

Winter 2021 Vol. 83, No.2

Agenda



Quarterly Newsletter of the
National Federation of Press Women

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*NFPW bids farewell to
Charlotte Schexnayder*



President's Message: Look to the Future

**By Gwen Larson
NFPW President**

Although I spent more than half of my career working at a daily newspaper, I still remember my early days on a monthly magazine and the crazy deadlines. We planned summer articles like 4th of July barbecue recipes while bundled up against the snow and ice of December and longing for warm comfort food and soups!

This column for Agenda feels similar. I'm writing this in early December, as the crazy year that is 2020 begins to slowly draw to a close. You will read this, however, in 2021 during the first month of a new year. I tend to be an optimist, which is an attitude I have somewhat maintained during 2020.

With that said, I am very hopeful for 2021. With plans being developed to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to those who want to take them, I feel as if I am looking down that very long tunnel of 2020 and finally seeing a spot of light. I look forward to even more good news as the year progresses.

Despite my optimism, I am well aware of the disappointments that came with the pandemic of 2020. Greater than "disappointment" is knowing that we have lost friends and loved ones to this ravaging disease. My heart breaks for every story I read or news I receive about people I know and how their lives have been affected.

I've missed my travel this year — to the NFPW conference in Arkansas as well as the Delaware state conference plus another professional development

opportunity in New Orleans. I didn't realize how much I enjoyed the travel, spending time with friends and colleagues and learning from each other.

Yet, I am very proud of the steps that NFPW took in 2020 to embrace technology and move toward completing a long-talked-about goal — offering more professional development for our members than a single in-person conference.

Back in June, it felt as if we'd jumped into the deep end when we learned how to convert the spirit and energy of our communications contest awards and Communicator of Achievement celebration to the virtual space. Then we watched as affiliates picked up the baton and moved to virtual meetings and conferences — all while inviting NFPW members from other affiliates to join them.

I think back to what it must have been like in 1937 when our founders worked to create this new organization. They would have used letters as communication, with perhaps phone calls (at least when local). They traveled to other states to spread the message of NFPW and help like-minded women create their own affiliates.

It is my hope that we NFPW members will capture that spirit of our founders while using the best of today's communication technologies to spread our message, share our professional talents and lift up each other.

Here's to 2021 and the adventure that awaits!

On the Cover:

Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder of Little Rock, Arkansas, died Friday, Dec. 11, 2020, just two weeks shy of her 97th birthday. Schexnayder served as Arkansas affiliate president in 1955, received the National Communicator of Achievement Award in 1970 and served as president of NFPW in 1977. NFPW members and friends remember Charlotte in this issue of Agenda, starting on page 5.



Social media gone wild

By Angela Smith
NFPW FAN Co-Chair

Remember those "Girls Gone Wild" commercials of the past? Well, today it seems social media is deserving of the "Gone Wild" tag.

The fringe elements of society have come out in full force, and racists, misogynists, xenophobes and hate-mongers are having a field day in what they consider a safe haven to spew their versions of reality and twisted ideologies.

So how does social media measure up to First Amendment standards when it comes to free speech? What's protected and what's not?

First, one must understand the First Amendment protects individuals from government censorship. Social media platforms are private companies and have complete discretion over what their users can post or not post on their sites.

The Freedom Forum Institute, an excellent source of information on this subject, lists four broad categories



regarding types of speech and how the First Amendment addresses them:

Hate: Speech that is offensive or that attacks people on basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, disease or other traits.

Unless the speech incites or is likely to incite criminal action, hate speech is protected by the First Amendment.

Obscenity: This one is harder to define but refers to content that offends prevalent morality.

Unless the content is deemed "obscene," depending on whether it is considered to have literary, artistic, political or scientific value, based on contemporary community standards, pornography is protected from government censorship.

Misinformation: This covers the gamut of whatever is considered false or inaccurate. Examples are false rumors, insults, pranks, hoaxes and propaganda, aka fake news.

(Continued on page 4)

Sunshine Week focuses on need for open government

By Marsha Shuler
NFPW FAN Co-Chair

Sunshine Week is just around the corner, and it is as important as ever that we bring attention to and celebrate the role "Freedom of Information" plays in our country.

Sunshine Week has been observed nationally in mid-March since 2005 to highlight that "government functions best when it operates in the open." It brings attention to the importance of government transparency in citizens' lives.

The weeklong observance coincides with the birthday of James Madison, who is known as the father of the U.S. Constitution. Madison, who became the fourth U.S. president, was the chief author of the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment. It was Madison who said "the advancement and diffusion of

knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty."

And so it is during Sunshine Week that media organizations, civic groups, libraries, schools and others stress the importance of open government in our democracy—why it is important to fight exemptions from public records laws and to work toward making more records available and more timely.

The National Federation of Press Women encourages its affiliates and individual members to participate in whatever way they can, whether it be sponsoring a seminar or forum, writing letters to the editor or an opinion column or a blog post or through other means.

Please share your experiences and results in the next issue of Agenda. Deadline for the March issue is Feb. 10, 2021.

Social media . . .

(Continued from page 3)

Once again, the First Amendment protects false statements of fact but allows suits of defamation from those who feel such information has damaged their reputations.

Harassment: Speech that degrades or humiliates someone. This does not include threats of violence, banned by all platforms.

A true threat is not protected by the First Amend-

ment—that is, a serious expression of intent to commit an act of unlawful violence.

This basic primer makes it clear the First Amendment offers protection more than not to forms of expression many of us might find offensive or repugnant.

Keep that in mind next time you check in to Facebook, Twitter, TikTok or Parler for your daily fix of news—fact or fake.

It's still not too late to renew membership

NFPW membership follows the calendar year, running from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, but renewals will still be accepted if you didn't make the year-end deadline.

- Our new system sends out reminders automatically. The final reminder was sent out Dec. 28.
- The reminders should only go out to those who have not renewed. If you receive a reminder and have paid, just send us an email.
- If you would like an invoice mailed to you, notify headquarters by email at info@nfpw.org.

The easiest way to renew is online. Follow these instructions:

1. Go to www.nfpw.org.
2. Click on "Member Login" on the right side of the page.
3. Login. If you forgot your password, choose "Reset Password."
4. Click on "Renew Your Membership for 2021" under Quick Links on the right side.
5. This gives you the option of changing or choosing more than one affiliate or paying POPPS dues, if applicable.

Everything can be fixed! If there is an error or a mistake made, just let us know and we will fix it. Contact info@nfpw.org with any questions.

Membership in NFPW has many benefits. As a member, you:

- Support the First Amendment.
- Invest in your career.
- Develop your professional skills.
- Receive recognition for your work.

