

# Seymour Hersh Honored for Integrity

An organization led by former U.S. intelligence officials has selected legendary journalist Seymour Hersh to be the recipient of an annual award for integrity and truth-telling, named for the late CIA analyst Sam Adams.

By Ray McGovern.

Journalist Seymour Hersh is to be honored with this year's Sam Adams Award for Integrity to be presented to him at the Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence (SAAII) award ceremony on the evening of Sept. 22 at American University.

Sam Adams Associates, who selected Hersh last month from a truly impressive roster of truth-tellers, are enthusiastic at the prospect of Sy joining the ranks of the 15 earlier awardees – from Coleen Rowley (2002) to John Kiriakou (2016). Included among those in between are other patriots: like Katharine Gun, U.K. Ambassador Craig Murray, Col. Larry Wilkerson, Julian Assange, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Fingar, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and Bill Binney. [To learn more about previous honorees, as well as other material on whistleblowing, go to [samadamsaward.ch](http://samadamsaward.ch).]

SAAII confers its annual award on a member of the intelligence profession or related field who exemplifies the courage, persistence and devotion to truth of Sam Adams, a CIA analyst on Vietnam who exposed the lies of the generals in Saigon and was then silenced. Later – but too late – Sam realized he should have gone public. (Yes, during the 1960s and 1970s, more of the U.S. media was able to put the national interest first and was open to whistleblowers.)

Sam, who was a fourth cousin seven times removed of President John Adams, died prematurely at age 55, nagged by the thought that had he not let himself be diddled by the system, thousands of lives might have been saved in Indochina. His story is told in *War of Numbers*, published posthumously. Several of Sam's former colleagues are included in SA AII, as well as others who hold up the experience he underwent as a lesson for those who now know that, if they wish to succeed in getting the truth out, "going thru channels" normally is not only quixotic but also dangerous.

In 1967, Sam discovered that there were more than a half-million Vietnamese Communists under arms in South Vietnam – roughly twice the number that the U.S. command in Saigon would admit to, lest the outside world learn that American generals' claims of "progress" were bogus. Commanding general William Westmoreland had put an artificial limit on the number that Army intelligence

was allowed to carry on its books.

On Aug. 22, 1967, Westmoreland's deputy, Gen. Creighton Abrams, specifically warned the Johnson administration back in Washington that the press would have a field day if Adam's numbers were released, and that this would weaken the war effort. In a *SECRET/EYES ONLY* cable from Saigon, Abrams wrote: "We have been projecting an image of success over recent months," and cautioned that if the higher figures became public, "all available caveats and explanations will not prevent the press from drawing an erroneous and gloomy conclusion."

The Communist countrywide offensive during Tet (January/February 1968) made it painfully clear that the generals had been lying and that Sam Adams's higher figures were correct. A few weeks after Tet, Daniel Ellsberg rose to the occasion and leaked the truth. Dan had learned that Westmoreland was asking for 206,000 more troops to widen the war into Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam – right up to the border with China, and perhaps beyond.

After the 206,000 request was leaked by someone else to the *New York Times*, Ellsberg leaked Sam Adams' information on actual enemy strength. Dan had come to the view that leaking truth about a deceitful war would be "a patriotic and constructive act." It was his first unauthorized disclosure, and it was effective. On March 19, 1968, the *Times* published a stinging story based on Adams's figures.

On March 25, President Johnson complained to a small gathering, "The leaks to the *New York Times* hurt us. ... We have no support for the war. This is caused by the 206,000 troop request [by Westmoreland] and the leaks. ... I would have given Westy the 206,000 men." On March 31, 1968, Johnson introduced a bombing pause, opted for negotiations, and announced that he would not run for another term in November.

### **Enter Sy Hersh**

Sy Hersh, who was already famous for bringing the My Lai massacre story to global attention in 1969, found Sam Adams and pursued this other story of Vietnam deception. Thus, there is poetic justice in Sy Hersh receiving this award named for Adams, since it was he who first reported (in the *New York Times* on Feb. 26, 1973) on Sam's David vs. Goliath struggle against a military/political/intelligence establishment eager to cover up the politically driven undercounting of Communist fighters in South Vietnam.

In an article on Feb. 26, 1973, Hersh duly quoted Army officials who were still disparaging Sam's courageous pursuit of the truth. But the quote that Sy chose to conclude the article reflects his well honed smell for the truth.

He wrote, "'The trouble with Sam is that he has always been right,' one former colleague remarked. 'He always told the truth and never cared whose toes he stepped on.'"

Sy Hersh has no doubt worn out several pairs of shoes stepping on the toes of a well-heeled Establishment. The current response from the mainstream media to Hersh's latest exposés that challenge the lies and propaganda of Official Washington is to say: "We'll show you, Hersh. Just you try to get published anywhere in the English-speaking world."

Sy tried in vain to find an American or British outlet that would publish his most recent report on President Donald Trump's lie that a Syrian aircraft carried out a "chemical weapons attack" in Syria's Idlib Province on April 4. This disclosure of a deception by the new President would have been a big deal, at least by the journalistic standards of the past, since Trump openly attacked Syria with 59 cruise missiles on April 6 in ostensible "retaliation."

Sy ended up having to go to the mainstream German newspaper *Die Welt* to get the results of his investigation published. [See [here](#) and [here](#).]

As for the New York Times – the so-called "paper of record" – and its proud tradition of publishing "all the news that's fit to print," its hallowed pages have made no mention of Pulitzer Prize-winning Sy Hersh's article on the chemical incident in Syria on April 4. The slogan should be changed to "all the news that fits neatly into the government narrative we print." Many Sam Adams Associates have also been active with Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity and have faced similar ostracism from the mainstream media for almost 15 years.

### **Until He Was Silenced**

Besides revealing the My Lai massacre in 1969, Hersh exposed illegal CIA domestic operations against the antiwar movement in 1974. More recently, in 2004, he reported on the torture and other abuses at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, and he exposed the Obama administration's lies used to justify a bloody proxy war in Syria. None of this, however has left him cynical or dulled his conscience.

Sy told *Die Welt* that he still gets upset with government lying and at the reluctance of the media to hold governments accountable. Summing up lessons from Trump's reaction to the April 4 chemical event in Syria, Sy said this: "We have a President in America today who lies repeatedly ... but he must learn that he cannot lie about intelligence relied upon before authorizing an act of war. There are some in the Trump administration who understand this, which is why I learned the information I did."

The common challenge we all face is getting such information into media outlets that Americans regularly access. Encouragement comes from Sy Hersh's example of grit, integrity and stick-to-itiveness, which have already had a powerful influence on Sam Adams Associates. In sum, this year's awardee is a wonderfully good fit.

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