

NEVADA PRESS ASSOCIATION
2008 HALL OF FAME NOMINATION

For: Anne Pershing, Fallon Star Press

Nominated by: James R. Sanford

There are perhaps many women who **restart** their lives at the age of 38 while raising two kids.

But how many of them can graduate from college at the age of 38, find their true calling in the field of journalism, become the “heartbeat, soul and body” of a newspaper they started from scratch, and earn a Pulitzer Prize nomination for public service while earning the respect and love of her employees, her peers and her public?

Anne Pershing, executive editor of the Fallon Star Press, fits the bill to a tee, and that is why she should be everyone’s nominee for the Nevada Press Association Hall of Fame.

Anne has spent the last 25 years as the heart and soul of weekly newspaper journalism in her beloved community of Fallon. Her love affair with her community is returned by that small Churchill County city which has honored her many times.

“I watched Anne start as a reporter back in 1983,” says former Fallon city councilman and mayor. “Then in recent years I watched her single-handedly build a new weekly newspaper and develop it and serve the community very well.”

He was referring first to her work with the Lahontan Valley News, a Nevada weekly she helped grow from her work as a general assignment reporter from 1983-85; then as the news editor for another two years; and finally as it’s editor/general manager/executive vice president until she left in 2003.

At the request of Gannett Newspapers, Inc. and the Reno Gazette-Journal in 2004, Anne undertook a project to create a weekly newspaper from “scratch”. The result is the Fallon Star Press, launched April 2, 2004 and boasting a circulation of 8,500 readers today.

“To me she loves and is loved by Fallon,” says award-winning RGJ photographer and Hall of Fame member Marilyn Newton. “Her newspaper is good for her and great for Fallon.”

Along the way, Anne was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Public Service for here extensive and responsible coverage of the Fallon Child Leukemia Cluster that gripped her beloved community from 1999-2002. She was also honored with a 2001 Associated Press Public Service Award for that coverage and was the chief speaker at the AP awards

ceremony in Anaheim, CA. Three United Press International writing awards and additional AP awards were picked up along the way.

AP President Lou Boccardi acknowledged that the LVN was the newspaper of record for accuracy in relation to the leukemia cluster and said he wanted others in the business to witness the capabilities of a very small paper covering such an important issue, saying the coverage was incredible.

During her tenure, the Lahontan Valley News and Fallon Star Press have also received just about every category award from the Nevada Press Association, including general excellence, community service, best column, investigative reporting, freedom of information, photography, business coverage, editorials, features, and page one design. The Star Press earned 11 NPA awards in 2007.

Anne has also served Nevada's newspaper industry as president of the NPA 1993-94, NPA President's Award winner in 1999, and service on the NPA Board of Directors from 1989 thru 2002.

Loyal to a fault

But, unassuming Anne Pershing will be the first person to tell you she didn't make it on her own.

"I had plenty of help along the way," she says with a blush and a smile, offering praise to college professors, peers, staff and family.

Passionate about family, children and newspapers, Anne says, "Employees are your most valuable asset. Without them, you're nothing." She doesn't patronize and is never condescending with readers.

According to Anne, "Our readers are the brightest people in the world. I have the utmost respect for small town culture and honor the fact that Fallon has its own culture."

"Anne is loyal to a fault," says Anne McMillin, whom Anne hired away from the Navy as a public information officer. "She is loyal as a friend and as a boss and her work ethic is from hell. She is the heartbeat, soul and body of the Star Press. It would cease to exist without her."

"People know and trust her," adds McMillin who now works at UNR's School of Medicine in public relations. "She was a mentor and always treated everyone with the utmost integrity."

"Anne is an advocate of youth in our community and she supports their activities which I think is a big factor in the paper's success," says former mayor Bob Erickson. "She nurtures the youth and I think that's her greatest contribution."

Another former employee Mike Carrigan, who has gone on to become a Sparks City Councilman and is an adjunct professor at UNR teaching Media Writing, adds, “Her belief was always that a newspaper should educate, as well as inform the readers. She believed that the paper should be the eyes and ears of the community and a local bulletin board where the public could turn for information.”

“She treated all her employees with the utmost respect and it was just darn fun working for her,” added Carrigan, who had just retired from the U.S. Navy and was working on his masters in journalism when Anne hired him. “She immediately impressed me with her kindness, her sense of humor and above all her integrity.”

