

Juror Says Members Wanted Sheehan to Share Times Prize

By JOSEPH LELYVELD

A member of the jury that voted to award a Pulitzer Prize to The New York Times for publishing the Pentagon papers said yesterday that the jury had wanted the prize to be shared by Neil Sheehan, The Times reporter who obtained the documents.

The juror, Stuart Awbrey of the Hutchinson (Kan.) News, said the recommendation by the five-member panel for a shared award in the public service category had been unanimous. He added that he thought Mr. Sheehan had gotten "a bum deal" from the advisory board on the Pulitzer Prizes, which decided to give the award to the newspaper alone.

Originally, The Times had nominated Mr. Sheehan for a Pulitzer Prize in both the national and international reporting categories. The newspaper nominated itself in the Public Service category after becoming aware that the Pentagon papers would also be considered under that category.

According to Alexander Bodi, editor of The Palo Alto Times of Palo Alto, Calif., the jury considering the award for national reporting had discussed the nomination of Mr. Sheehan informally and seemed to feel that it would be more appropriate for the newspaper to receive the award because, as he put it, "It was a publishing decision."

Since 1918, when the first Public Service award was won by The New York Times, no individual has been cited in that category. The statement of qualifications for the award says that it should recognize "a distinguished example of meritorious public service by a newspaper."

Mr. Awbrey said that this year's panel was aware that its recommendation stretched those guidelines. With the recommendation, he said, it forwarded a letter asking that the guidelines be rewritten "to eliminate the blur between what's public service and what's reporting."

Sheehan Is Cited

Here is the text of the recommendation submitted by the jury on the Public Service award to the Advisory Board:

"A gold medal is recommended for The New York Times and Neil Sheehan for the remarkable journalistic feat which has come to be known as the Pentagon papers.

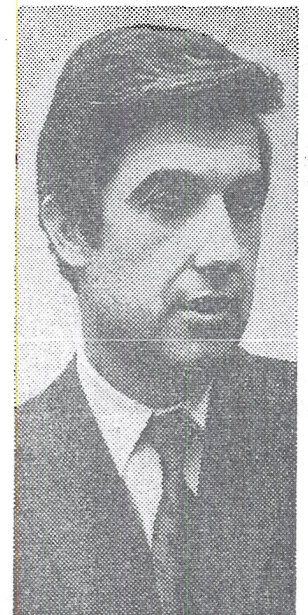
"The Times has well earned the top award for public service by the exceptional marshaling of its resources towards twin goals — first, to let the

people know the workings of their Government in matters of highest concern to all citizens; and second, to defend the people's right to know in the face of the most serious threat to press freedom during nominal peacetime in this country.

"Neil Sheehan's role in this outstanding performance cannot be separated from that of The Times. His work was a combination of investigative reporting, analysis, research and writing — all of which added up to a distinctly meritorious public service, not only for readers of The Times but also for an entire nation.

"It is seldom that such a significant episode surfaces in so dramatic a fashion with the use of basic journalistic skills. It is seldom that publishers are called on to make such decisive judgments as those which led to the publication of the Pentagon papers. It is fortuitous that the Pulitzer Prize can recognize the accomplishments of both the newspaper and of a persistent, courageous reporter and thus can reaffirm to the American people that the press continues its devotion to their right to know, a basic bulwark of our democratic society."

A member of the Advisory Board said there were disagreements among its members over the editorial handling of the Pentagon papers by The Times. "But the members felt that one thing was beyond dispute," he said, "and that was that The Times had performed a great service by asserting and maintaining the right of publication without prior restraint."



The New York Times
Neil Sheehan