National Portrait Gallery Announces
2004 Paul Peck Presidential Award Winners
Annual awards honor presidential service and portrayal

George Elsey, a presidential advisor to three presidents, and Brian Lamb, founder of C-SPAN, have been named the 2004 recipients of the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery’s 2004 Paul Peck Presidential Awards. The annual awards honor individual excellence in presidential service and portrayal. Elsey won the award for service to a president, and Lamb for portrayal of the presidency. The winners will receive $25,000 and a specially designed Smithsonian medal at a dinner on Oct. 28.

The Paul Peck Presidential Awards were founded in 2002 and are the only awards in the United States to celebrate achievement in support of the presidency. They are named after Paul Peck, the National Portrait Gallery’s chief individual donor, and are one of several presidential initiatives undertaken by the gallery.

“The National Portrait Gallery, which displays the great tradition of the American Presidency, has created the Paul Peck Presidential Awards to increase the public's knowledge of this extraordinary office,” said Marc Pachter, director of the Portrait Gallery. “I congratulate our winners for their commitment to serving that office and increasing America's understanding of its importance to us and to the world.”

Award for Service

The award for service to a president honors members of the president’s executive staff, members of the cabinet, or members of Congress. Officials from the current administration are not eligible.

George McKee Elsey, 88, served Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Johnson during the tumultuous years between 1942 and 1953 and in the late 1960s. Elsey, as a Naval officer, was at the heart of Roosevelt’s new and secret map room during the start of America’s involvement in World War II. Since nothing was allowed into the room to record its proceedings--no cameras, diaries or recordings--Elsey’s memory is the only record historians have of what went on in the
room. During Harry Truman’s presidency, Elsey went on to become one of the president’s most valuable aides through his contributions to the administration’s foreign and defense policies. The intelligence summaries that Elsey wrote while he was in the White House intelligence and communications center during World War II played a large role in Truman’s preparation for the conduct of foreign affairs. Elsey’s writing skills and strong advocacy of presidential power led to his crafting of the 1947 State of the Union address that set forth the Truman Doctrine and provided the notes for each of Truman’s informal “railroad train” platform talks on the famous “Whistle Stop Campaign.” Elsey continues to share his experience with the public through oral histories and television documentaries, including CNN’s recent series, “The Cold War.”

“I have always felt that the privilege of serving on the personal staffs of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman was in itself sufficient honor,” said Elsey. “Therefore, it comes as a special surprise to receive the National Portrait Gallery’s Paul Peck Presidential Award. For it, I am humbly grateful.”

**Award for Portrayal**

The award for portrayal of a president is given to an individual who has depicted the presidency in either a visual or literary form. This winner could be a portrait artist in any medium, a journalist, a presidential biographer or a scholar.

Brian Lamb has led C-SPAN, the nation’s eighth largest cable network, since the cable industry launched it 25 years ago in 1979. The coverage that Brian Lamb and C-SPAN provide during a presidential election year gives viewers unique insight into the candidates. C-SPAN’s 20th anniversary television series, “The American Presidents,” covered 41 presidents in 41 weeks, providing viewers with an in-depth look at the lives, families and administrations of each.

Lamb, a native of Lafayette, Ind., became fascinated with communication at a young age. He followed this passion through college and the Navy to a job in the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy at a time when a national strategy was being implemented for communications satellites. In 1974, he began publishing a newsletter called “The Media Report,” and he covered telecommunications issues as Washington bureau chief for Cablevision Magazine. It was from this position that Lamb learned that Congress was looking to televise its proceedings and simultaneously the cable industry was looking for programming to deliver to its customers by satellite. Brian Lamb brought these two ideas together and launched C-SPAN on March 19, 1979 with its first televised House of Representatives debate.
“I accept this award on behalf of my entire team at C-SPAN, which worked so diligently on the American Presidents series,” said Lamb. “It was such an enjoyable and rewarding project for all of us. We feel honored that the Smithsonian and Paul Peck are paying us such a terrific tribute.”

**The Paul Peck Fund for Presidential Studies**

The National Portrait Gallery houses the nation’s only official portrait collection of all 43 presidents, other than the collection at the White House. The Portrait Gallery has explored and celebrated the presidency in public programs, research, exhibitions and publications, while amassing a collection of more than 1,200 presidential likenesses.

The Paul Peck Fund for Presidential Studies was created in 2000 when Peck, a former federal employee with the U.S. Customs Service and a successful investor, donated $2 million to enhance the gallery’s presidential programs. The Fund has provided resources for engaging panels about topics related to the presidency. This fall, a series of panel discussions were held at the University of Miami including topics such as “9/11 and the Presidential Election,” “White House Photographers” and “Polls & Predictions.”

The Fund has also provided resources such as publications and educational materials accompanying the museum’s popular “Portraits of the Presidents” traveling exhibition.

Education plays an important role in the awards. The winners will participate in two programs with high school students affiliated with the Junior Statesman of America and the Close Up Foundation. They will be interviewed at two Town Hall sessions on Friday, Oct. 29 at the Dillon S. Ripley Center in the Quad Lecture Hall. George Elsey’s program is at 2:30 p.m. and Brian Lamb’s is at 3:30 p.m. Both are open to the public.

“Freedom is life, and freedom is rooted in democracy,” Peck said. “These presidential awards were created to encourage Americans to be more committed to their civic engagement and reasoned voting.”

**The Nominating Process**

The nominating committee consists of 10 organizations that are devoted to the study of the American political system and are not associated institutionally or ideologically with any political party. Nominating institutions for this year’s award are The American Historical Association, The American Political Science Association, The American Society of Portrait Artists, The Center for the Study of the Presidency, The Close Up Foundation, The Junior

A selection committee chooses the winners each year. Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and George H. W. Bush are honorary co-chairmen of the committee, and members of the 2004 committee include former Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-Wyo.); best-selling author and Harvard professor David Gergen; former vice-presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro; ABC News political commentator Cokie Roberts; former White House curator Betty Monkman; historian and presidential scholar and author, Professor Emeritus Robert Remini; Washington Post columnist and contributing editor for Newsweek Robert Samuelson; and professor Roger Wilkins of George Mason University, who was formerly on The Washington Post editorial page staff and shared the 1972 Pulitzer for Watergate coverage with Woodward, Bernstein and Herblock.

**Background**

The National Portrait Gallery will reopen, after extensive renovation, in its magnificently refurbished space on July 4, 2006. It is a landmark destination for people interested in the fascinating stories of the Americans who have shaped our country and our culture. The only museum of its kind in the United States to combine American history, biography and art, the National Portrait Gallery was established by an Act of Congress in 1962 and opened its doors to the public in 1968. Today the museum’s collection includes over 18,600 portrayals of famous Americans in painting, sculpture, photography and drawings.

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