

Bat Watch Vessel Runs Aground Press Women Take Adventure in Stride

By **DONNA HUNT**
Press Women of Texas

Never having been stuck in the middle of Lake Texoma near my home, I had to go all the way to Austin to have that experience.

The week after the Press Women of Texas hosted NFPW at its annual conference in San Antonio, press women taking part in the conference post tour came from many states around the nation from Alaska to Pennsylvania. Our first stop was Austin to see all the historical and cultural sites there. Our last stop in the capital city couldn't really be described by either term, but it was a highlight of the tour.

We had planned to take the group to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Research Center, but because of the drought in the area, there were no flowers blooming. So we substituted a bat cruise on Lady Bird Lake, right in the middle of Austin.

The lake flows under the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, home to about 1.5 million Mexican Free-tailed Bats that have become a tourist "must see."

We arrived before sunset and found our cruise boat that fortunately had a cover since it was threatening rain. We climbed aboard and joined three other ladies who already were on board. When it was time to cast off, our pilot, who couldn't have been older than 21 years, expertly backed us away from the dock and headed in the opposite direction from the "bat" bridge to give us a short cruise up the river and tell us about the giant buildings that have sprung up in

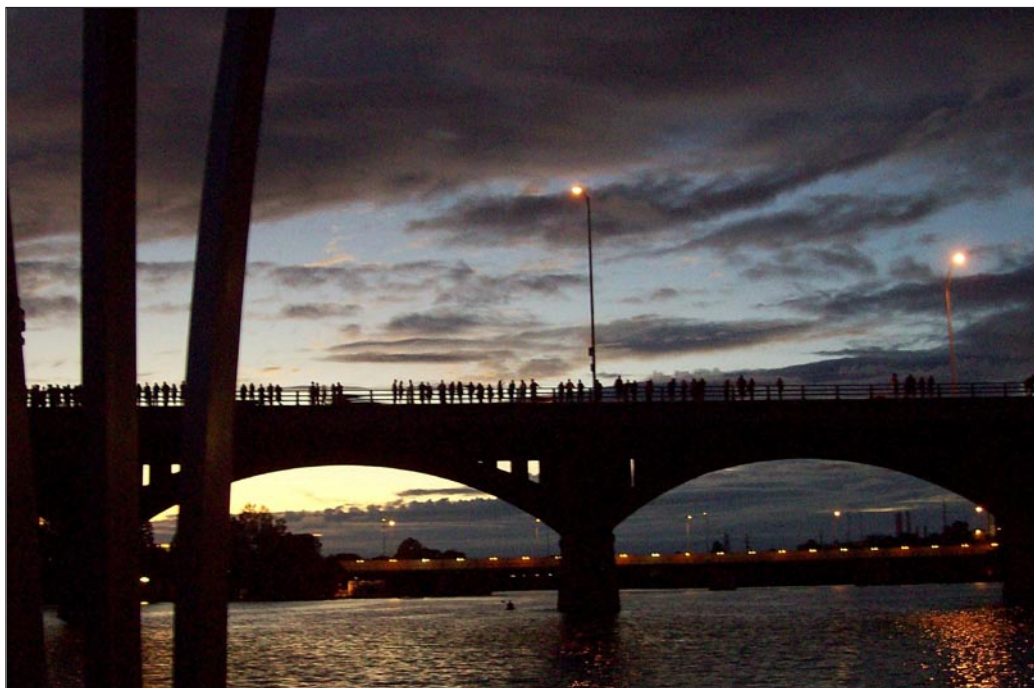


Photo by DONNA HUNT

THE ANN W. RICHARDS BRIDGE at dusk attracts scores of tourists lined up to wait for millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats to fly out of their nesting place.

recent years. I'm sure she had timed the trip precisely because she turned around just in time to get us back for the bats' flight.

Our boat wasn't the only one lining up on the water to view the happening. Several others offered a close up view for those aboard. Perhaps we could have seen the bats better, more up close, had we done what hundreds of others did and joined the line along the bridge above where the bats exited. But being on the water was special for our visitors to Texas.

A few of the little bats came out first and we were told they were the scouts to look the

situation over. Then they began flying out in a dark, black cloud from the small holes in the bridge as they headed out for their evening meal of bugs. Their exit is pretty orderly as they head out across the river into the countryside.

It is said that the bats eat more than 10,000 pounds of insects every night. Makes you want a bat house to attract them, doesn't it?

This colony of bats is considered the largest in North America. The bats have been coming to Austin for many years and after completion of the renovation of the Congress

Bat Cruise: See Page 8

President's Corner



Time to Turn the Tide: Growth is Up to All of Us

Cynthia Price, NFPW President

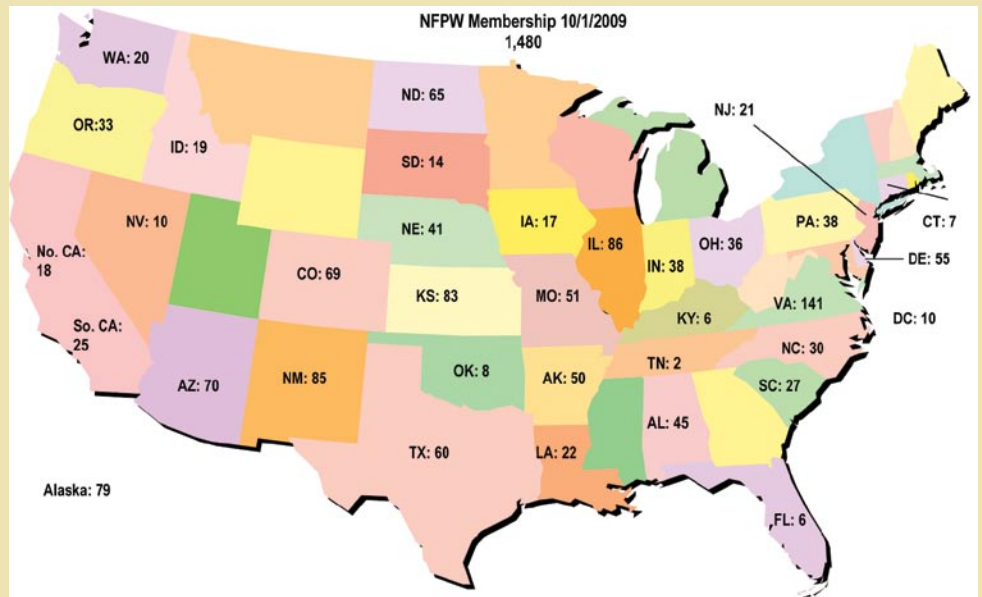
For three days, I and other members of the senior management team at my organization discussed, dissected and digested what would be needed if we were to measure the health of our organization. I've attended many workshops throughout my career, and this one was hard work.

