Spiked! USU journalists create fitting award to honor ‘curmudgeon’ | Journalism

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LOGAN—A new award was created to honor Ted Pease, head of the Department of Journalism and Communication at Utah State University, who is stepping down from his post at the end of the academic year. The award is named for the long-time journalism educator, and will be given annually in recognition of individuals whose careers exemplify service to journalism.

“Officially, it’s the Ted Pease Award, but we’re informally calling it the Ted Pease Award for Curmudgeonly Service To Journalism,” assistant professor Matthew LaPlante said while presenting the award to Pease during the department’s annual awards banquet April 3.

“In years to come, we hope to give the award to those who don’t really give a damn what people think about them, so long as they’re doing what’s right on behalf of journalism and journalists.”

The award is sponsored by the newly formed Northern Utah Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, based at Utah State. The chapter’s first official act of business was establishing the award—a simple wood box bearing Pease’s name and signature, inside of which is a railroad spike.

LaPlante noted the importance of the spike as part of northern Utah’s regional heritage—the Golden Spike National Historic Site is about an hour to the west of USU’s campus—and an important metaphor for what journalists do.

“Journalists help bring things together,” he said. “People, ideas—even revolutions.”

Pease, who was unaware he would be receiving the award, said he was touched by the honor.

The Pease Rusty Spike Award

“It’s nice to know that even once I’m spiked I’ll be remembered,” he said, employing a newspaper term used when editors or publishers elect to kill story.

Pease, a veteran newsman, professor, photographer, fisherman and self-proclaimed “professor of interesting stuff” will return to the department as a part-time instructor after the department’s new chair, Thomas Terry, takes the reins in the fall. Pease has served as professor and department head since 1994.

Danielle Manley, a member of the SPJ chapter’s board of directors, called Pease “an outstanding journalist and exceptional professor. I feel blessed to have been in the department for his last couple years at USU.”
Paul Christiansen, another member of the chapter's board, said Pease is "rough around the edges and has a bit of an in-your-face attitude, sure. But he is that type of person because he knows the world is hard on journalists. How better to prepare students than by not cutting us any slack?"

The award was sponsored by the department's students and faculty, with additional support from Logan Regional Hospital. For more information, or to donate to the annual award, contact LaPlante at matthew.lapante@usu.edu.

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