- Learn from your peers.
- Nurture the next generation of communicators.
- Network with communicators from throughout the country.

In addition, you can take advantage of:

- Monthly E-Letter — Stay abreast of trends in communication fields, First Amendment issues and affiliate activities.
- Quarterly Agenda — With more depth than the monthly e-letters, Agenda focuses on individual members and NFPW initiatives.
- Professional Development — Hear speakers at the top of their fields and network with peers from across the nation at NFPW's annual conference. State affiliates also offer conferences, local meetings and professional development seminars throughout the year.
- Competitions and Recognition — Win accolades for your work at the state and national level in our annual Communications Contest. Compete for Communicator of Achievement, our top honor bestowed for professional and civic contributions.
- Mentor the young communicators through our High School Communications Contest.
- Discounted Libel Insurance — Feel more secure with libel policy at a discounted rate for **premium** members. The plan covers legal defense costs, damages and protection from lawsuits. It's the ideal cost-effective solution for freelancers and those writing independently.
- First Amendment Network — Learn about threats to press freedom and join others to rally for change.

Plan to enter 2021 NFPW communications contest

By Teri Ehresman
NFPW Contest Chair

The holiday season and end of the year are a great time to reflect back on 2020 to acknowledge your accomplishments and challenges as you set goals for 2021.

One great way to recognize your efforts and hard work is to enter them in the 2021 NFPW professional communications contest. The contest recognizes outstanding communications efforts and offers constructive feedback from professional communicators on ways to strengthen or improve your entries.

NFPW is again using the software program, Open-Water, for both the professional and high school contest. The contest team believes the program is much easier to use and submit entries.

Work published or broadcast between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2020, is eligible for the 2021 contest. Here is the link to enter the contest: <https://www.nfpw.org/2021-professional-contest>

If you entered the contest last year, your password remains the same. If you did not enter the contest, you

will need to enter an email address and create your own password to access the system.

The NFPW communications contest is a two-tiered competition. Entrants first compete at the state level. First-place winners at the state level are eligible to move on to the NFPW contest.

State-level winners are recognized by their state NFPW affiliates. National-level winners are recognized at the national conference and will have their work featured on the NFPW webpage and shared across NFPW social media outlets.

Enter by noon in your time zone on Jan. 27, 2021, to save \$25 in a one-time additional entry fee for the professional contest. The final deadline is Feb. 3, 2021, for books and Feb. 10, 2021, for all other entries. The entry deadline is noon in the entrant's time zone on the deadline day.

Remember, you can't win if you don't enter!

For a complete list of entry categories and instructions, go to [Professional Contest \(nfpw.org\)](https://www.nfpw.org/professional-contest)

Call for candidates . . .

Yes, you can become an NFPW officer

. . . Here's how!

NFPW is looking for dedicated, enthusiastic members willing to help lead a re-energized national organization into the future.

During the June 2021 conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, new officers will be elected at the business meeting and charged with guiding NFPW for the next two years. The officer positions are president, vice president, secretary and treasurer.

To be eligible to run for office, candidates must be NFPW members, have the endorsement of their state affiliate and be able to fulfill the responsibilities of the office sought.

For more information and a digital application form, go to <https://nfpw.memberclicks.net/2021-call-for-candidates>

For more information about the responsibilities of

each office, go to the NFPW website, click the "About" button, then select Bylaws. The responsibilities are contained in Articles V and VI.

The deadline to submit a nomination is Feb. 1, 2021. The submission process has been streamlined and can now be completed electronically. There is also information available to submit forms via mail, if needed.

If you have any questions about serving as an officer, you can contact any member of the nominating committee:

- Meg Hunt (SC) at mhunt21@msn.com;
- Lori Potter (NE) at potterspix@gmail.com;
- Helen Plotkin (AR) at hplotkin@outlook.com;
- Amy Geiszler-Jones at algj64@sbcglobal.net; or
- Angela Smith (TX) at ASmith1411@aol.com.

Please consider sharing your talents and ideas with NFPW by agreeing to run for office.

Trail-blazing NFPW president served as legislator, publisher, church founder

Courtesy of

Arkansas Press Women website

Politics fascinated Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder her entire life. Writing in her memoir, "Salty Old Editor," Schexnayder remembered her grandfather buying a radio to listen to presidential candidate Al Smith's campaign speech.

The written word also fascinated her. A seventh-grade project on handwriting a newspaper "forever marked" her as a newswoman, she wrote in her 2012 book about her life, "Salty Old Editor."

Schexnayder, of Little Rock and formerly of Dumas, Arkansas, died Friday, Dec. 11, 2020. She was two weeks shy of her 97th birthday.

She was the longer-living half of a newspaper power couple. Her husband, Melvin, died in 2007. Both worked long hours to publish the Dumas Clarion and raise a family in the Delta community they moved to as young newspaper owners in 1954. They quickly put their small newspaper on the map, winning awards from the Arkansas Press Association.

Though well known for serving 14 years in the Arkansas House of Representatives, Schexnayder also is remembered as a lifelong member of Arkansas Press Women (APW).

Schexnayder served as APW president in 1955 and was named the national Communicator of Achievement at the National Federation of Press Women conference in 1970. She served as president of NFPW from 1977 to 1979.

Schexnayder participated in major journalism organizations—



Claudia Ahrens hugs Charlotte Schexnayder at the 2012 Arkansas Press Women annual awards ceremony in Little Rock. Schexnayder, president of APW in 1955, gave a talk about her book that had been published earlier in 2012. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Press Women.

Society of Professional Journalists, Arkansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association—becoming the first female leader in many of the previously male-dominated groups over the 44 years she owned the Dumas Clarion.

Schexnayder was also preceded in death by longtime Dumas Clarion Publisher Terry Hawkins, an assistant who eventually took over newspaper operations and continued on

as publisher for the new owners when Schexnayder sold the newspaper in 1998. Hawkins, who became one of the first male members of APW along with Melvin Schexnayder in 1977, who died in February 2019.

Long retired, Schexnayder kept in touch with her journalism friends and became a treasure for younger generations.

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Trail-blazing NFPW president . . .

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In a 2019 article written by Aprille Hanson in *Arkansas Catholic*, Schexnayder said some of her best advice for women pursuing careers in journalism and politics is “have a tough skin” and “never abandon your beliefs.”

“Don’t expect it to be easy; expect it to be rewarding when you really work at it and go prepared. Always go prepared. When you’re prepared it’s harder to be shot down, it really is,” she said.