We had to consider what we wanted to be known for. Then we had to decide how we could measure that. We also had to consider what we might need to measure that wasn't necessarily a goal.

I share this with you because the NFPW board is taking a hard look at our organizational health. When I spoke at the NFPW Conference in Texas I stressed a few key areas, including sustainability, networking, professionalism and fiscal responsibility.

Those are the areas your board is using to measure the health of NFPW. We have set goals and we, too, are discussing, dissecting and digesting what we know of our organization. First up, we wanted to grow the organization by five percent. The percentage is small, but it is telling because it is about growth. We have been losing members and we want to stop that.

An exit survey will go out to those members who left so we can identify any areas for improvement. That's an example of measuring an area that isn't necessarily a goal.



San Antonio Recap

Living Up to A Famous Name

By Linda Koehler
Pennsylvania Press Club

Who is the Queen of Household Queries?

Who is the Diva of Dishpan Hands?

Who is the newest National Federation of Press Women's Communicator of Achievement 2009 winner?

Here's a Hint.

It's Heloise!

Heloise is the nationally known syndicated columnist of "Hints from Heloise" which runs in more than 500 newspapers. She is a contributing editor and monthly columnist for *Good Housekeeping* magazine and is featured in other magazines as well. She has published 11 books and frequently appears on radio, television, and the lecture circuit. She is well known for her charitable work.

Heloise, also known as Ponce Kiah Marchelle Heloise Cruse Evans, was the Keynote speaker at the Friday morning session of the recent NFPW Communications Conference, held in San Antonio, Texas. She spoke on "50 Years of Heloise: From Typewriter, Dictaphone® Machine, and Mail to Computer, Cellphone and E-mail!"

She shared with the audience many humorous and poignant inside moments about how her mother started the famous column 50 years ago and what it was like living with, working with and loving Heloise.

Her father, Air Force pilot Lt. Col. Marshall Cruse was stationed at Honolulu's Hickam Air Force base. Her mother, Heloise Bowles Cruse, was a 40-year-old housewife and mother of two.

"My mother started the column in 1959 on a bet and a dare."

She couldn't get a job at the *Honolulu Advertiser*. So she called the newspaper and asked when the editor would not be there. Complete in hat and gloves, went to the newspaper, made quite an impression and left her name and phone number. When the editor returned, he was told that a very important lady was in to see him. When he talked to the brown-haired lady who spray painted her hair silver, she told him that there was nothing in the newspaper that offered tips to housewives. And being a military wife where other military wives helped each other with such tips, she offered to put those hints in his newspaper.

"She told him that she would work for free for the first few months. Then when he'd hire her, he could pay her but no more than \$25 a week because her husband said that more than that it would put them in a higher tax bracket."



Photo by Linda Koehler

HELOISE ADDRESSES HER fellow members of NFPW at the 2009 Communications Conference in San Antonio.

The column was called "Readers' Exchange." Neither Heloise nor her editor ever dreamed the column would become a household name

The Cruses moved to San Antonio in 1966. Heloise's office was in her home.

"I grew up in our house and the master bedroom was her office. You know all about reality shows? I lived a reality show," quipped Heloise. It was nothing to come home to find a magazine photo shoot or television crew in her mother's bedroom.

Her mother had a twin sister, Louise.

"They were very competitive. I remember when I was about 4 years old, they would put me in the middle of the room and then call me and I'd have to pick which one I thought was my mother," she smiled at the memory.

She remembered how her mother use to spray her brown hair with silver streaks so she would look older and wiser. But she also liked to spray paint her hair orchid, sapphire blue and emerald green.

"This was perfectly normal to me," said Heloise, famous for her own beautiful mane of silver hair.

"My hair started to get gray when I was about 12 years old," she said.
Heloise: See Page 16

San Antonio Recap

When Marge Speaks, Folks Listen— Standing Room Session No Surprise

By Marlene Cook
Illinois Woman's Press Association

To open her afternoon session at the NFPW Conference in San Antonio, "Professional Ethics – do we have any?," Marge Carpenter quoted Eugene Meyer, publisher of the *Washington Post* in 1933. He had said, "The first mission of a newspaper is to tell the truth as nearly as the truth can be ascertained."

Then she asked, "What makes a good journalist?"

Going back to 1888 she told the standing room only attendees, "The old time journalist who works for the paper, gives his time and his health, his sleeping time, eating time, and sometimes his life."

She added, "Sometimes a reporter still gives his life. I think of the *Washington Post* reporter that was beheaded in Iraq."

"Ethics, unfortunately, changed with Watergate. We became too involved in bringing down presidents instead of reporting the news. And who decided to put a slant in a story?" She warned, "Keep your slants to yourself!"

Marge has been around for some time and when she speaks, folks listen. She was NFPW president from 1991 to 1993. She was moderator, the highest elected office, for the entire Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. That position took her to missions at all corners of the world.

As a no-nonsense, scotch drinking West Texas reporter and editor and a great storyteller, she was not afraid to share her own ethic challenges.

She said, "We know how to get even. Maybe we'll pick the quote we like and throw out the others, or print an ugly photo of someone we don't like."

That's unethical.

"Is there anyone here who has never been unethical?" No hands were raised.

In the 1960s, Marge was a reporter at *The Pecos Independent* when the paper uncovered a scheme in which Billy Sol Estes, a financier, conned farmers out of millions of dollars through mortgages on nonexistent fertilizer tanks. The paper won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

When Estes later ran for trustee on the Pecos school board he was defeated by a write-in candidate sponsored by *The Independent*. Billie Sol was a sore loser and retaliated by buying his own printing press and starting the *Pecos Daily News*. And the newspaper war began.

The phone numbers of the two papers were listed in line in the phone books, so sometimes Marge's informers would call the wrong paper. They'd ask for Marge and they'd answer, "She's not here, but I'll take a message." So they got the tip. Marge got a little tired of that and phoned the *Daily News* and asked for herself. They told her she wasn't there, which was true, but they'd take a message.

There had been an over abundance of fish in the lake and they were working to dwindle the number. Marge said, "Oh, I just wanted to tell her they just took a fish from the lake that looks like a dragon."

She watched as they hurried to the site to find nothing.

That was unethical.

Three days later there was a bad sand storm. Marge called for herself again and they again took a message. This time she told them a water tower had been blown down in Barstow, about six miles from Pecos. She watched as they went scurrying out for the story only to find out there were no water towers in Barstow.

That was unethical.

