



E-Newsletter | January 2016

Movie Directors

As the year comes to an end, the Oscar races start to heat up as movies are released in time to ensure their consideration for these significant awards. It seems hard to believe that a woman didn't win the Oscar (Academy Award) for best director until 2010 - that was Kathryn Bigelow for *The Hurt Locker*. In this e-newsletter, we profile two earlier female directors who helped lay the foundation for Bigelow's success: Frances Marion and Penny Marshall.



Frances Marion

Referred to as the most famous female screenwriter of the twentieth century (along with Anita Loos and June Mathis), Frances Marion was the first writer to win two Academy Awards. She wrote more than 100 scripts and won those Oscars for *The Champ* and *The Big House*. Before moving to Los Angeles in the 1910s, Marion has been a journalist and an artist. Her business partnership with the successful actress Mary Pickford was long and mutually rewarding. Two of the movies in which they collaborated were *Poor Little Rich Girl* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. Both were highly popular at that time.

In 1921, Marion directed her first film. By the 1930s, she was teaching screenwriting to others at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Marion was one of the few people who made the transition from silent films to the "talkies" that we know today. Her script for *The Champ* has been used for several remakes including the 1979 film that starred Faye Dunaway, Jon Voight, and Rick Schroder.

Actress, director and producer Penny Marshall's path was very different from Frances Marion's. Marshall starred in the television series *Laverne and Shirley* which ran from 1976 to 1983, involved many members of her family, and led to

three nominations for the Golden Globe Award. That role came after work as a teacher, a tap dancer (she began tap dancing at age three), roles in television commercials and appearances in well-known sitcoms of the day including *The Odd Couple*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Happy Days*. *Laverne and Shirley* was a spinoff from *Happy Days*.



Penny Marshall

Convinced by others to direct films, Marshall's second film, *Big* (1988) featuring Tom Hanks, grossed over \$100 million and led to her becoming the first female director with that accomplishment. Her next movie, *Awakenings* (Robin Williams and Robert DeNiro), was nominated for an Oscar for Best Picture in 1991. *A League of Their Own* in 1992, featuring Geena Davis, Rosie O'Donnell, Madonna, and Tom Hanks, also grossed over \$100 million leading to her becoming the first female director with two films with that level of success. After her 2001 film starring Drew Barrymore, Marshall has focused on cameos and producing. In 2013, she received the Women

of Vision Award from Women in Film and Video.

Marion and Marshall are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. We benefit from their accomplishments and are proud to continue telling their stories.

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Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
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