Admired by peers

Her peers also praise the individual and the journalist. “I have knowm Anne for a quarter century and she has always been one of my favorite people,” says Jim Sanford, retired editor-publisher of the Mason Valley News in Yerington who was a 2007 Hall of Fame inductee. “We worked together on projects and on the NPA board on behalf of the smaller newspaper in Nevada. She is intelligent, feisty, fun and tremendously loyal.”

Marilyn Newton, the award-winning photographer for the Reno Gazette-Journal, adds, “She is one of the most ethical people I have ever known and she really believes in what she is doing; and she always gives credit where credit is due.”

And, Marilyn Melton, widow of Nevada newspaper legend Rollan Melton says, “I know Rollie was always very, very fond of Anne and encouraged her. He told me she was tenacious, overcame adversity, and had to make a place for herself. She has to be very devoted to have succeeded as she has.”

University of Nevada, Reno professors Jake Highton and Warren Lerude also praise Anne Pershing.

Anne tells a story of how Highton told her when she graduated it was “too late” in her life for her to expect to become an editor. “But by God she did very well in school and by God she did very well as an editor. She is a hard worker and will be a credit to the Hall of Fame,” he adds.

Lerude, who is a Pulitzer Prize winner, an NPA Hall of Famer himself and former RGJ publisher, says Anne often served as a speaker/mentor in his Media Leaders and Issues classroom. “The students loved her and she related to them.”

He adds, “Anne represents the very best of what a newspaper is. She should be help up as a lamp of goodness and her actions inspire newer generations. She cares about the leaders and the town of Fallon. In my view, she is a hometown newspaperwoman adopted by her home town.”

Anne Pershing's Background

Anne Pershing was born in Bushnell, Ill., a town of 3,300 residents, perhaps where she developed her love for a small community.

Back in 1962-63, she attended Western Illinois University in Macomb, Ill. Where she was a radio disc jockey. The University of Illinois in Chicago was her next stop in 1967-68; and then it was on to Western Nevada Community College in Carson City, but not until 1980. She earned a Minor in Journalism and then a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communications at UNR in 1983, concluding her formal education with graduate level classes in counseling at UNR in 2003-2004.

Anne began her journalism career in 1983 with the Lahontan Valley News where eventually she managed the entire operation and 23 employees. She proudly points to her efforts to work with her staff rather than her individual accolades, pointing out such accomplishments as implementing a 401K and profit sharing program, along with health insurance benefits for those employees. "I tried to create a family-oriented working environment for employees," she says, and those employees will tell you she was successful.

In 2004 when she was requested to build a brand new weekly newspaper (Star Press) from "scratch", Anne will give credit to making that a successful effort to working "with a team". But, that newspaper turned a profit three months after it was launched and she was the one in charge of "everything".

Fallon has embraced that new publication, with the Chamber of Commerce naming it the "Business of the Year in 2006" and the New Business of the Year" in 2004.. The Churchill County School District also honored the newspaper in 2006 for supporting and promoting education in the community.

Anne has always been very active in her community as her civic involvement shows:

- * Appointed to Mayor's Fallon Centennial Commission, August, 2007
- * Chairman of Mayor's Millennium Commission (2 year celebration)
- * Chairman and organizer of "Community Day" to raise funds for victims and firefighters involved in 9/11.
- * Won the UNR Most Enterprising Journalist award in 1983
- * Member of Rotary International, 1999-2001.
- * Appointed by Gov. Bob Miller to 2-year Nevada 125th Birthday Commission, 1989
- * Served on UNR School of Journalism Advisory Board, 1989-94
- * Guest lecturer at UNR J-School
- * Appointed by UNR President Joe Crowley to the selection committee for a new dean of the J-School, 1992-93
- * American Association of University Women, "Woman of the Year", 1998.
- * Business and Professional Women, "Woman of the Year", 2000.
- * President, Fallon Chamber of Commerce, 2000-2002; served on board 1989-2002.

* Member of UNR Alumni Society, Nevada Art Museum, Nevada Women's Press Association, former member of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Society of Professional Journalists.

* One of four in Fallon who founded the Fallon Chapter of the UNR Alumni Association in 1983.

* Arranged for the sponsorship via the LVN for the free annual holiday concert by the Comstock Cowboys.

* Assist Boys and Girls Club of Fallon and other organizations in Fallon with fundraisers