But they didn't take any more messages for Marge Carpenter. But they did hire kids to pick up and dispose of *The Independent*. Even Marge's daughter got into the act by just lifting the brick off a pile of *Daily News*. The wind took care of the rest.

That was unethical.

Marge said, "We've gotten mixed up with Freedom of the Press and our own opinions. Television blames newspapers, newspapers blame television. Have we lost our heart? Do we need to ask grieving parents how they feel? We have to report honestly, but with heart. We can't not report some of this, but do it as gently as possible."

She went on, "One time they didn't allow me to be ethical. The daughter of one of the big advertisers solicited someone to kill her husband. The publisher said, 'No! We will not print it.' I needed the job and it didn't run."

That was unethical.

Several in the audience shared similar stories about situations they were told not to write.

Sometimes reporters are stopped from speaking too. Marge was going to be interviewed by a then young Dan Rather and was given

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San Antonio Recap

Right to Know Opening New Doors to Let the Sun Shine In

By Mark Fowser
Delaware Press Association

Are e-mails exchanged by elected officials a matter of public record?

Must a reason be stated in order to seek government information through an open records act?

Those were just two of the topics covered in an NFPW workshop in San Antonio, "Our Right to Know: The Latest on Open Government."

One thing is clear: in Texas, the open records act is heavily used. The State Attorney General's Office is on track to issue 19,000 opinions this year on whether requests for information are justified.

Texas Assistant Attorney General Amanda Crawford said the panel that oversees such requests is quasi-judicial. A government body must seek an opinion before denying a request for information.

While the panel's role is to interpret and mediate, it is also there to educate. Elected officials to any office in Texas are now required to take part in one hour of training in how to comply with open meetings requirements and the public information act.

Sometimes rulings, or even the act itself, are challenged. Dallas-based attorney Malachi Boylus said in its fight to keep the law on the books, the state stresses several points.

* It preserves the public trust by helping public officials avoid the "appearance of corruption."

* It protects honest officials.

* And, it protects a minority party from being excluded from the decision-making process.

As for e-mails of public officials, a challenge to the open meetings law, which alleged it violated First Amendment rights to free speech, was rejected. However, it is the content of a communication that matters, not from where it is sent. For example, an elected official who uses his or her government e-mail for a personal message is protected from prying eyes.

Also, one is not required to state the reason when using an open government act to seek information. In fact, a government body is prohibited from asking for a reason.

New twists to the application of open government laws are happening all of the time. *The Dallas Morning News*, according to Boylus, sought access to the birthdates of all state employees for cross-reference purposes – to determine, for example, whether any had been arrested or convicted of a crime. It's a major concern in this era of identity theft.

The case is now before the Texas Supreme Court.

Ethics (Continued From Page 4)

prepared questions and the answers. He asked, "Why did you decide to go after Billy Sol Estes?" She answered, "Actually..." And they yelled "Stop." They said the typing was too loud, so all typing in the newsroom stopped. They started again. Marge began her answer, "Actually..." and was stopped again because the air conditioner was too loud. By the time they figured out they couldn't put words into Marge's mouth, it was over. Marge told Rather, "You're not a reporter, you're an actor."

She met him several years later and he asked,

"Have I met you before?" She said, "Yes, and you don't have any more sense today than you did then."

Was that unethical?

Sarah McClendon, long time White House reporter, invited Marge to attend President Bush's inauguration. Marge tried to be inconspicuous but Sam Donaldson found her and said, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" Marge answered, "I'm Marge Carpenter, Who are you?" adding, "I'm a guest of Sarah McClendon" He said, "Oh," and left.

Marge stimulated some conversation with her final question, "How do you feel about not being allowed to accept meals during an interview?"

Many who cover community news said a hostess would be insulted if they didn't eat with them. Some agreed gifts were not acceptable, but thought the limitations were too strict. Most agreed that receiving a meal or small token of appreciation would not influence what they wrote.

San Antonio Recap



Photo by Pat Ryder

Family Ties

Pictured at the 2009 Awards Banquet are, from left: Jill Miller and her Mom, Cecilia Green, Emily Richardson and her Mom, Donna Penticuff, and Clara Cordova and her Mother-in-Law, Kathryn Cordova.

Diversity Losing Ground In Era of Downsizing

By Ella Wright and Pat Richardson
Alaska Professional Communicators

Bob Ray Sanders, who has three decades of media experience including television, university journalism and newspapers, started his workshop, *Journalism in the Age of Obama*, using the Socratic method of teaching in which one asks a series of questions that lead to a logical conclusion.

He asked his audience to question differences in journalism from the Walter Cronkite years to the present. The questions ranged from the differences in race and gender to impacts of changing media ownership and staff downsizing.

Sanders' main focus was diversity in today's newsrooms. He noted that 10 to 25 years ago media expended great effort to get more women into newsrooms. When cable TV started up, he said, they sought out the most experienced women journalists. Now, these women have been pushed to the side by young women with sex appeal who are presenters, not reporters.

Sanders asked what is wrong with little substance and lots of sex appeal. "Is this a step back to what women did 50 years ago? Why are we accepting these trends?"

Are we going backwards by reporting on Michelle Obama's arms, her sleeveless dresses and her shorts at the Grand Canyon, he asked..

"What should daily journalism be telling us?" he asked. "Because we have 24-hour coverage, the reporter stands in front of the courthouse waiting for the live shot instead of going through court records."

"What's the topic today, not what's news, not what's important. It's what are people talking about today. ...Give us bullet points, don't explain it. Let's take polls, take it to the Internet."

"Some of you can still change things for the better. Is there advocacy in your place of employment? People are being reassigned. We used to see a cadre of people who went to management when they saw an injustice. Now they are just happy to have a job. That worries me. We need people to speak up. What does that say about us when no one speaks up? When I think of all those pioneers who fought all kinds of craziness, why don't we?"

"We will see changes in the FCC under Obama but it will be more about ownership than content. The real issue is whether we can get giant corporations out of the media business."

San Antonio Recap

Narrative Non-Fiction That Reads Like a Novel Has Been Key in Speaker's Successful Career

By Suzanne Hanney
Illinois Woman's Press Association

The experience of having worked on a newspaper, Mike Cox told a nonfiction writing session at the National Federation of Press Women conference in San Antonio, "is like being in the Marines. Once you've been a reporter awhile, you can do anything."

Not only do reporters have the ability to gather information, they can organize diverse facts in an interesting way, they can think fast and write fast, and they have the discipline to produce, Cox said.

Over a 40-year career, he has been an award-winning journalist with the *Austin American-Statesman* and other Texas newspapers, written 15 nonfiction Books, including his latest, a two-volume history of the Texas Rangers for Macmillan, and been elected to the Texas Institute of Letters.

