



OUR HISTORY

NFPW has been helping writers and professional communicators for more than six decades.

A vision for a national organization for professional newspaper women and writers came to Helen Miller Stanley Malloch in 1935. By 1937, the National Federation of Presswomen (later changed to Press Women) was up and running with its primary purpose to "promote the highest ideals to journalism; provide exchange of journalistic ideas and experiences, and coordinate editorial opinions on matters of national interest to women."

The same thoughts had earlier come to Marion McBride who shared her idea with women at the 1885 American Exposition in New Orleans, La. Although the national organization didn't materialize then, New England Woman's Press Association and the Illinois Woman's Press Association were formed.

Helen had been a member of the Illinois Woman's Press Association (IWPA) since 1928. She took an active role on the board that led to her election as president in 1935 during its 50th anniversary. That same year, she married Douglas Malloch (a second marriage for both), an author she met at the New York Writers' Guild. He traveled extensively as a popular speaker, and Helen quit her job at publisher David Cook & Co. to accompany him. He fully supported her vision for a federation, acted as her adviser and helped finance her endeavors as well as lend her his secretaries to assist in the paperwork.

While attempting to get copyright legislation through Congress, Helen saw a federation as only one of the many advantages that unification could offer its members. At the 1936 annual IWPA meeting, Helen appointed Martha Dunlap Moore as chairman of the IWPA "Committee for Federating Press Women." IWPA members enthusiastically endorsed it and appropriated \$50 for expenses with an additional \$50 the following year. Helen, Martha and Minnie Goodwin wrote the first NFPW constitution to consist of autonomous state groups, as it remains today.

While traveling with her husband, Helen used every trip to personally contact prospective members. An invitation from Ohio Press Club to speak at its October 5, 1936, annual meeting resulted in its becoming the first group to officially endorse the

project. Right behind were Portland Oregon newspaper women and Indiana Press Women. Through a letter-writing campaign, 90 members from 21 states joined the new organization.

The first annual meeting of the National Federation of Presswomen took place May 6, 1937, at the Chicago Woman's Club. The dinner cost was \$1.25 and lodging was \$2. Attendance numbered 39; 24 from Illinois, seven from Indiana, two each from Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania and one each from New York and Washington, D.C. Missouri was organized the same day.

The constitution was accepted and Helen Miller Malloch was elected NFPW's first president, also continuing as president of IWPA. The new federation was countrywide news, but timely copy was preempted by the Hindenberg disaster.

Helen presided over the second annual meeting in 1938, also in Chicago, where she stepped down as president, and was replaced by Octavia Walton Goodbar of New York. Helen remained on the board as corresponding secretary and remained president of IWPA until 1941.

The first official NFPW newsletter, The Bulletin, made its debut in January 1939. In January 1941, it was renamed Press Woman and was first published quarterly, then monthly. In 1997, Press Woman and longtime Agenda, a publication for internal NFPW news, were redefined and publication dates set on alternate months. The two publications later merged to become Agenda, now published four times a year.

Helen Miller Malloch was elected vice president of NFPW in 1940 and in May 1942 was again elected president. After the death of her husband, she took a position in California, where she formed the California Press Women in 1950. Helen continued to be involved in NFPW until she died while attending its 1963 conference in Indianapolis, Ind.

Her vision to create a federated organization "to provide a means of communication between woman writers nationally; make possible the expression of a common voice in matters of national interest to press women, and otherwise advance the professional standards of press women" remain NFPW main objectives today.

Through the years, NFPW has refocused its mission, making changes and adding opportunities in keeping with the times.

Currently, the organization has built on its foundation through a web site for internet users, cost-effective libel insurance for freelancers, grants for educational opportunities and training, job, national networking among members and much more.

Annual conferences continue to provide stimulating programming. We recognize outstanding work by our members and high school journalists through a national communications competition, and we honor our own Communicators of Achievement.

FAN (First Amendment Network) keeps members up-to-date on issues concerning freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We are a cofounder of the National Women's History Museum and part of the National Council for Journalism

Organizations, the World Press Freedom Committee and many more related organizations. (See ABOUT US, Involvement)

Helen Miller Malloch once said, "...this, with very much of myself, I have given you; but you are the ones who will make it live as my lasting memorial."

We thank Helen for her vision and welcome those who want to keep this memorial alive for many years to come.

- Our thanks for Marlene Cook, Illinois, NFPW Historian,
for providing this comprehensive history