Schexnayder inducted into the Arkansas Women’s Hall of Fame in 2019 in part for her work with the Holy Child Church in Dumas and delivered an outstanding acceptance speech. In that speech, she told the crowd she was “speaking out on behalf of freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly.

“We have to guard freedom of the press because it’s a keystone of democracy.”

She admitted “it’s very hurtful to me” to see society’s distrust in the media, adding “there is news; there is no false news. False in news are plain lies.”

APW had planned to honor Schexnayder and founding member Dorothy Stuck at a June 2020 reception of the NFPW, which had chosen to host its national conference in Little Rock for the first time since 1988. The pandemic put those plans on hold.

In an April phone conversation with APW President Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, Schexnayder agreed that canceling the 2020 conference

“We have to guard freedom of the press because it’s a keystone of democracy.”

—Charlotte Schexnayder

was the right decision during the pandemic. Schexnayder, who lost her vision from macular degeneration, said she could not see well enough to even work on an iPad so she was unable to attend APW’s virtual awards ceremony. Instead, she recorded a greeting for all her press women friends:

“I went to my first NFPW national conference in New Orleans in 1956, and I had been looking forward to this year. I’m so sorry we’ve had to move it another year. But I want to say to all my friends out there who have been press women for years, I miss you, I love you and I hope you are well, and that’s the best I can do right now.”

Schexnayder started 2020 off strong but health problems besides her eyesight slowed her down. She entered hospice over the summer and was able to visit with family again thanks to reduced visitation restrictions. She is survived by three children – John, Sarah and Steve – and their spouses, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder, left, was photographed during her early days as a member of the National Federation of Press Women. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Press Women.

Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame inducts Schexnayder

Serving as editor, state representative had a higher purpose for Dumas trailblazer

By Aprille Hanson
AWHF Associate Editor

The Dumas Clarion newspaper was more than a compilation of stories. With Charlotte Schexnayder and her husband, Melvin, at the helm, it was a beacon of hope in a small community.

"A man came in the front office and said, 'I want to speak to the lady here, the lady editor.' So they got me



Arkansas Hall of Fame Executive Director Anna Beth Gorman, left, inducted 95-year-old Charlotte Schexnayder into the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame in 2019. Schexnayder, a longtime journalist and state representative, also helped establish the Holy Child Church in Dumas. She was one of eight inductees that year. Photo by Greg Owens, courtesy of Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame.

and I went up there and he said, 'Lady, you don't know me, but I got a problem. My brother died and I ain't got no suit to bury him in.' And I said, 'We can take care of that.' My family got the suit for him," Charlotte explained to the Arkansas Catholic.

"There were so many opportunities for us to help people in circumstances that were not known to the public. They thought that the paper was maybe their last source of help. We'd have people who were traveling, ran out of gasoline; [we] bought gasoline for them. At times we would buy food for people" and even cover utilities, she said. "... We wanted to tell the town's story, but we wanted to be a source of hope and push for better for everybody."

At 95 years old, Charlotte Schexnayder was inducted into the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame Aug. 29, 2019, for her contributions to state journalism and lawmaking.

After graduating college in 1944, she became editor of the McGehee Semi-Weekly Times. She and Melvin bought the Dumas Clarion in 1954, owning it for more than four decades. She served 14 years in the Arkansas House of Representatives, elected in 1984. Schexnayder was a woman of firsts — the first female president of the National Newspaper Association along with seven other state and national journalism organizations, and the first female president of the Dumas Chamber of Commerce.

In 2012, she published a memoir, "Salty Old Editor: An Adventure in Ink."

But pride isn't measured by the accolades. It is in the four generations of women in her family present at the Hall of Fame induction. It is in the work she and her husband put into helping establish Holy Child Church in Dumas. It is in each story she penned that bettered the lives of others.

Faith and the truth

Schexnayder converted to Catholicism after being raised Presbyterian, marrying Melvin in 1946.

"I enjoyed that we were a family that could share the same faith," she said. With no parish, Mass in Dumas was held in the home of the local Mayer family.

"For three years we went to their home and every Sunday they moved the living room furniture into the attic to set it up for Mass, and that's how I guess we got three years of raising money to build the church," she said.

Holy Child Church in Dumas was built in 1967.

Charlotte, as editor of the Dumas Clarion, was not without controversy. They endured personal threats following editorials like one she wrote regarding the 1957 crisis over integrating Little Rock Central High School. Her mother, a teacher, strongly advocated for integration.

"It did not matter if they had anything or had the finest, she treated everybody fairly, very kindly. I grew up thinking that and my husband felt the same way," Schexnayder said.

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Hall of Fame inducts Schexnayder . . .

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'Just a girl'

When Schexnayder first took over as editor of McGehee Semi-Weekly Times at just 20 years old, a man came in and wanted to speak with the editor.

"I said, 'I am she.' And he said, 'You can't possibly be, you're just a girl.' I said, 'Well, unfortunately I am the editor — if you think it's unfortunate, but I'd be glad to help you.'"

Her grit carried over to her 14 years as a state representative, fighting for freedom of information, rural development and education.

Schexnayder said some of her best advice for women pursuing

careers in journalism or politics is "have a tough skin" and "never abandon your beliefs."

New vision

Prior to her death, Schexnayder had severe arthritis and macular degeneration resulting in progressive vision loss. Her husband died in 2007, but she was surrounded by children, grandchildren and friends.

"Reading a newspaper is not an option for me anymore," she said, adding, "Even though I can't read, I listen a great deal."

In her Hall of Fame speech, she told the crowd she was "speaking out on behalf of freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of

speech, freedom of assembly."

There's hope, she said, that as big corporations — which had bought up newspapers mistaking them as "cash cows" — close community newspapers, someone steps in to save them, as had happened most recently in Stuttgart, Helena and Mount Ida.

"I'm really encouraged because people are hungry for local news. If you keep it local, they'll buy it," she said.

Comparing the years she served in the Arkansas legislature, Schexnayder said they used to be "kinder to one another" and have more open discussions. It's up to the voters to be careful on who they elect, she said.

"I don't think you can go back. I think as we go forward, the people have to place a lot more emphasis on honor. And honor in all aspects in life; that's what I see has dissipated. You have to have personal honor, you have to have public honor," she said.

But what ultimately threatens society the most is a "lack of vision," Schexnayder said.

"Without vision, the people perish. I mean that in the small towns, in the cities and the nation. You can always be better than you were if you work hard enough to do it. And I think we've sort of lost this; in the bickering, we have lost a vision of what our country was and what it needs to continue to be."



Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder, center, poses with Mary Hightower, left, former APW president, and Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, current APW president, at a funeral service in February 2019 for Schexnayder's longtime assistant, Terry Hawkins. Hawkins was publisher of *The Dumas Clarion* when he died. Schexnayder and her husband, Melvin, owned and operated the newspaper for 44 years. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Press Women.

Remembering Charlotte Schexnayder

NFPW friends share memories of Charlotte

By Helen Plotkin
Arkansas

Charlotte, as NFPW president, spoke briefly at the first Arkansas Press Women meeting I attended.

I remember two things about that meeting – winning my first APW contest certificate and meeting Charlotte. She spoke briefly and lit up the room with her energy and enthusiasm for APW, NFPW and the important role journalists play in a democratic society.

She warmly welcomed a timid, young journalist less than a year into her first job into the APW family and showed me that it was possible for a woman from a small Arkansas town to have influence on a national level.

She has been an inspiration to me and to many others and an illustration of what intelligence, hard work and grit can accomplish.

By Marsha Shuler
Louisiana

Charlotte Schexnayder is the reason for my long-running, active involvement in NFPW. She took me under her wing as a 20-something newspaper reporter and new member of what I call "a professional organization with a heart."

She got my feet wet in NFPW. Before you know it, when she became NFPW president in 1981, she had appointed me as one of her regional directors. She had a way of



Charlotte Schexnayder signs a copy of her book, "Salty Old Editor," for an aspiring writer at the 2012 Arkansas Press Women awards luncheon. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Press Women.

getting people involved in the things she believed in and she believed in NFPW!!

Charlotte helped NFPW grow to record membership, using her national position as president of the National Newspaper Association to promote and recruit as she visited newsrooms across the country. She was NNA's first woman president.

A newspaper owner, she tackled thorny issues head-on and championed Freedom of Information legislation as an Arkansas state legislator.

She was an extraordinary, talented and determined woman whom I will always be grateful to have counted as a friend and mentor.

By Cathy Koon
Idaho

When I met Charlotte at the NFPW conference in 2012, I had no idea that she was one of the most inspiring women I would ever meet. It wasn't until I read articles and the tributes included in this issue of Agenda that I realized I had missed an opportunity to get to know a real NFPW legend.

I had donated a quilt to the silent auction that year, and Charlotte was the only bidder. I am ashamed to say I bid against her to drive up the price. If I had known then what I know now, I would have paid for the quilt and gifted it to her.

Join your friends in Arkansas in 2021

By Kristin Netterstrom Higgins & Debbie Miller
Arkansas 2021 Conference Co-Chairs

If, at first . . . Nope, that's not it. Arkansas hosts national conference, Groundhog Day version? Definitely no.

How about BIG 2021 NFPW reunion in LITTLE ROCK? Now, we're talking.

Arkansas Press Women invites you to attend the 2021 National Federation of Press Women conference taking place June 10-12 in North Little Rock in, of course, Arkansas.

The last time we hosted NFPW was 1988. Bill Clinton was the state's governor and gave the nominating speech for Michael Dukakis at the Democratic National Convention. Arkansas-based Walmart established its first supercenter when it wasn't even cracking the Fortune 100.

A lot has changed since 1988, including revitalized downtowns along the Arkansas River and the construction of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum in Little Rock.

How we communicate has also changed in the past three decades. Many things about this conference will reflect those changes in communication tech. The 2021 schedule includes sessions on using drones, creating podcasts and navigating the ever-changing world of social media.

What hasn't changed about our conference is the opportunity to see longtime friends and catch up. We have learned a lot in the past 11 months, including that Zoom is not a true substitute for the gathering of friends that we formally call the



annual NFPW conference. So, in this new year, plan to join us in Arkansas.

Our state is known as one of the few places on Earth where the public can mine for diamonds at one of our state parks. We can't promise you will receive your own gemstone, if you come to our conference. However, we look forward to sharing our treasures with you, whether it's taking a tour of the Clinton Library or participating in a general session with Elizabeth Eckford of the Little Rock Nine. She will share her struggle of integrating Central High School as seen on television screens across the nation in 1957. Eckford has published a children's book on her experience along with a call to stand up to bullying.

Our conference theme this year is "Emerge, Evolve, Engage: Guided by Truth." We hope you join us in renewing friendships and making new ones while also taking a moment to appreciate what Arkansas has to offer.

Starting planning today to attend and to join us for pre-tours of local attractions as well as a post-tour to Arkansas wine country, the state's highest peak and a world-class art museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

Our conference committee is ready to provide fun adventures, learning opportunities and lots of chances to network, all while treating you to Southern hospitality in The Natural State.

21 reasons you should attend

1. 2020 forced us all into some level of isolation to protect ourselves and others from a vicious virus. The time is approaching when we can **EMERGE** and reunite with our NFPW family.
2. Much has changed since we gathered last in 2019. Our daily lives and how we interact with each other have changed. To flourish in our changing world, we must **EVOLVE**.
3. As professional communicators, NFPW members can help build consensus needed to move our nation forward. To be effective, we must first **ENGAGE** with each other and our communities.
4. To be successful, all our work must be **GUIDED BY TRUTH**. As our Code of Ethics states, NFPW members work with "truth as my ultimate goal," a commitment that is more important now than ever.
5. Participating in the 2021 NFPW Conference will reconnect you with NFPW friends, help hone your skills and inspire you to *Emerge, Evolve, Engage: Guided by Truth*.
6. The conference is a good professional development value. The \$405 early registration fee for NFPW members gives you access to all workshops and general sessions, professional and high school contest awards luncheons on Friday and Saturday, and the Communicator of Achievement awards banquet Saturday evening, as well as complimentary coffee during breaks.
7. Conference sessions cover a range of topics, including opportunities to build your skills, learn from the experience of others and be inspired.
8. Listen to Elizabeth Eckford discuss how she and eight other Black students integrated Little Rock's Central High School in 1957 and learn how that experience changed her life and our world.
9. Learn more about the dangers of social media and computer-generated misinformation from Dr. Nitin Agarwal, one of the nation's top experts in the field and the Jerry L. Maulden-Entergy endowed chair and distinguished professor of Information Science at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.



