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Writer Wins National Award for Travel Writing

Birmingham, Ala. -- From horse farm tours to a tour through the eyes of a former revolutionary, two articles published in 2017 garnered a first place award for Specialty Articles: Travel from the National Federation of Presswomen (NFPW). Verna Gates wrote “Race to Kentucky” and “Revolutionary Ties” for Birmingham Magazine. The award was presented at the national conference in Bethlehem, PA on September 7.

“I am passionate about travel and how it can expand us – intellectually and spiritually. We learn so much every time we exit our own front door,” said Gates.

While the Kentucky story resonates with the horse farm culture, “Revolutionary Ties” follows the adventures of a woman raised in Birmingham. Henrietta Boggs met the dashing Jose Figueres Ferrer, engineer of Costa Rica’s revolution and later president, and married him. Her life among whizzing bullets and daring escapes, including running from her burning home with a child in each arm, helped shape the country. Women’s rights and progressive policies in Costa Rica emerged from her horror at segregated Birmingham.

Judges raved about the stories saying: “Wow. Great writing, makes me want to go on this trip, for sure! In a few short and entertaining paragraphs, you’ve described seeing the great championship horse, farms and breeding barns, scenery, restaurants, racetracks. I feel like I am in the know (e.g. getting a tip about having track breakfast and looking for “hard boots”). Just so many turns of phrases (e.g. “who don’t read books, but read horses like a book,” “just met the puppy dog of racing,” and in the Costa Rica piece, “The most violence I expected to encounter was a deep-tissue massage”). That piece was a fascinating connection to Birmingham and more great writing “...the giant morpha butterfly adds it show-stopping electric blue...” Top notch.”

Recipients from across the country were honored for excellence in communications at the awards dinner in Bethlehem, PA. A distinguished group of professional journalists, communications specialists, and educators judged over 1,500 entries in a wide variety of categories. Only first-place winning entries at the state level are eligible to enter the national contest. All entries were published or broadcast between Jan. 1, 2017, and Dec. 31, 2017.

About Verna Gates

Verna Gates began her career as one of the original 50 employees of CNN. She spent 13 years reporting for the world’s largest news organization, Reuters. She also has reported for TIME, the Guardian, and Troy Public Radio. She is the author of “100 Things to Do in Birmingham Before You Die”. She is the recipient of a lifetime achievement award, the Communicator of Achievement, from the National Federation of Presswomen. More at www.VernaGates.com

About the National Federation of Presswomen

NFPW is a nationwide organization of women and men pursuing careers across the communications spectrum, including print and electronic journalism, freelancing, new media, books, public relations, marketing, graphic design, photography, advertising, radio, and television. More at nfpw.org.