

A tribute to Longtime Editor's

David Fisher and the Late Mary Fisher Who Were Honored by the Arkansas Press Association

Arkansas Press Association PUBLISHER WEEKLY

Vol. 21 | No. 24 | Thursday, June 18, 2026 | Serving Press and State Since 1873

David Fisher and the late Mary Fisher to be honored with Golden 50 Service Awards

One of the state's most storied community newspaper couples will be honored at the annual Arkansas Press Association Convention scheduled June 25-27 at the Inn of the Ozarks in Eureka Springs.

David Fisher and his wife, the late Mary Fisher, will receive Golden 50 Service Awards for their long-term commitment to their communities and positive impact on journalism in Arkansas.

The Fishers have been an integral part of a distinguished newspaper family that spans four generations. David's great-grandfather, W.A. Watt, owned newspapers in Southwest Oklahoma dating back to 1890. His grandfather, W.O. Watt, continued the family tradition by purchasing the *Dardanelle Post-Dispatch*, the oldest weekly newspaper in Arkansas. His parents, R.L. "Bob" and Joan Fisher, bought the *Yell County Record* in 1946, and later acquired the *Post-Dispatch* in 1957 when Watt and his wife Irene retired.

The *Post-Dispatch* later was published by several individuals and groups over the years before the Fishers brought it back full circle by purchasing it from Paxton Media Group in 2014.

"We definitely wanted to do that because of the heritage, but it's still in Yell County and there are two papers, Danville and Dardanelle," David Fisher said at the time. "With that in mind, the mayor called a town meeting, and had 20 or 30 people, and we talked to them before we bought it. We wanted to make sure we had 100 percent of the community support before we dove in."

David and Mary Fisher already owned three other newspapers in that area of the state — the *Yell County Record* in Danville, which they had bought from David's parents in 1967, and the *Perry County Petit Jean County Headlight* in Perryville and the *Conway County Petit Jean County Headlight* in Morrilton, which they had purchased in 2000.

Mary Fisher became the editor of the *Post-Dispatch* and made several important changes in the publication,

See FISHER Page 2

Arkansas Publisher Weekly



David and Mary Fisher at the APA Convention in 2023.

including a policy of all local news and a lot of full-color photos. She enjoyed working on historic Front Street in Dardanelle in an office overlooking the Arkansas River.

She continued her editorship at Dardanelle until she died unexpectedly in 2023 shortly after attending an APA convention in Little Rock, a meeting that featured a breakfast honoring the association's past presidents that included both the Fishers.

David has continued as publisher of the four Fisher newspapers, a promise he made to his wife in the event of her death. "I'm going to try to do it as long as I can," he said at the time. "We talked about that — whichever one of us went first, that we would try to keep going."

Chambers Bank and I personally, want to congratulate David Fisher and the late Mary Fisher for being our Hometown Newspaper Editors for over 50 years.

The Arkansas Press Association honored David and Mary at their summer convention in Eureka Springs in June of this year.

Their son, David, accepted Mary's award and spoke at the awards ceremony on behalf of the Fisher newspaper family.

I asked David to find some pictures of he and Mary that showed some of the community and business things they were involved with for not only helping our community but for their newspaper work as well.

—Johnny Chambers, Chambers Bancshares CEO



Yell County Record editor David Fisher is shown with his son, David (Davy) at the Arkansas Press Association convention in June where he and his late wife, Mary, were recognized with the Golden 50 Service Award for publishing newspapers for over 50 years.



In 2010, former Representative Nathan George presented Mary with a plaque for chairing the Westark Area Boy Scout Council Camp Orr 50th Anniversary celebration. She worked with the Boy Scouts for over 40 years. Nathan is a bank board member.



In 1997, A. D. Morris was chamber president. Mary was presented an award, given by James Lee Witt (top right and the chamber speaker) from President Bill Clinton for organizing the chamber and serving as president for two years. FEMA Director Witt presented Mayor Chambers with a special award from President Clinton for his help with the chamber. Jim Loyd (far right setting) was Chamber Member of the Year.



Former Danville Mayor Johnny Chambers, who helped Mary reorganize the Danville Chamber of Commerce, presents Mary flowers at a chamber banquet as the first chamber president and banquet chairman in 1997. She chaired the chamber banquet for 23 years.



In 2003, chamber president P.T. Sanders presented Mary and David the Business of the Year award for the Yell County Record (established in 1898).



On Monday, October 30th, 2000, the Yell County Record caught fire on Main Street and destroyed much of its three buildings. The next day (Tuesday) Mary and David and staff were able to recreate the newspaper at their home. They are holding the front page of the November 1, 2000 newspaper.



Mary was president of the Arkansas Press Association in 2015 (and the only woman on the board) and brought the board of directors to Chamberlyne Country Club soon before she became president and then to the Mt. Magazine Lodge when she was president.. Host for the board at Chamberlyne was Johnny Chambers (standing far right).



Mary and David are shown outside of their new building in 2001, a year after their Yell County Record buildings burned on Main Street in Danville. The Record is still published in the same building.



In 2006, longtime bank employee Bood Keathley is assisting Mary in the Danville Chamber of Commerce banquet program she was chairing.



The groundbreaking for the new Mt. Magazine Lodge was held 25 years ago in 2001. Mary chaired the *Southgate to Mt. Magazine Committee* with a large following (nearly 50 members) to make sure the south side of the mountain was represented. They had their own Southgate T-Shirts. Shown with her at the groundbreaking were (l. to r.) — Kenny Jackson, Philip Alexander, Mary, former Rep. Lloyd George (a champion leader for this lodge and bank board member) and Rep. Jeff Gillespie.



ChambersBank

510 UNION STREET | 316 UNION STREET | 1-800-603-1226

Member FDIC