An author at 21, Cox started each day writing before he went to work at the paper.

Why did he start nonfiction? "I was already doing it as a reporter, it seemed like the next easiest step."

A tip from a homicide detective that the Texas Rangers were talking to a serial killer gave him an exclusive story that made national headlines. In open court, Henry Lee Lucas blurted out that he had killed 100 women between his release from prison in 1975 and 1983. *The Confessions of Henry Lee Lucas*, which Cox wrote for Simon and Schuster, sold 125,000 copies.

Narrative nonfiction should read like a novel, Cox said, but he tries to make his research as scholarly as he can. He uses a lot of quotations, from diaries, court transcripts or contemporary works, then culls out the boring facts.

Other advice:

- * Universality is key: love, hate, fear or emotionally uplifting themes play as well to Texans as New Yorkers.
- * Show cause and effect -- or irony.
- * Don't be afraid to use suspense. Describing a four-foot water moccasin that fell into a fisherman's boat in one essay he judged, Cox said the writer should have delayed the punch line as long as possible.

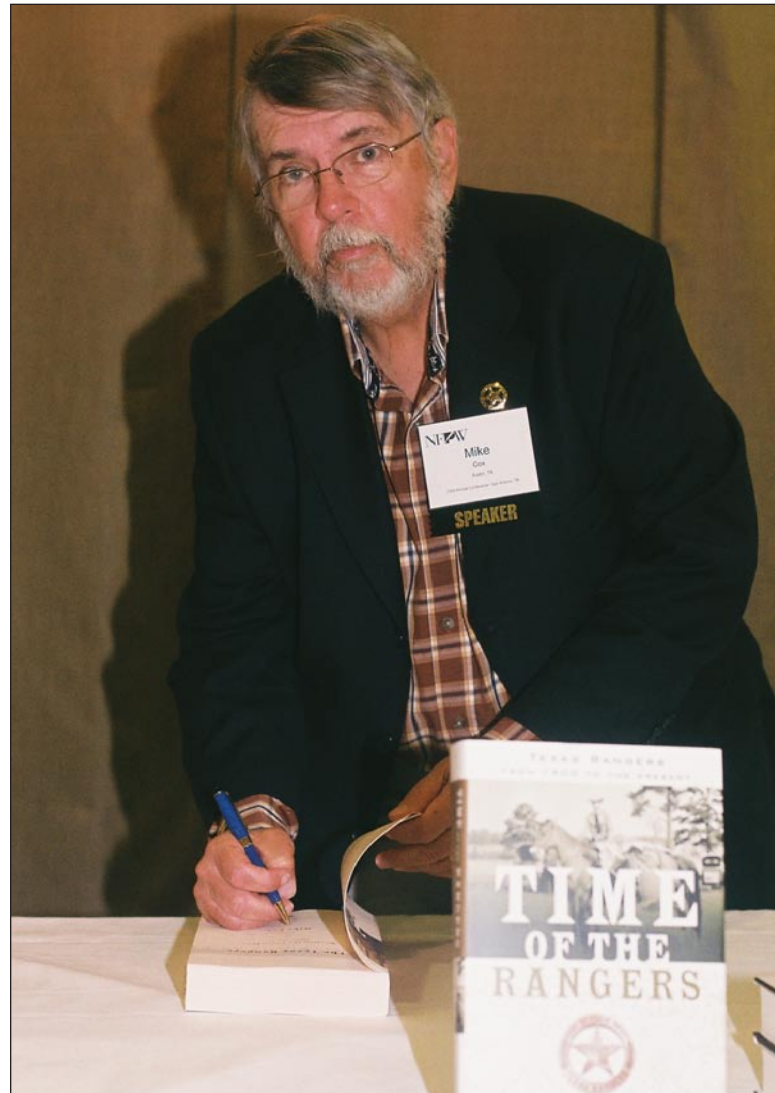


Photo by Suzanne Hanney

MIKE COX, SPEAKER at the non-fiction session, autographs a copy of his latest work, a history of the Texas Rangers.

Retired two years as communications manager for the Texas Department of Transportation, he writes the syndicated Texas Tales historic column for 11 newspapers and for Texas Escapes.com online magazine. He's also on Facebook and he writes the Lone Star Book Blog.

"I'm an old dog but I do try to learn new tricks," he said.

San Antonio Recap



Photo by Donna Hunt

Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch...

The full post-tour group gathers in front of the Texas White House during the visit to the LBJ Ranch.

Bat Cruise (Continued From Page 1)

Avenue Bridge in 1980, they began to nest there on a permanent basis from mid-March through November. They head south to a warmer climate during the winter months.

After the oohs and aahs of spectators and the last of the bats exited, the cruise boats began to head back to the dock. The Austin area has been in a terrible drought and the river was lower than our cruise pilot had expected and we inadvertently got too close to the shore and sheared a pin in the motor on our boat. There we were, 28 NFPW members and the three other passengers, adrift on the Colorado River.

No one panicked because our group is always is up for an adventure. We've covered lots of adventures and it was fun to be in the middle of one. We began wondering if we were going to have to swim to shore, when another cruise boat heading toward the dock came near our boat. Our pilot called to the other pilot, who slowly approached. The two got their heads together and pilot number 2, named Johnny, came up with a long rope with which the two pilots lashed the two boats together.

Our young pilot climbed aboard the second boat and towed us in to the dock.

Not only was our group in for an adventure, it was a noisy group at times. Someone began singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," and everyone in our boat joined in. Other tunes like "Oh Johnny" in honor of pilot number 2, and other appropriate songs serenaded the rescue boat's occupants who weren't as happy as we were (and no one had been drinking).

After visiting the LBJ Library, the Bob Bullock Texas Museum, the Texas Cemetery and a drive around the Capitol and the University of Texas, we headed toward Fredericksburg, the Wild Flower Farm, Becker's Winery and on to Luckenbach, Texas, the third day after staying overnight in Fredericksburg.

After a lot of Texas culture and wonderful workshops and speakers during our conference in San Antonio, our visitors found the Texas culture displayed at Luckenbach to be a highlight of the Hill Country Adventure. A visit to that tiny town of possibly eight or nine people is worth the trip far back in the Hill Country.

San Antonio Recap



Overtaking Texas Town

Presswomen on the post tour outnumber the residents of the tiny town of Luckenbach, TX. Pictured at the site of the WC^ VcA^ de@WTV RdV AW ^ left rear, Marion Garmel, Kathie Magers and Mary Jane Skala, In front row are: Glennis McNeal, Cindy Cruz, Katherine Keniston, Marion Galant, Mary Pat Finn-Hoag and Elaine Miller.

