

**BFF Women Journalists-IV:** Inspired by the words of award-winning journalist and popular television host Christiane Amanpour, November 1, 2018, who spoke of how the free press is, “the BFF of the people and not the enemy of the people.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd0Blxbgpuw>, prompted me to suggest she author a book expanding her friendly rhetoric to a larger audience. Then, awaiting Ms.

Amanpour’s book, I wrote a column about historic women journalists, to support them, their profession and the free press that has turned into a series of which this is my fourth column.

**Cora Rigby (1865-1930)** born in Lancaster, Ohio, started her career when women were just beginning to find a place in journalism. She started in a staff position with *The Boston Globe*, then as a reporter for publications in New York, in London and, in 1919, with the Washington, DC bureau of *The Christian Science Monitor*. That same year, as one of only ten women with one hundred men, she received access to the US House and Senate press galleries. Also in 1919, after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, she and five other women journalists founded the National Women’s Press Club in direct response to men barring women from membership as well as from functions of the prestigious all-male National Press Club. It is considered her most notable achievement.



First lady Eleanor Roosevelt joined in the 1930s and began holding women journalists-only press conferences which forced the all-male news bureaus to hire more women reporters. The NWPC became an influential organization of women for decades to come. In 1970, as the most prestigious club in town, the women voted to admit qualified men journalists and changed its name to the Washington Press Club. The next year, the male NPC voted to accept women. In 1985, the WPC and the NPC merged under the banner of the National Press Club. The remaining assets of WPC formed the non-profit Washington Press Club Foundation to continue to promote journalist women’s equality, a mission begun one hundred years ago by a group of five women journalists and Cora Rigby. The Foundation still exists today supporting women journalists such as, and including, Ms. Amanpour.

<https://www.marybakerreddylibrary.org/research/women-of-history-cora-rigby/>

<http://www.wpcf.org/history-of-the-wpcf/>

**Ida Tarbell (1857-1944)** one of the first women to graduate from Allegheny College in 1880, was born in a log cabin in Hatch Hollow, Pennsylvania. Her dream as a young girl was to be a scientist. But science, she would learn, was a field largely closed to women, and she would pursue teaching, a profession deemed more suitable for a woman in the late 1800s. In 1883 she met Dr. Thomas Flood, editor of the *Chautauquan*, a magazine of the Chautauqua, an adult education and cultural movement in the U.S. Flood was about to retire and hired Tarbell to assist him a few months while he searched for a successor. Writing became her passion she stayed for six years and became an editor. She

moved to Paris in 1890 to do further research on a series of articles she had written about women of the French Revolution, but published no further articles on these women. After a few years in France she joined S. S. McClure's magazine empire in the states that focused on civil reform through influential articles published by respected journalists and authors such as Upton Sinclair, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson and Willa Cather. McClure created a whole new form of writing for his staff that is still in use today. Rather than demanding articles for his paper immediately, he gave writers all the time they needed to do extensive research on their topics.

In 1904, Tarbell published her two-year study of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. She meticulously documented the aggressive techniques employed by Standard Oil to outmaneuver and, where necessary, roll over whoever got in its way. Her disclosure of his unfair business practices and the illegal means used by Rockefeller to monopolize the early oil industry, led to public outrage followed by government prosecutions of the company for violations of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act which led to the break-up of Standard Oil.



President Theodore Roosevelt, in a speech in reference to Tarbell, Sinclair, and other journalists writing critically about the tremendous power of big business, used the term "muckraker" (from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*). Tarbell objected to the term she felt it belittled work she believed to be of historical importance. And that she, along with other "muckrakers" ushered in reform journalism. It was journalism like hers that inspired Americans of the early twentieth century to seek reform in our government, in our economic structures, and in our urban areas.

Oil historian Daniel Yergin declared her famous work, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, as the "most important business book ever written." It remains a classic of investigative reporting and, ever since, newspapers have played a leading role as the watchdogs and consciences of our political, economic, and social proceedings.

Another president, Woodrow Wilson, commented on Tarbell's researched series of articles about another extremely controversial issue of the time, the tariff imposed on goods imported from foreign countries, Wilson stated, "She has written more good sense, good plain common sense, about the tariff than any man I know of."

Regarded as the most famous woman journalist of her time, she authored biographies of several important businessmen and in 1906 helped found *The American Magazine* that merged with *Colliers* and was published for the next fifty years. During World War I, she joined the efforts to improve the plight of working women.

