



NEWS RELEASE

News Bureau • Schofield Hall 201 • Eau Claire, WI 54702

phone: 715-836-4741

fax: 715-836-2900

Web: www.uwec.edu

e-mail: newsbur@uwec.edu

Helen Thomas to speak at April 29 Devroy Forum

RELEASED: Feb. 24, 2010

EAU CLAIRE — Helen Thomas, the longtime "dean" of White House reporters who has tenaciously covered every president from Kennedy to Obama and is the author of six books, will be the featured speaker April 29 for this year's Ann Devroy Memorial Forum at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Thomas, who was a White House reporter for United Press International from 1961 to 2000 and has been a columnist for Hearst Newspapers for the past 10 years, will share her insights about national and international affairs at the Devroy Forum. Thomas was the first woman to be elected an officer of the National Press Club, the White House Correspondents Association and the Gridiron Club. She was the only female reporter to accompany President Richard Nixon on his 1972 breakthrough diplomatic mission to China, and for nearly 40 years her seniority allowed her to open every presidential press conference with the first question and close it with, "Thank you, Mr. President."

The UW-Eau Claire Foundation and department of communication and journalism host the Devroy Forum, which will start at 7 p.m. in the university's Schofield Auditorium. It is open to the public, free of charge, but because seating is limited, each attendee must make a reservation at www.uwec.edu/mdorsher/HelenThomas or call the communication and journalism department at 715-836-2528.

Interviewing Thomas on stage will be Mark Matthews, a former Baltimore Sun foreign correspondent, the author of a recent book on the Middle East and the widower of Ann Devroy. Devroy, a former Spectator student newspaper staffer and 1970 journalism graduate of UW-Eau Claire, went on to work alongside Helen Thomas as a White House reporter for Gannett News Service and, later, The Washington Post. After Devroy died of cancer in 1997 at age 49, The Post established the annual journalism forum in her name, at her alma mater.

"Helen Thomas eagerly agreed to come to UW-Eau Claire as soon as I told her the forum was in honor of her colleague Ann Devroy," said Mike Dorsher, an associate professor of

journalism who worked briefly with Thomas at UPI in the 1980s and with Devroy at washingtonpost.com in the 1990s. "I agree with those who say Ann Devroy was the best White House reporter of her time — and Helen Thomas is the best of all time. Neither of them ever let a president dodge their tough questions, whether he was a Democrat or a Republican. "

Thomas says she has great hope for Obama, who shares her Aug. 4 birthday, but she has been a harsh critic of his sidestepping of the press — and the press's initial obsequiousness toward him.

"Thank God for Helen Thomas," Ray McGovern wrote on the truthout blog last week. "(She was) the only person to show any courage at the White House press briefing after President Barack Obama gave a flaccid account of the intelligence screw-up that almost downed an airliner on Christmas Day."

Thomas has agreed to meet with journalism students when she arrives at UW-Eau Claire the afternoon of April 29. Then she will have a short question-and-answer session with invited students, faculty and local journalists. After her on-stage interview with Matthews, she will also take questions from the public and then autograph copies of her books, which will be there for sale.

Reviewing Thomas' latest book, "Listen Up, Mr. President," which came out last October, Cheryl Pruett of the Detroit Examiner wrote, "In less than 200 pages, Helen Thomas, along with co-author Craig Crawford, have nailed it. The book is part history lesson, part sound advice and all a pleasure to read. ... It addresses politicians and voters, giving them plenty to consider when it comes to the presidency and the U.S. Constitution."

More information is available about Thomas, her extraordinary career and all of her books on her Web site, helenthomas.org. Also, a complete history of the Ann Devroy Memorial Forum is available at www.uwec.edu/cj/Devroy.

This year's Devroy Forum will be the 13th, and Thomas joins a line of distinguished Devroy speakers that includes Bob Woodward and David Broder of The Washington Post and Andrea Mitchell of NBC News. In another highlight of each year's forum, a top UW-Eau Claire journalism student is awarded the Devroy Scholarship, which includes a January residency in Washington at The Post and a paid summer internship at one of Wisconsin's three largest newspapers.

"At a time when much of the news industry is reeling, the Devroy Forum celebrates the best of journalism's past and the promise of its future," said Dr. Mary Hoffman, chair of UW-Eau Claire's department of communication and journalism. "Who better to recall and carry Ann Devroy's legacy to our students today than Helen Thomas?"

-30-

MD/JP/DW

UW-Eau Claire News Online

Find UW-Eau Claire news online at www.uwec.edu/news. You'll find recent and archived news releases, links to other campus news, upcoming events, a news tips submission form, news media resources and more.