Photo by Donna Hunt

Award Winning Novelist Shares Secrets to Success

By Nancy Hamar
Iowa Press Women

"Writing fiction is like being a prostitute," says fiction writer Jodi Thomas. "First you do it for love, then for friends, and then for money."

Thomas presented a session on romance writing at the 2009 NFPW conference San Antonio, Texas.

She wrote her first book in 1988 and her first win of any kind was after she joined NFPW. "You would have thought I had won an Academy Award," she says. "NFPW changed my life."

Her latest win is a National Readers' Choice award for "Twisted Creek."

Thomas told her fellow writers, "It feels like marketing is more important than writing." A cover is developed and then the book has to fit the cover. She emphasizes the business end of writing and the events attached to getting published. When her third book sold, her agent told her to "get the one out from

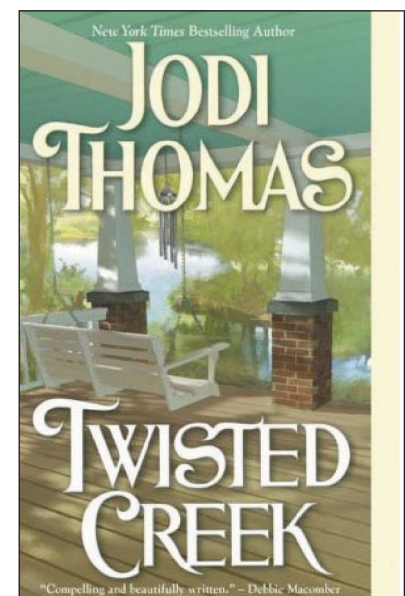
under the bed." She did and it sold to the original rejection.

She was told to add some sexual tension in her plot between an injured man and his caregiver. Thomas put in a dream scene and says, "I would put it back under the bed if I could."

Plotting a book can occur in unexpected places. While six women were flying from Los Angeles to Dallas, they were seated facing each other and discussing the stupid things they had done to improve their looks and what they hadn't done in their lives. They bonded and she knew she had to write a book about five such women.

"Let a plot wash over you," Thomas says. "Bring the readers along on an emotional journey you've never gone on. Your characters have to become so real you talk to them. Creativity is a river, not a bucket."

She suggests starting by selling a few articles, take some classes, read magazines, and join critique groups.



Thomas says "Twisted Creek" is her best mainstream story yet.

She adds that book to her resume of 18 Texas tales she has written.

"Writing is the only thing I was meant to do," Thomas concludes.

San Antonio Recap

Plan for the Future by Sharing Information

By Janice Denham
Missouri Professional Communicators

When Betty Packard was suddenly widowed at age 23, she responded as many mothers with one child 11 months old and another on the way would.

She froze the food neighbors had brought, so they would have something to eat. Then she figured out whether she could afford to live.

The 2006 NFPW Communicator of Achievement and president of Northern California Press Women became an expert on how insurance agents should talk to widows, has published a "Family Data Workbook" and answers international calls concerning what people need to know when someone dies.

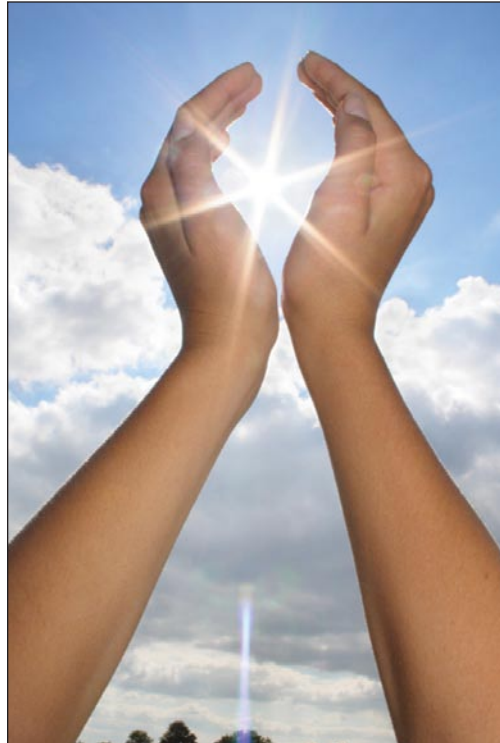
"If you are prepared, you are one step ahead of the game," she said at the NFPW Communications Conference. Her workshop was called "Frank Financial Talk: Order for Life."

She estimates that only 20 percent of the people get the financial reward they deserve when someone dies. They either don't know it exists, don't know where it is or are too overwhelmed to want to look for it. Bureaucracy will settle the remainder.

Her initial goal of interviewing 50 beneficiaries to find out how they coped with a mate's death has drawn her to consider the statements of many widows and widowers.

From will to cemetery plot record, divorce decree to mortgage document, tax record to insurance policy, Packard recommends listing everything that might remotely influence how a person's wishes during life would be conducted after death.

"A passport provides the easiest form of ID theft," she said. "Crooks have learned that it is



the easiest thing to steal, because who ever checks on dead people's passports?"

Once all the records are found and noted in a listing, a copy should be given to someone you trust, perhaps a child or friend, without depending on a copy surviving in one's own house. After all, it may burn down.

Packard gave a copy of her workbook to her own mother and said, "I don't need to read it now. Just fill it out and leave it where I can find it."

Some of her recommendations for gathering 50 records and tips to follow include this information:

- *Skip the pre-arranged funeral. Too many corporations, now owners of traditional mom-pop funeral homes, will not honor them in their entirety. Do list preferences for a funeral and memorials.
- *State specifically what should go to whom. "I have heard more arguments, more

screaming, more families split up over stupid things. If there has been a divorce, honor the first children if that is what you want. List it. Sign it," she said.

- * Give things away before death. Leave family mementos if the estate goes to charity.
- * Sign forms which allow private medical records to be shared, so someone else can help or actually make decisions that you would.
- * Power of attorney over a parent ends when that person dies, so be sure to check the state's laws about freezing accounts at the time of death.
- * Leave \$100 in the bottom of a lower dresser drawer for convenience.
- * Take someone along on doctor visits. Someone should understand what is happening from a medical viewpoint.
- * List Social Security numbers and birth certificates for the entire family.
- * Keep a budget up to date, so someone knows who should be paid what and when.
- * File an access password to every mechanical or computerized lock. It will allow survivors to find documentation, which will be needed for everything.
- * Don't assume and don't be complacent. Be sensible. There is always something new to learn about handling death. It is good to know how it works in the state in which a person lives, as well as in the state in which one's children live – because that might be the place where death occurs.
- * Keep information like access numbers and passwords close at hand.
- * Sign a living will with directives for medical care and carry it with insurance cards.