10. Find out how drones are used as story-telling tools in newsrooms and other communications activities and get tips on legal issues, safe drone usage and equipment from Michael Ray Taylor, Communications Department chair, and Scott McKinnon, instructor of Innovative Media, at Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
11. Hone your writing skills and learn more about the art of memoir writing with Greg Graham, director of the Little Rock Writing Project, and Dr. Heidi Skurat Harris, professor in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
12. Other topics being planned include a discussion about ways to preserve local news as hometown newspapers disappear, dealing with hostility toward reporters from the police and others, how to build a successful social media marketing campaign and searching for the best pie in Arkansas.
13. Your colleagues from across the country can be a great source of information about growing your career. There's no place like an NFPW conference to build your professional network and make new friends who share your passion for clear, concise and accurate communication.
14. Get details about NFPW's First Amendment Network, how you can join and what you can do to help protect First Amendment rights for journalists and for all citizens.
15. There are rumors of an ice cream sundae bar appearing sometime during the event. Intrepid reporters are checking it out. Stay tuned for details.
16. NFPW and your hosts from Arkansas Press Women are working closely with the hotel and all our vendors and presenters to follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Arkansas State Health Department to keep our meeting environment safe.
17. Our recently renovated conference hotel is conveniently located near the intersection of Interstate 30 and Interstate 40 in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

(Continued on page 13)

21 reasons why . . .

(Continued from page 12)

18. The hotel rate of \$104 per night (plus taxes) for single or double occupancy includes a free shuttle to and from the airport and to local attractions, free parking, free internet access and free hot breakfast every morning of your stay.
19. The hotel is a short walk or trolley ride from the Argenta Arts District in downtown North Little Rock and from the River Market district in Little Rock, which are both filled with places where you can find good food, good music and entertainment, with a dollop of culture on the side.
20. There is an outdoor pool at the hotel and June in Arkansas is usually great weather for swimming or lounging by the pool. If lounging isn't your style, there's also a fitness center with cardio equipment and free weights.
21. In addition to the planned pre- and post-conference tours, Arkansas offers an abundance of recreational activities in 52 state and seven national parks. Whether you like hiking, rafting, water skiing, fishing, mountain biking, art, music, crafts, fine dining or digging for diamonds, there's a place in Arkansas where you can do that. [Check it out.](#)

Arkansas, in the south-central region of the United States, is home to more than three million. Its name is from the Osage language.

The state's diverse geography ranges from the mountainous regions of the Ozark and the Ouachita Mountains, which make up the U.S. Interior Highlands, to the densely forested land in the south known as the Arkansas Timberlands, to the eastern lowlands along the Mississippi River and the Arkansas Delta.

Arkansas is the 29th largest by area and the 33rd most populous of the 50 United States. The capital and most populous city is Little Rock, located in the central portion of the state, a hub for transportation, business, culture and government. The northwestern corner of the state is a population, education and economic center. The largest city in the state's eastern part is Jonesboro and in the state's southeastern part is Pine Bluff.

The Territory of Arkansas was admitted to the Union as the 25th state on June 15, 1836. Much of the

Delta had been developed for cotton plantations, and landowners largely depended on slaves for labor. In 1861, Arkansas seceded from the United States and joined the Confederate States of America



during the Civil War.

On returning to the Union in 1868, the state continued to suffer due to its reliance on the large-scale plantation economy. Cotton continued as the leading commodity crop, although the cotton market declined.

Because farmers and businessmen did not diversify and there was little industrial investment, the state fell behind in terms of its economy and opportunities for residents.

White rural interests dominated the state's politics by disenfranchisement of African Americans and by refusal to reapportion the legislature. It was not until after the civil rights movement and federal intervention that more African Americans were able to vote. The Supreme Court overturned rural domination in the South and other states that had refused to reapportion their state legislatures, or retained rules based on geographic districts. In the landmark ruling of *one man, one vote*, it ruled that states had to

organize both houses of their legislatures by districts that held approximately equal populations, and that these had to be redefined as necessary after each decade's census.

Following World War II, Arkansas began to diversify its economy. In the 21st century, its economy is based on service industries, aircraft, poultry, steel and tourism along with important commodity crops of cotton, soybeans and rice.

Learn more about Arkansas at www.arkansas.com.

Affiliate and Member News . . .

Alabama Media Professionals

By Donna Francavilla/Ann Halpern

AMP forged into fall with fervor. Realizing that most people want to be invited to join any professional organization, we challenged current members to invite two or more communicators to join us. We remembered who invited each of us and passed along the tradition. It is the first time in several years that we have reached out to colleagues. It seems to be working for us.

Our fall workshop "Navigating Entrepreneurial Waters Amidst a COVID-19 Storm" was a virtual event available to all. Our presenters were freelance photographer Butch Dill, freelance writer Cary Estes and Shaun Chavis, a former Southern Living writer who now owns a business creating customized cook-books.

Our keynote speaker was Pulitzer Prize-winner Harold Jackson, a Birmingham native whose stops included Birmingham Post-Herald, The Birmingham News, Philadelphia Enquirer and the Houston Chronicle. For details, visit our [website](#).

During recent months, a trio of past AMP presidents (Elaine Miller, Ann Halpern and Mary Wimberley) carefully reviewed every line of every bylaws article with intent to make sure we could have virtual meetings and vote online, and made sure our student membership information echoed that of NFPW.

We added a section outlining our 501(c)(6) nonprofit status and added standing committees for archivists and sponsorship. Some changes were definitely influenced by pandemic times but also will make membership more attractive statewide—socially distant but professionally close. Both the AMP board of directors and the membership approved the revisions in September.

A new grant program is helping Alabama journalists—including freelancers—who have been furloughed or have lost work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Alabama Press Association, with support from the Alabama Power Foundation, is offering the grants. Alabama journalists facing hardships can apply to the APA for a \$500 grant to write a story/content (including photos) that APA papers would be interested in publishing. Story ideas will be reviewed by an APA panel and must be completed within two weeks of being approved.

Our September speaker, Alabama's Secretary of State John Merrill, followed his visit with a note:

"I was honored to meet with some of Alabama's most outstanding members of the media when I visited with and made a presentation to the Alabama Media Professionals. I'm thankful for the job they do every day!"

We were pleased to be recognized as "objective presenters of facts." For journalists, there is no higher compliment in a changing world of "fake news" and the proliferation of fabricated story content.

At AMP's October meeting, author and UAB creative-writing professor Kerry Madden-Lunsford discussed using your life as story-telling material. (She grew up the daughter of a college football coach moving every few years, depending on the winning or losing season of the team.) Currently she's scripting a segment of her autobiographical novel, "Offsides," as a pilot for a possible TV series.

Nebraska Press Women By President Lori Potter

The fall conference for Nebraska Press Women was our first-ever virtual event, with approximately 40

people participating, including seven from other states.

Two were NPW members in South Dakota and Georgia. Five were NFPW members in other states: NFPW President Gwen Larson and Wilma Moore-Black from Kansas, Marsha and Julie Hoffman from Iowa and Kay Casey from Texas.

