

Journalists win top National

By CATHERINE CROCKER
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A newspaper columnist won the 1988 National Book Award for fiction Tuesday with a novel about a murder in Georgia, and another journalist captured the non-fiction prize with a book about Vietnam.

Peter Dexter, 45, a columnist for the Sacramento Bee and a frequent contributor to national magazines, won for "Paris Trout," about the murder of a 14-year-old black girl by a white man in a small Georgia town just after World War II.

Neil Sheehan, 52, who was United Press International's Vietnam bureau chief in 1962 and worked for the New York Times from 1964 to 1972, won for "A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam."

Sheehan's book examines the war through the eyes of one who

lived most of his adult life in the midst of it.

His book combines biography and history to tell the story of Lt. Col. John Paul Vann, a troubled but dedicated career officer who spoke out against the brutality and ineffectiveness of the early U.S. strategy in Vietnam.

Dexter said his novel's success would not cause him to give up his column.

"I'm not someone to hole up in the woods and produce a novel every two years," he said.

In all, 10 authors were nominated for the 1988 National Book Awards.

Don DeLillo, who won in 1985 for "White Noise," was nominated for "Libra," a novel based on the life of Lee Harvey Oswald and the events that led to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

J.F. Powers, who won in 1963 for his novel "Morte D'Urban," was nominated in the fiction category with his latest book,

"Wheat That Springeth Green," about a middle-aged priest who is disappointed when a new curate is assigned to his parish.

Peter Gay, who won in 1967 for "The Enlightenment: An Interpretation," was again nominated in the non-fiction category for his biography, "Freud: A Life for Our Time."

Other nominees in the fiction category were:

■ Mary McGarry Morris, whose first novel, "Vanished," is about a couple who kidnap a toddler and embark on a five-year flight from justice.

■ Anne Tyler, whose novel "Breathing Lessons" concerns a long-married couple and the detours they take on the way to the funeral of an old friend.

The other nominees for non-fiction were:

■ "Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877," by Eric Foner.

■ "Nora," by Brenda Maddox, a biography of James Joyce's life-

Book Awards honors

long companion and muse.
■ "Jefferson and Monticello,"
Jack McLaughlin's chronicle of

the life of Thomas Jefferson as
seen through the prism of his love
for his rural homestead.