Packard's "Family Data Workbook" is being transferred online, so documents can be downloaded and changed as necessary. It should be available by the end of the year.

The current workbook is still available by sending \$14.50, which includes shipping charges, to Betty Packard, 1419 De Haro, San Francisco, CA 94107. She is available by e-mail at bettypackard@comcast.net.

San Antonio Recap

Social Media Changing the Way We Get, Disseminate our News

By Elaine Hobson Miller
Alabama Media Professionals

Are you on Facebook? Have you tweeted today?

If you answered “no” to either of these questions, or threw up your hands crying, “I’m too old for that stuff,” listen up. Facebook and Twitter are an integral part of today’s social media landscape. Whether you are a journalist, author, public relations mogul or advertising guru, they can help you do your job better, according to four workshop leaders at the NFPW communications conference in San Antonio.

“Twitter is a 140-character microblog,” said Kym Fox, one of three speakers at the “New Tools, New Rules” workshop.

Fox, former deputy metro editor at the *San Antonio Express-News* and a member of the journalism faculty at Texas State University, said that because of its length limitations, Twitter makes her a better writer.

“Twitter is becoming the place where news first breaks,” she said. “When that airplane ditched in the Hudson River, the first picture was on Twitter.”

She said you are never too old for new skills such as tweeting (the word for sending a message via Twitter), and illustrated her point with the story about Ivy Bean, a 104-year-old woman who tweets.

“She’s the oldest person on Twitter,” Fox said.

She said Facebook and Twitter are reporting tools that can help a journalist gather news but they transcend journalism, also helping other media professionals find sources and distribute their messages.

“You can’t break the internet, so fool around with it, experiment,” Fox concluded.

Jennifer McInnis, assistant editor at *210SA*, a weekly entertainment magazine targeting San Antonio’s 21-39 year olds, suggested using Twitter to post notices about news that appears on your web page.

“Whether the page is your own or that of the company you work for, you can use Twitter to find sources, take polls, connect with people,” she said. “Then you can follow up with phone calls.”

Twitter, Facebook and other social media web sites require as much time as you want to put into them, said Joe Ruiz, the third panelist on the “New Tools, New Rules” forum. Ruiz, nightside Web editor for *KSAT.com* and a freelance journalist, said communicators should be willing to try the new tools that are available, to determine whether they work for them. “Every tool is not for everybody,” he said.

Monika Maeckle, who conducted the workshop on “New Media, Old Media, Try the Hybrid,” said before diving into any of the new social media web sites, ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish. Then get a handle on the key concepts involved.

“If you understand the key concepts of these media, you can figure out the rest on your own,” said Maeckle, who is vice president for new media for *Business Wire* and hosts *Lost in MySpace*, a webinar for corporate communicators.

One concept is that people today are getting their information from each other rather than from institutions and companies. “The availability of free and easy tools and information from each other is changing the way we do things in the media,” she said.

Another key concept is Web 2.0.

“For communicators, this means searching and sharing,” Maeckle said. “It’s what you do to your (web page or blog) content to make it easy for people to find it. When editors and publishers consider layoffs, they look at who is getting the most hits on the web. So you have to market your content. This is the big challenge journalists and writers have to face. It’s a whole new concept for them.”

“Link Love” is another concept communicators need to master, according to Maeckle. (The term means posting a link to sites or blogs that you enjoy, admire or find useful.)

“Work links into all of your web content,” she said. “Think about where you are linking to, think about what people might type into a search engine to find your product, and try to get links back to your site.”

As a communicator, you need to know these tools but you don’t have to master them, according to Maeckle.

“You don’t have to be an expert, but a willing student with an open mind she said. “But if you do master them, you will be able to handle what’s coming in the next six months.”

San Antonio Recap

Digital Divas Share Tips on Blogging

By Sandi Latimer
Ohio Professional Writers

A couple of women who use today's technology in communications maintain they are not experts, but learners who happen to be a little ahead of others.

Nettie Hartssock and Jennifer Hill Robenalt shared tips on blogging in a workshop at NFPW's annual convention in San Antonio. They made it sound easy to get started and provided information where to find some bells and whistles to spruce up established pages.

"All writers should create a blog as a way of getting information across the Web," said Hartssock, adding that her blog serves as her Web page.

Robenalt created three blogs and explained that each carries a different topic.

"Your readers become accustomed to what



you are posting and when," she said. "And you can keep them coming back."

Robenalt cautioned bloggers and wannabes to keep the posts short.

"You are accustomed to writing up to 1500 words, but keep blogging items to 400 words," she said.

Hartssock mentioned spending 30 minutes

three times a week on blogging. She said it is possible to write items ahead of time and archive them to be posted at specific times. And Robenalt said it is possible to write some evergreens that can be posted at anytime.

Bloggers and those who want to learn more about the activity can go to their pages – soullabmedia.com and nettiehartssock.com.

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San Antonio Recap

Worth Repeating...

The following, published by Shayne del Cohen in the newsletter of Nevada Press Women, captures memorable moments of the recent NFPW conference.

This year's high school contest winners, as so many of their predecessors, give us hope and faith in the future. The keynote speaker at the youth recognition luncheon, Sophie D'Arcy, a student at Dos Pueblos High School in Goleta, California, talked of her project, "Kids Speaking Up" a remarkable organization dedicated to combating apathy and ignorance among young people. The group deserves five minutes of your attention at www.kidsspeakup.org.

Bob Rivards (*San Antonio Express News*), Mitch Land (Mayborn School of Journalism), Bob Ray Saunders (TCU School of Journalism) and Tammy Prout (*Hill Country Community Journal*) led Saturday morning's chat session on the Future of Journalism, consensus being that the need for and appreciation of journalism remains; it is the transmission and printing that is changing.

It was a conversation with no end that could have gone on all morning.

But the Ladies of Lincoln needed to invite us to Chicago next year, so in a presentation that zig-zagged the ages from Abraham himself to Sinatra's "My Kind of Town" to the bevy of beauties invoking the choreography of the namesake movie, the pitch was on, enhanced by "Get Your Kicks on Route 66", theme of the post tour.

From every conference one takes pearls of wisdom away. With the designation of "Heloise" as Communicator of the Year, it was fitting to learn that a packet of sugar substitute (yellow, pink or blue) vigorously applied to gravy spilled on a dinner jacket would perform magic.