Two NPW members gave presentations about launching new weekly newspapers, Gothenburg Leader General Manager Rebecca Steward and LuAnn Schindler of Clearwater, editor and co-owner with her husband, Scott, of The Summerland Advocate-Messenger.

They described their newspapers and talked about why they decided to create start-ups, and the difficulties and rewards of doing so.

The other highlight was naming the 2020 NPW Communicator of Achievement.

COA Director Ruth Brown of Lincoln and I tried our best to make the announcement a surprise, but honoree Mary Jane Skala was on a mid-October vacation touring Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding area with her son Matthew from Los Angeles. They were hiking on Oct. 17 and not in range of internet service to connect with the Zoom conference.

Mary Jane did send a photo of her and Matt to Ruth, which was shared to the conference group.

Below is the press release sent to Nebraska media:

LINCOLN, NE – Nebraska Press Women named Kearney Hub lifestyles reporter Mary Jane Skala its Communicator of Achievement Oct. 17 during NPW's virtual fall conference.

Skala honed her journalistic skills at the Sun News chain in Cleveland, Ohio, where she worked her way

(Continued on page 15)

That's where she is today . . .



- in Yellowstone
- with her son, Matt
- hiking
- camping
- enjoying nature
- avoiding COVID
- with as few electronics as possible.

Some people are hard to surprise!

Congratulations, Mary Jane: NPW Communicator of Achievement!

(Continued from page 14)

from reporter to senior editor in charge of 22 suburban newspapers.

During nearly all of her 40-plus years as a journalism professional, she has been a member of the National Federation of Press Women (NFPW) and one of its state affiliates, which she credits for helping her polish her career, make connections and see parts of the U.S. that she might never have seen.

Through one of those connections Skala found her way to the Kearney Hub and to Nebraska Press Women.

Skala has served both the national and state organizations as an officer and a board member for many years. She has also won numerous writing awards in Ohio, Nebraska and national communications contests. Skala is a two-time national sweepstakes award

winner of the NFPW contest – once in 1996 and again in 2020.

“The truth is, she can report and write about any topic from hard news and technical topics to personal profiles and light features. And she finds all those topics and every person she’s ever met interesting,” stated members who nominated Skala.

The COA Award is the highest honor bestowed upon an NPW member. It recognizes achievement in the communications profession, service to the community and industry, and leadership in the organization.

Skala will represent Nebraska in NFPW’s 2021 COA competition at the convention in Little Rock.

Arkansas Press Women By Kristin Netterstrom Higgins APW President

If planning a national conference weren't enough, Arkansas Press Women used this pandemic year to update its look. APW unveiled a new website this fall at ArkansasPress-Women.org.

The site, developed by graphic designer Kevin Cates, provided us a modern look to replace our old blog feel. The site shares our history, information about our annual scholarship and allows people to sign up for our monthly newsletter.

Cates also provided a new logo and graphic for the 71-year-old organization. The updates were recently featured in the Arkansas Press Association's weekly newsletter to Arkansas publishers. Read the issue [here](#).

The old website was deactivated Dec. 31.

Get some retail therapy while raising \$\$ for NFPW

AmazonSmile makes it easy to support the National Federation of Press Women Education Fund when purchasing items online.

When looking to order items online, go to smile.amazon.com, join AmazonSmile and designate NFPW Education Fund as your favorite charity. A small percentage of your eligible purchases will go to the fund at no cost to you. The more money you spend, the more money goes to the Education Fund.

The donation supports the NFPW high school communications contest, first-timer grants and professional development activities.

The donation is made to the Education Fund by

AmazonSmile, which receives the tax benefit of the charitable donation. NFPW will not receive a list of who designated the fund for donations.

Cathy Koon, Agenda editor and former Education Fund treasurer, said she signed up for AmazonSmile a number of years ago and encouraged her fellow members to join to raise money for the Education Fund.



The value of NFPW Education Fund:

Helping dreams come true

By Nikoleta Morales

Illinois Woman's Press Association

When I received the news that the NFPW Education Fund had approved my request to sponsor part of my tuition for the Story Summit, I was ecstatic.

If it weren't for NFPW's help and support, I wouldn't have been able to raise the additional funds I needed to attend the Story Summit. The NFPW Education Fund helped me achieve my writing dream.

The Story Summit is a weeklong training program for novel writers and screenwriters, which took place in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

During the week, we worked in small groups with assigned professional writing mentors who helped each writer with his or her writing project. My project was my memoir book, "My Life is a Movie You Don't Want to Miss." My personal mentor was Richard Mois who believed in me and my writing, while bringing the best out of me.

In addition, there were keynote speakers and writing workshops with mentors ranging from successful book authors to established screenwriters who were there for extra guidance and support.

Being a memoir writer is one of the most vulnerable experiences in my life, and I needed to be surrounded by the right tribe and mentors to move forward in completion. Unlike journalistic writing, memoir writing is more intimate, personal and raw, and a craft I needed to master with the right teachers. Now, I am ready to emerge and take on the challenge.

I spent a week training, learning about memoir writing and working on my craft with mentors Richard Mois ("The Hundred-Foot Journey"), Debra Engle ("The Only Little Prayer You Need"), Jeff Arch ("Sleepless in Seattle") and Amy Ferris ("Marrying George Clooney"), among others.

The Story Summit was founded by David Kirkpatrick, who was the President of Production at Walt Disney and Paramount Studios in the '90s. These are people who have succeeded in their field and made an impact in the

world as authority figures. Their job at the Story Summit was to teach us how to do the same.

The Story Summit changed my life not only as a person but as a professional writer, thanks to the mentors I met and learned from that I will be able to not just finish my memoir, but also promote it and get it out into the world.

During the summit, we also visited Concord, Massachusetts, where I got the chance to learn about and see where Louisa May Alcott wrote "Little Women." Seeing her house inspired me and showed me why her writing was so legendary. Now, I can apply that in my own writing.

We also took a tour of The Sleepy Hollow Cemetery where we visited the graves of American authors Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau. The summit was not only hands-on training, workshops and lectures, but also a personal guided tour into the great American past, where the legendary American writers once lived.

I have come back changed, transformed and inspired to complete my memoir. I have the necessary tools and knowledge to do so now.

In addition, a few of the mentors agreed to personally endorse my book, because they loved my writing. This is something I wouldn't have been able to achieve had I not gone to the summit.

NFPW's Education Fund gave me the financial support I needed to help me realize my writing dream. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to attend the Story Summit and come back with the knowledge and tools I needed to succeed in my writing journey.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you, NFPW Education Fund, for helping me realize my dream.



