

Remembering Margaret Feldman, A Person of Substance, Compassion, Passion

My experiences and deep admiration of Margaret Feldman began in 1984 when I became the Executive Director of NCFR. Over 25 years until her death November 7, 2009, she was a professional colleague, a role model and most importantly, a dear and wonderful friend.

Margaret and Harold, her husband, were nearing retirement at Cornell and Ithaca College respectively, and were making trips during the summers to work on Family Policy in Washington D.C. Margaret was also the President of the NY Council on Family Relations, which was quite active under her leadership at that time.

After the White House Conference on Children, a small group of social science organizations had formed a coalition to promote better policies for Children, Youth and Families (COFO) and, in fact, there was also in Congress, a **House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families** which is where Harold had been providing research on the necessity of Family Life Education in schools. NCFR was a member of this coalition, and so I often flew to Washington D.C.- stayed with Harold and Margaret and attended the meetings. The organizations included: American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy; Family Service America, American Home Economics Association; and NCFR. Thus, began years of policy work. Margaret & Harold (until his untimely death in 1989) always graciously hosted me in their home to save NCFR hotel bills, and provided some memorable adventures.

Together, Margaret and I attended COFO, and COSSA meetings; interviewed members of Congress on their family policy activities, and wrote articles for the COFO Report which was distributed to members of all 4 organizations. Margaret's interest and work with Aging, and Women's issues; military families; and family violence also paved the way for NCFR relationships with other Washington organizations, and research and policy leaders. Margaret was the "front runner" who would seek out the important people, set up appointments and accompany me to the meetings, from Congress to the Pentagon.

Once, she and Harold permanently moved to Washington D.C., they joined with Barbara Chandler in hosting the NCFR Washington Policy meetings at their homes. (Elaine Anderson will address this.....)

Always, when I did business in Washington, Margaret would build in an additional tour of some famous place, restaurant, show, or meeting. She made sure that I became fully acquainted with all that this fabulous city had to offer. Sometimes it also included joining in her neighborhood service projects, such as her "**Riverplace Patrol**" group which went out every night to insure a safe neighborhood.

The most remarkable thing about Margaret was the breadth and depth of her interests concerning families. She was a citizen of the world, having lived in several countries, she was keenly aware of the plight of poor families, children, and women. She had also been involved in several United Nations sponsored international conferences. When NCFR was invited by the UN to be one of the sponsors of the UN International Year of the Family, Margaret willingly accompanied me to the UN meeting held in Vienna, Austria at her own expense. There we met 65 other nations at a meeting in Baden, Baden, and at the UN Headquarters near Vienna. Together we also traveled that country and Budapest.

When the United Nations sponsored the **4th World Conference on Women**" in Beijing, China,(1995) Margaret, Harriette McAddo (then president of NCFR) and I presented a panel entitled: "**Men and Women in Families: Research, Policy and Education**" Harriette did Research, Margaret did Policy and I did Education. Together, we three worked in U.S. Caucuses and toured China. I remember that on the day we climbed the Great Wall of China, Margaret turned 80 years old. I remember thinking, "I hope I will have her energy & drive when I arrive at that age. It was Margaret who helped Donna Shallala and Geraldine Ferraro write the paragraph on families which was inserted into the **Beijing Declaration** (**paragraphs 30,31**). Margaret subsequently went on to attend another UN conference on Environment in Istanbul, Turkey on NCFR's behalf the following year.

In the 25 years that I knew and worked with Margaret, who represented NCFR so well in public policy both national and international, she never once asked for a salary or any remuneration from NCFR. When offered, she always turned it down.

That is true dedication and passion and loyalty. So much more could be said about this remarkably capable woman. I can only say that I am so privileged to have known her and to have been her friend. I am also eternally grateful to her for her role and the legacy she left to NCFR during her many years of service. She would say today, if she were here. "Carry on – for children and families!"

Mary Jo Czaplewski