The obvious reinvigoration of NFPW could be reflected in the over \$4000 raised for the Education Fund and in 39 "first timers" of whom 18 received NFPW Scholarships to attend. This puts a challenge to each "seasoned" member to bring in a "new" one. Go

for it.

The 2009 Communications Conference was a great success. The Press Women of Texas did a great job of creating a very valuable professional development event. Besides being filled with information packed sessions, it was also fun and poignant. We thank all of the members of PWT for their hard work and we especially thank Angela Smith, Bonnie Arnold, Donna Hunt and Kay Casey for their extraordinary efforts on NFPW's behalf.

To get a look at the activities in San Antonio, visit www.nfpw.org/conference.htm. You will find several short videos of some of the events of the conference posted on the NFPW web site. You will see that we enjoyed everything from dancing to band music to installing new officers, and that we ended with a rousing NFPW resolution.

We hope you will begin planning now to attend the conference in Chicago on August 27 - 29, 2010.

FROM THE FEDERATION'S FRONT LINES:

News from, and of, our affiliates and individual members

▲ **Ella Wright** was presented with a lifetime membership to **Alaska Professional Communicators** and a plaque honoring her lifetime service and achievements on Oct. 1.

Wright has been a leader of the Alaska affiliate for more than 30 years, having served as president as well as vice president, Communicator of Achievement director and scholarship judge. She volunteered for the national board in 1990 and ascended the ladder of offices, culminating with the presidency of the National Federation of Press Women in 2001-2003.

Coordinator of the hugely successful NFPW conference in Alaska in 2000, Wright also served as NFPW communications contest director and director of ethnic recruitment. She has served her community in numerous ways, such as volunteering with the Anchorage School District to promote minority female leadership, recruiting minorities for government positions, and serving on the board of Alaska Pacific University and editing its newsletter.

While working and raising two sons, she earned two college degrees—a Bachelor of Arts in English/Art from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a Masters of Liberal Arts in English from Alaska Pacific University.

▲ **Woman's Press Club of Indiana** member **Ann Colbert** has been invited to go to Oxford University in England in March to participate in a roundtable discussion on Women and the Academy. Ann is director of the journalism program at IP-FW (Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne), where she has been for almost 25 years. She was head of a research group on the history of women in the media for the American Journalism Historians Association, and suspects this is how she got invited to the discussion in England. She serves WPCI as recording secretary.

▲ **ROK ICT**, a new venture that is promoting culture and arts in Wichita will be featured at the next luncheon of Wichita Professional Communicators, chapter of **Kansas Professional Communicators** on Nov. 4.

The organization was developed as a social network platform for Wichitans to connect and a talent showcase of local creative professionals.

BD Tharp brought printer's proofs of her new book, *Feisty Family Values*, to the last WPC luncheon. The book revolves around three mature (and feisty) ladies living in Wichita. It's a tale of relationships, friendship, love and growing old with grace. Look for it on bookshelves in February.

San Antonio Recap

Heloise, Gates Named COA, Runner-up

The National Federation of Press Women named Heloise, a member of the Press Women of Texas, as the organization's 2009



Heloise

Communicator of Achievement. Verna Gates of the Alabama Media Professionals was named first runner-up. The two were honored at the 2009 NFPW Communicator of Achievement banquet on Friday, Sept. 11, in San Antonio, Texas.

Heloise is known by the single name that she uses as the byline of her syndicated column - "Hints From Heloise."

The column, syndicated by King Features, runs seven days a week in more than 500 newspapers in the United States and internationally. Her online "Daily Hints From Heloise" goes out to more than 250,000 e-mail subscribers five days a week and her Web site, www.Heloise.com, is a source used daily by her column readers and many others seeking trusted, tested and reliable information.

The daughter of the original Heloise, today's Heloise took over the column upon her mother's death in 1977 after working in the office full-time for several years.

Heloise said that she learned from her mother and follows her example in answering questions from readers. Her mother wasn't an expert, but she did know or could find where to go to get the information she needed for her column and taught her daughter to do the same.

A few years back, she visited 10 newspapers in nine days arriving at the paper on her Russian made URAL motorcycle with a sidecar, visited with readers, spoke with editors and took many for a ride.

A Texas native, born in Waco, she now lives in San Antonio with her husband, David.

Heloise is a 1974 graduate of Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) at San Marcos, with a bachelor of science degree in education -- a double major in business administration and mathematics with a teacher's certificate.

The Heloise Bowles Memorial Endowed Scholarship was established in October 2006 to commemorate the Texas State Parents

Association's 30th Anniversary on the Texas State University campus and to honor the memory of the original Heloise, who was the Association's first honorary chairman. The Scholarship is given to a student who is studying journalism and mass communication or mathematics.

Along with her support of Press Women of Texas, NFPW and other related professional organizations and activities, Heloise also makes frequent appearances for Battered Women's Shelters, the USO and the American Heart Association.



Gates

Verna Gates began her career as one of the original 50 employees of CNN who worked to launch the network. She worked for CNN as a writer/producer for four years. A freelance journalist for 26 years, she writes for a number of national, regional and state publications.

She currently reports for two of the world's largest and most prestigious news organizations, *TIME Magazine* and London-based Reuters International News Service. For Reuters, she has covered national stories from the Southeast Bureau, including presidential candidates, church arsonists, killer tornadoes, white collar crime, Constitutional battles, murder and corruption.

Besides her demanding writing schedule, Verna maintains a high profile in her community, including founding her own nonprofit organization. She serves on a number of boards of directors such as those for Seasoned Performers and the Alabama Environmental Council.

She also spins yarns as a storyteller and has twice been awarded the distinction as "Biggest Liar in Alabama" -- lies being Southern-speak for tall tales. The Alabama Bureau of Tourism named Verna "One of Alabama's Unforgettable Faces in 2003" and *The Huntsville* (Alabama) *Times* named her "An Alabama Treasure."

Verna's primary focus is on Fresh Air Family Inc., which she founded and serves as executive director. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to outdoor education. "Our mission is to teach that every living thing deserves respect," Verna said. Fresh Air Family launched in July 2006 and quickly rose to more than 10,000 members. She recently received a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

San Antonio Recap

Writing a Book? You've Got an Edge Knowing How to Tell a Story

By Kay Stephens
Pennsylvania Press Club

When it comes to writing books, award-winning author Diane Fanning says journalists have a head start.

"Changing from one genre to another can bring fear," Fanning told those attending her workshop at the NFPW's annual convention in San Antonio.

"But channel your fear to the place where it gives you energy."

Fanning lived in Virginia and raised three children while writing for radio, television and an advertising agency. She later moved to Texas and began working for a non-profit agency. After 10 years with the agency and after sending her youngest child to Texas A&M, Fanning started writing books and hasn't stopped.