Nikoleta Morales

Send submissions for Agenda to
Editor Cathy Koon at cakoon52@cableone.net

Arkansas Press Women

Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder,

a 44-year newspaper owner, editor and publisher who served as NFPW president from 1977 to 1979, died



Dec. 11, 2020, a few weeks shy of her 97th birthday.

Schexnayder's longtime interest and dedication to journalism traced to the 7th grade when she created a handwritten newspaper as an English assignment. She worked at college newspapers at then-Arkansas A&M College and Louisiana State University, and she earned a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and journalism from LSU.

Before she and her husband, Melvin, became the owners, editors and publishers of The Dumas Clarion in 1954, she had worked for The McGehee Times and the LSU extension service.

She also was active in the Dumas, Arkansas, business and community life, was the first woman appointed to the Arkansas Board of Pardons and Paroles and eventually served 14 years as an Arkansas state representative.

She served as NFPW president from 1977 to 1979 and received more than 500 newspaper contest awards and numerous other communications awards, including NFPW's highest honor, Communicator of Achievement, in 1970. She published her memoir, "Salty Old Editor: An Adventure in Ink," in 2012.

Virginia Press Women

Eileen Wanda (Howie) Mead, 91, died Nov. 29, 2020, at Sterling, Virginia.

Born in Beach, North Dakota, she grew up in Redmond, Washington, where she graduated from Lake Washington High School.

Upon graduation she attended the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. She met and married her late husband John E. Mead while attending the UAF.

Eileen had many talents, her most avid reporting for local newspapers. As a Marine wife, she traveled and was stationed in various states and Japan with her husband and family, writing for local newspapers, which included The Free Lance-Star in Fredericksburg and Potomac News in Virginia, Port Townsend Leader and the Kirkland Journal Newspaper in Washington state.

She was known for her feature writing and crime reporting. She was recognized for her outstanding journalism and received numerous Virginia and national press awards.

In 2009, Mead was recognized for her 35-year membership in VPW and NFPW.

Alaska Professional Communicators

Elaine Bleakley Williamson, 69,

a longtime member and former president of Alaska Professional Communicators, died Sept. 21, 2022, in El Paso, Texas. Born in West Point, New



York, Elaine joined the Navy and met the love of her life, Larry Williamson. After numerous deployments, she and Larry settled in Larry's home state, Alaska, where they spent 26 adventurous years. Before leaving Alaska in the mid-2000s, Elaine worked at the Alaska Museum, sifting through old photos and experiencing the history of Alaska through pictures. She loved photography, camping, her poodles and the Alaskan life. She served as the 1996-1997 president of APC, then known as Alaska Press Women.

Obituaries and death notices for NFPW members should be emailed to
Amy Geiszler-Jones
algj64@sbcglobal.net



National Federation of Press Women

Nominations for NFPW's highest award due by March 22

Nominations for the 2021 NFPW Communicator of Achievement are due by Monday, March 22, 2021.

The award, NFPW's highest honor, is given to a member nominated by his or her state affiliate for highest achievement in the communications field and service to the affiliate, NFPW and the community.

Traditionally, each affiliate honors its nominee in its own way. All affiliate nominees for NFPW Communicator of Achievement are recognized individually, and the winner is announced at the COA Banquet at NFPW's annual conference. The 2021 event is scheduled for Saturday, June 12, assuming the annual conference is held in person. The 2020 conference was held virtually because of the covid pandemic.

In charge of the contest again this year is Karen Stensrud of North Dakota, herself a COA winner.

"We strongly encourage each affiliate to select a COA every year, recognizing individual achievement and share it at the national level," Stensrud said in announcing the availability of the nomination packet.

"Judging criteria balance both professional accomplishments and service, so any nominee has an excellent chance of being recognized as NFPW's national COA," she said.

Nominees must be living members, in good standing for at least two years in an affiliate and NFPW. To check on a member's status, email membership@nfpw.org. A previous nominee can be named by an affiliate again, as long as he or she has not been honored as NFPW's national COA winner.

Nomination packets must be emailed to COA contest director Karen Stensrud at nfpwcoa2021@gmail.com.

The entry fee of \$60 covers COA expenses and silk-

flower corsages or boutonnieres for the nominees to wear at the COA awards banquet (assuming it is held in person). The COA director will provide the flowers.

The fee can be paid electronically at nfpw.org/coa or by check made out to NFPW and mailed to:

NFPW
140B Purcellville Gateway Dr., Suite 120
Purcellville, VA 20132

Payment of the fee must be made by March 21, 2021, one day prior to the deadline for the nomination. Continue to watch email and NFPW publications for information.

Nominees will be judged in four areas:

Professional achievement (50%)—All nominees should have high professional qualifications and achievements in their areas of communications (any field that has qualified the nominee for NFPW membership).

Community service (20%)—Each nominee should have made some impact on the world beyond his or her profession—some contribution to humanity. That impact or contribution may be through the profession or beyond it.

NFPW service (15%)—Since this is NFPW's highest award, each nominee should have been active in the national organization. This could include attendance at previous NFPW conferences, volunteering or giving presentations at NFPW conferences or other activities deemed by the judges to have been of service to NFPW.

State affiliate service (15%)—Each nominee should have made a definite and important contribution to his or her affiliate, as the state affiliates are important for carrying out the mission of NFPW.

The complete nomination packet, including rules, judging criteria for submission form can be found online at nfpw.org/coa.

2021 Communicator of Achievement Checklist

- Official COA entry form
- Brief summary in resumé-style list form of vital information divided among professional, community and NFPW/affiliate service (*one page – 500 words maximum*)
- Narrative about the nominee (up to four pages – 2,400 words maximum)
- Endorsements of the nominee (*up to two pages – 1,200 words maximum*)
- Two samples (or excerpts) of nominee's work (*up to two pages – may include copy excerpts, graphic images/clips or digital links*)
- 150-word biography for *AGENDA* newsletter
- 75-word biography for the conference program
- Color photograph of the nominee in jpg format, at least 300-dpi resolution

