the NCPA Secretary-Treasurer.

A 1969 graduate of UNC-CH, Woodin's first newspaper job was writing headlines for the old Greensboro Daily News after he got off active duty with the Marine Corps.

After five years in various Daily News bureaus, including Raleigh, Woodin went west and took a "temporary" job with a weekly newspaper in Jackson, WY. He stayed a decade.

Following Woodin's stint in Wyoming, he worked for newspapers in West Virginia, Virginia and Michigan.

In November 1992, Woodin moved back to North Carolina to run nine weeklies owned by the Whichard family in rural towns around Greenville. In July 1998, he was named publisher of The Rocky Mount Telegram.

Lambert will remain on the board of directors for a one-year term as immediate past president.

Deuce Niven, editor The Tabor-Lois Tribune, was elected to a one-year term as vice president.

Newly elected directors, serving three-year terms are: Bill Bowman, publisher of Up & Coming Weekly in Fayetteville; Elliott Potter, editor and associate publisher of the Daily News of Jacksonville, and Rick Thames, executive editor of The Charlotte Observer.

In addition, Scott Harrell, publisher of The Brunswick Beacon in Shallotte, was elected to a one year term on the board, representing the community newspapers, and Hal Tanner III, general manager of The News Argus in Goldsboro was elected to a one year term on the board, representing dailies.

The business meeting and elections were held in conjunction with the NCPA's 132nd Annual Convention. Approximately 150 newspaper executives and their families attended the three-day conference.