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## Film Critic Gire to be Honored as EIU Journalism Alumnus of the Year

Oct-17-2011

Charleston native Dann Gire, longtime film critic for the Daily Herald in Arlington Heights, will be honored Friday, Oct. 21, as the 2011 Journalism Department Alumnus of the Year.

"Dann has established himself as one of the premier journalists in the Midwest and has been a great supporter of our program over the years," said department chair James Tidwell. "Anytime we call on him to speak at an event on campus or in other parts of the state, Dann always says 'yes.' He's a heck of a speaker and a great film critic."

Gire is a featured speaker each year at the Embarras Valley Film Festival sponsored by EIU.

Gire will be honored at a noon luncheon Friday, Oct. 21. Tidwell said Gire also will be a guest speaker in several journalism classes the day before.

Tidwell noted that although Gire graduated from EIU before a journalism major was established in 1975, "We've always thought of him as one of our own" because of his extensive experience with the school's student newspaper, The Daily Eastern News. He served as sports editor, photography editor and co-editor-in-chief of the DEN.

A recipient of the alumni award must be a graduate of EIU with a journalism major or with significant student media experience during his or her collegiate days, according to Tidwell.

Gire earned a bachelor's degree in speech communication with a journalism minor in 1974 and earned a master's degree in speech communication in December 1975.



Dann Gire

Madeleine Doubek, executive editor of the Daily Herald and a 1985 EIU journalism graduate, said Gire, despite being a "bigwig" movie critic, began filling in on a general assignment weekend rotation a few years ago when the paper started facing staffing challenges.

"He covers breaking news and crime with gusto," she said. "Not many bigwigs would do the same. He's a gem I've been honored to know."

Retired journalism professor John David Reed said Gire was one of the first students he met when he came to Eastern in August 1972 as adviser to the Eastern News.

"He was a scrawny, wiry - and wired - shooter (photographer)," Reed said. "And he learned all the great newspaper photographer habits - super work ethic, ceaseless nose for news, creativity in pursuit of same, absolute dedication to the task, perfect understanding of the most basic rule of newsgathering: You have to be there. Those qualities have served him well during a commendable career as a journalist, of course."

Reed said he was not surprised that Gire would distinguish himself as an outstanding writer and eminent critic of film.

"I watched him bug his editors about running his movie reviews, immerse himself in the art through such venues as the Eastern Film Society," Reed said. "And he excelled, right there in The Daily Eastern News."

After graduating from Eastern with bachelor's and master's degrees in speech communication, Gire joined the Daily Herald in 1975. There, he has held positions of government reporter, crime reporter, metro reporter (assigned to the Cook County Criminal Courts), and film critic on the features staff.

He has served as the newspaper's film critic for 33 years. He's also a contributing critic for "Ebert Presents at the Movies" on PBS.

In addition to his full-time work as a journalist, Gire teaches journalism at Aurora College. He previously taught journalism and advised the student newspaper at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine.

"What pleases me most about Dann is his dedication through his adjunct teaching to the concept of service to others, of passing it forward, that lies at the heart of journalism," Reed said. "As this alumni award attests, Dann has earned a hearty KUDOS from all of us who care about the profession."

Gire has won the Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism in Arts Criticism seven times. He has also won awards from the Association of Sunday and Feature Editors, The Associated Press, and other journalism organizations.

He is the president and a founding director of the Chicago Film Critics Association, a nonprofit organization with charitable and educational goals. He wrote the organization's ethics code and founded the group's Zappa Committee charged with monitoring First Amendment violations against filmmakers and recommending responses to those violations.

Gire worked as film critic at Chicago's Fox TV news from 1988 to 1991, and for four weeks this summer contributed film critiques for CBS Chicago's "Monsters and Money in the Morning" TV news program.

He is married to Peggy (Burke) Gire, a longtime music teacher in Schaumburg District 54. They have two daughters. Both Gires are graduates of Charleston High School. Dann is the son of Charleston residents Jim and Donna Gire. Peggy's parents, Tom and Elaine Burke, are deceased. Tom Burke was a longtime Coles County judge.