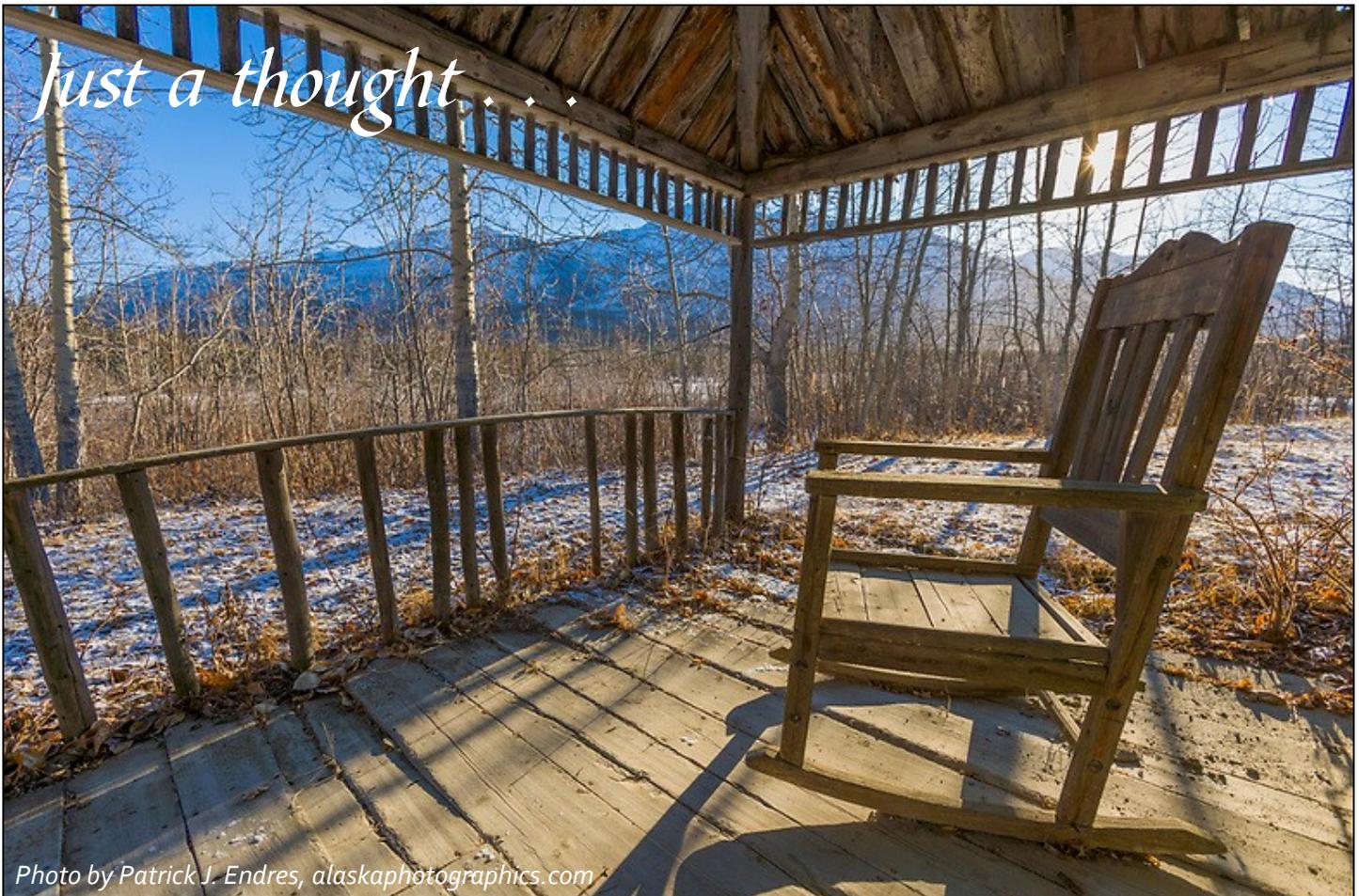


Photo by Patrick J. Endres, alaskaphotographics.com

By Cathy Koon
Agenda Editor

2020 was a landmark year for me as it was for most of the world's population. But for me it wasn't about COVID-19 or Black Lives Matter or being unemployed and not being able to pay my rent.

2020 marked my 50-year class reunion, the birth of a grandson who is very likely the last of my line and family feuds that rival the Hatfields and McCoys. (Ok, so not quite that epic but divisive just the same.)

2020 is also the year I began to face my mortality. I have been the sole caretaker for my son, Travis, since I was divorced 15 or so years ago. (I really don't remember the year I finally called it quits.) Travis is developmentally disabled, and I operate a certified family home so Medicaid pays me to take care of him instead of putting him in a group home or other facility.

I've been a bit of a recluse since I retired in 2016, so the isolation resulting from the pandemic hasn't impacted me all that much. My son and I stay home and stay safe.

But I have struggled all year to plan for the eventuality that I will no longer be able to care for him. I'm no spring chick, and my memory isn't what it used to be. What happens when I can't remember to give him his

meds or even remember which meds are his and which are mine? Getting old sucks.

This is not how I imagined my old age. I expected to grow old, sit in a rocking chair on my front porch and watch my grandchildren playing in the yard. And I always imagined sharing my old age with a husband or lifelong companion. So much for expectations.

And then I read the tributes and the life story of former NFPW President Charlotte Schexnayder, who died in December. What a woman.

I remember meeting Charlotte at the NFPW conference in 2012. She struck me as the grandmotherly type, not knowing the firebrand she was during her careers.

The Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame article called her a trailblazer. I would call her amazing, an inspiration for anyone, female or male, looking to make a difference.

And she never slowed down. If you haven't read all the stories about her contained in this issue, please go back and read every nugget. She started young and charged through the decades of her life. I wish I had met her sooner and known her better.

I know one thing. I'm rethinking my plans to retire to that rocking chair. I've still got things to do.

NFPW Leadership Directory

ELECTED OFFICERS

President:

Gwen Larson, Kansas

Vice President:

Karen Rowley, Louisiana

Secretary:

Julie Campbell, Virginia

Treasurer:

Jane Falany, Alabama

Immediate Past President:

Marianne Wolf-Astrauskas, Illinois

APPOINTED BOARD

Archivist:

Paula Casey, At-Large

Communicator of Achievement Director:

Karen Stensrud, North Dakota

FAN Co-Directors:

Marsha Shuler, Louisiana

Angela Smith, Texas

Historian:

Amy Geiszler-Jones, Kansas

Assistant Historian:

Mary Pat Finn-Hoag, Nebraska

Hospitality and Protocol:

Catherine Petrini, Virginia & D.C.

Parliamentarian:

Allison Stein, Missouri

POPPS President:

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Presidential Adviser — Membership:

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Presidential Adviser — Contest Director:

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Cathy Koon, Idaho

Publications Assistant:

Gwen Woolf, Virginia

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Michele Cook, Virginia

2021 Conference Co-Directors:

Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, Arkansas

Debbie Miller, Arkansas

Agenda DEADLINES

Deadlines for submitting photos and/or stories for upcoming issues of Agenda are:

March 10

For publication April 1

June 10

For publication July 1

Sept. 10

For publication Oct. 1

Send submissions to
Editor Cathy Koon at
cakoon52@cablone.net

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