"You know how to tell a story," she told those attending her NFPW workshop. "And you know how to put things together that make sense...As a journalist, you get a look at a lot of other professions...so there's all sorts of things you've seen that another person doesn't."

Fanning has long been interested in crime and that's what her books are about.

Her first true crime book was *Through the Window*. It detailed the confession of serial killer Tommy Lynn Sells to a murder for which Julie Rea Harper, wrongly convicted in 2002, was sentenced to spend 65 years in prison.

She also authored *Written in Blood*, nominated for the Edgar Allen Poe Award, and *Gone Forever*, which has drawn praise from staff at domestic violence shelters.

Fanning encourages journalists interested in writing books to read books. "Then ask yourself what made you like that book," she said. "Consider the question as a reader. Plus, you can learn what you don't want to do by asking what you didn't like."

She suggested tackling research and interviews for a book, just like a journalist writing a story.

"You've already learned to recognize that little gem of a quote," she said. "You can pull that out and put it in dialogue."

Another journalistic skill that's helpful when writing a book is to be clear and concise, she said.

"Don't go on and on using unnecessary words," Fanning said. "Spare and lean is always better."

Fanning's newest book, *Mommy's Little Girl*, is due to go on sale in November. It's an in-depth look at the story of Caylee Anthony, the 2-year-old Florida girl found dead in December. The child's mother, Casey Anthony, is charged with first-degree murder.

Brill Serves up Cocktail for Advancement

By Carol Sanders
Arkansas Press Women

Solo entrepreneurs should think social media and have a social media strategy, advised Larry Brill, writer and owner of Brill Media, a full-service graphic design and video production company. He told NFPW conferees that social media is not frivolous; instead, it has become a necessity for professionals in virtually every industry. Everyone should be doing lots of networking in this economy.

Social media has four cornerstones -- LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Blogs. "Think of LinkedIn as business professional and Facebook as business casual," he said in describing the differences between the two.

The first thing serious social media users should do is set up a Web site. And, use your own name as part of the Web site. If your name is still available, he advised. Then, get connected. Write a strong profile with lots of key words. Build a base of 150 connections, and use sites to interconnect.

He mentioned www.plaxo.com, www.biznik.com, a business networking site to connect with other small business owners; and www.fastpitchnetworking.com, a social network for business professionals which provides both free and fee services. Bloggers should limit their posts to 100-400 words.

Limit social networking to 30 minutes a day. Otherwise, it can become a black hole that sucks away all your time, says Brill. Be selective and pick one or two social media venues and concentrate on them. Entrepreneurs should join groups that are their target groups (potential customers) rather than targeting peers. Search your competition, find out who they are connected to and use these as potential contacts.

To stay within the 30-minute time limit for daily social networking, Brill recommended www.ping.fm, a free service that allows to posting/updating all your social networks at once.

Time to Change Chairs

By Pat Ryder
Pennsylvania Press Club

It's been fun, but the time has come to bid farewell.

For personal reasons, in the interest of domestic tranquility, I find that I have to turn my energies to another task—one that permits me to convince my spouse that it is less demanding of my time over the long pull.

By virtue of the intensity of effort required in becoming Director of the Communicator of Achievement competition, as opposed to the year-round demands of the job of Publications Director, I've managed to convince my husband that I will be able to devote more of my time to our home-based travel business while serving in the new post.

As I bow out, I'm happy to report that, thanks to the excellent recruiting job of our esteemed president, Cynthia Price, I am confident of leaving our publications in very capable hands.

During the conference in San Antonio, Cynthia worked her magic on Linda Koehler, who not only is a fellow Pennsylvania Press Club member and a repeat winner of national awards, she works for the company from which I retired so I have had the opportunity to read her work and follow her accomplishments for the past decade. All of which convinces me she has the talent and the skills to take over the post of Publications Director with aplomb and without skipping a beat.

Finally, I want to thank the faithful correspondents from the various affiliates who have contributed news items and sent along local newsletters.

A special thank you to those whom I tapped to cover various conference sessions and write other articles of interest to our membership. In some cases, I drew upon long-time friendships. In others, I relied on smiling faces, intuition and ready responses. All of you came through with the quality stories I counted on.

I knew I could. After all, we are all professional communicators!

Heloise (Continued From Page 3)

Nicknamed Ponce, her mother wanted her to change her name legally to Heloise when she was 18 years old. So her legal name is Ponce Kiah Marchelle Heloise Cruse. She added Evans after she married David Evans. She majored in math at Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) and helped her mother with the column. When Heloise became ill, she wanted Ponce to take over the column. She introduced her to the public as Heloise II. Her mother died Dec. 28, 1977.

"The night Mother died, I went to her apartment. Mother always said to start at the top. So the first call I made was to Randolph Hearst and his wife gave me a number to call to get the word out about Mother's death. I then got a call from her agent asking me when I was going to take over because they'd have to print it that day. I agreed to try it for a year."

That one year stretched into 32 and Hints from Heloise is now in its 50th year. "In Mother's time, she used a Dictaphone® and an electric typewriter. She wrote about how nylon netting cleaned pots and pans and was good to scrub your feet with. Mother got a letter from a reader one time

that said she used green nylon netting in her salad to help her diet."

Heloise related some of her own reader challenges.

"You know how for years it was always known that when you boil eggs you add vinegar to help them peel easier? When the question came up again, I went to the National Egg Board who said that was wrong. They said the older the egg, the better it will peel. So that's what I wrote and I got all kinds of mail that said that was wrong. 'Heloise said...' But, the facts said otherwise. And that's what we do. We get the facts straight."

Another reader wrote in that she had her husband's ashes put in an egg timer and that's how she timed her eggs every morning.

"I called a mortician and asked if that was possible and he said, yes, it was possible."

"Things change but what does not change is human nature," she observed. Another thing that hasn't changed, in the era of Heloise II, are all tips and hints received from readers are tested before printed.

"When you do something zany at home, you can always say, 'I'm testing a hint from Heloise.'"

As an active member of the Press Women of Texas, a NFPW affiliate, Heloise addressed her audience: "To all of you and those who came before, I appreciate how hard you worked and maybe didn't get the recognition you deserved."

Becoming emotional, she added, "My mother is up there in heaven cleaning the Pearly Gates with vinegar."

Heloise informed everyone that she is launching a blog that will coincide with the syndication of her mother's columns and will be based on her own stories.

Heloise, Ponce to her family and friends, lives outside San Antonio with her husband, David. She has a stepson, Russell.

How much longer will she continue writing the column?

Here's the hint she gave: "I love what I do. I'll do it as long as I am capable."