Tarbell's legacy as a someone who took seriously the credo that journalists should "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted" lives on today as noted in the words of Ms. Amanpour that: "We go out there and go to all the dangerous places, and talk to all

the dangerous people, and bring back the truth and the facts and the evidence. What more friendly thing could we do?" And, they did do - historically!

<https://connecticuthistory.org/ida-tarbell-the-woman-who-took-on-standard-oil/>

<https://www.womenofthehall.org/inductee/ida-tarbell/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.\\_S.\\_McClure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S._S._McClure)

<https://sites.allegheny.edu/tarbell/briefbio/>

**Winifred Sweet Black Bonfils (Annie Laurie) (1863-1936)** grew up on a farm west of Chicago in Lombard, Illinois. She started her journalism career in Chicago, but on a family trip west in 1890, fell in love with San Francisco and became a reporter for William Randolph Hearst's first newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner*. It began what would be a fifty-year newspaper collaboration in which her exposé columns would help build a newspaper empire for Hearst and set in motion her career as a reporter of articles which investigated and influenced civic and social reforms.

Winifred's first column for Hearst was an exposé of the questionable treatment of women in the city's hospital emergency room. Wearing threadbare clothes, she feigned fainting on a public street, was prodded with a club by the police, and placed on the hard wooden floor of a horse-drawn carriage for the trip to the hospital and released after lewd treatment. Her reporting initiated hospital personnel changes and the establishment of an ambulance service.

Her articles mobilized public concern over society's inhumanities such as her 1892 column about the leper colony on Molokai, Hawaiian Islands, and often they created public good-will services. She raised funds for several charities, helped to found the Junior Republic for neglected, wayward youth, and she organized a charitable California Children's Excursion to Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Her 1894 Christmas article about a sickly child born in the city's prison hospital turned away from San Francisco's Children's Hospital because he was incurable raised funds through the *Examiner* for the hospital's "Little Jim" ward. Built a year later, it was dedicated to Little Jim, the first patient on the new wing.



In 1895, she went east with Hearst to launch his *New York Journal*. She disliked the city and left after two years to join the *Denver Post* while continuing to write for Hearst. He sent her to Utah in 1898 to cover Mormon polygamy; to Chicago to investigate its juvenile court system; and to Galveston, Texas, to cover the 1900 tidal wave destruction of the city that took an estimated ten thousand lives. Disguised as a boy, she slipped through a police cordon and filed the first eyewitness account. While reporting, she opened a temporary hospital and dispensed relief funds collected through Hearst papers. In 1906, in response to a one-word Hearst telegram that said, "Go," she reported from the earthquake-ravaged city of San Francisco. She covered World War I and the 1919

Versailles peace conference in Europe while she reported on the realities facing modern women at home - their work, their marriages, divorces, the violence they endured, their need for independence.

During her career from 1888-1936, her writings appeared not only in the Hearst papers but also in fifty other weekly newspapers through syndication. At age 73, nearly blind and confined to bed with diabetes but still working, she said of herself, "I'm just a plain, practical all-around newspaper woman."

In her final interview for *TIME*, one of the most successful, versatile journalists of her time expressed her love of newspaper journalism and respect for her colleagues. "I'm proud of being, in a very humble way, a member of the good old newspaper gang—the kindest-hearted, quickest-witted, clearest-eyed, most courageous assemblage of people I have ever had the honor and the good fortune to know." What more friendly thing could she have said in 1936 about journalists, so remarkably similar to the 2018 words about journalists being BFFs as spoken by Ms. Amanpour, who I hope, is writing her book?

<https://www.bookdepository.com/Winifred-Black-Annie-Laurie-Making-Modern-Nonfiction-Katherine-H-Adams/9781476662961>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/black-winifred-sweet-1863-1936>

[https://books.google.com/books?id=ywsyj\\_gy2agC&pg=PA600&lpg=PA600&dq=little+jim+ward+san+francisco+hospital&source=bl&ots=7fvAKJ56Wa&sig=ACfU3U3Zz0JxxtqP5jFRx8\\_u6MjDfyuU8Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiru7y5zbHgAhUsc98KHb9eBgoQ6AEwDHoECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=little%20jim%20ward%20san%20francisco%20hospital&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=ywsyj_gy2agC&pg=PA600&lpg=PA600&dq=little+jim+ward+san+francisco+hospital&source=bl&ots=7fvAKJ56Wa&sig=ACfU3U3Zz0JxxtqP5jFRx8_u6MjDfyuU8Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiru7y5zbHgAhUsc98KHb9eBgoQ6AEwDHoECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=little%20jim%20ward%20san%20francisco%20hospital&f=false)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winifred\\_Bonfils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winifred_Bonfils)