

Sheppard Ruling Irks Editors

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PORTLAND, Ore., June 12 (AP) — The president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors said today the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Dr. Sam Sheppard case may lead the courts to "hide from public knowledge virtually all of the facts of law enforcement and the administration of justice."

Robert C. Notson, executive editor of the Portland Oregonian, said the decision invalidating the verdict of second-degree murder against Sheppard supplies useful guidelines to trial courts and the press.

"But the court did not stop there," Notson said.

In an article for the Oregonian's Sunday editions, Notson wrote that the court seized upon an extreme case and generalized.

A court statement that "unfair and prejudicial news comment on pending trials has become increasingly prevalent" is not true, Notson said.

"American newspapers have been increasingly circumspect in the handling of news of criminal matters, and any fair analysis of their columns over the years should demonstrate that this is true," Notson said. "The clear reason the number of cases has increased is not that the practices of newspapers had become increasingly bad, but that the courts had shown an increasing disposition to entertain appeals based on alleged adverse publicity."

"There is no body of evidence anywhere to support the claim that publication of sober and factual pretrial information has resulted in innocent men being convicted," he said.