



Our Stories

(from page 20 of the book)

Introduction

History Sets the Stage for Our 'Second Blooming'

The Authors' Stories

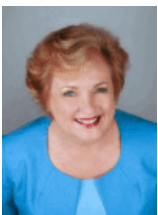
Our lives in many ways illustrate both the magnitude and speed of changes that have occurred in our - and your - lifetime. Think of it: women only got the vote in 1920. That means our grandmothers were the first women in our family to vote, our mothers the second, and we were third. By 2007, Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the House and Hillary Clinton was running for President. But how did this happen? Why do women now have this new stage of life, time for a 'Second Blooming'?

As the authors, our lives in many ways illustrate both the magnitude and speed of changes that have occurred for American women. Think of it: we only got the vote in 1920. For me, Kathleen, it means my grandmother was the first woman in my family to vote, my mother was second, and I was third. Also, as you read these stories, note how different our experiences have been despite being only seven years apart in age.

1940s

(Kathleen) The attack on Pearl Harbor happened only months before I was born in April 1942. American men streamed to the military to defend our country, leaving behind huge industrial labor needs. With three children, my father was exempt from the draft, but not from the war's impact on America's economy and social changes.

Women were actively recruited for the work force as most of the men were fighting the war. In 1940, just 10% of women who worked were employed by factories; by 1944, that figure was up to 30%. These women collectively were represented by the Rosie the Riveter character, now considered a feminist icon in the U.S. After the war ended in 1945, many of these women were displaced by returning servicemen.



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In my childhood, dad was the recognized head of the family. As my mother said with pride, “No one wonders who wears the pants in this family.” Yet, we kids saw what an expert she was at getting dad to do what she wanted while making him think it was his idea. My brother, their fourth child, was born in 1945.

(Betsy) I was barely part of the 40's. In 1949, after the war was over it was a cold, snowy day in the little town of Coleman, Texas, when I graced this world with my presence.. Across the ocean, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' was also making his entrance. The family folklore has my mother's nurse saying, "Our baby is getting more attention than Prince Charles."

It was a big day for my parents. During their thirteen years of marriage, they had been surrogate parents for all of their nieces and nephews. Mother and Daddy were both 33 years old when I was born - old for first time parents in 1949. Again, the family folklore states that I was a very difficult birth; therefore, the doctor convinced my mother to have a tubal ligation. Imagine their surprise five years later when she became pregnant.

The doctor tried to talk my mother into having an abortion as he was fearful for her life during another birth. And by now, she was 38! "You leave me alone, and God and I'll have this baby," my 110-pound, stubborn German mother replied. (There was no Roe v. Wade yet, so the procedure was medically called a D and C, or Dilation and Curretage.)

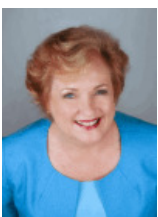
During the war, my father worked in the oil field and did not served in the armed services. Both of his brothers and both of my mother's brothers served however, and I remember the stories from those uncles I remember vividly the story about Uncle Don and his Indian motorcycle.

My father was the man of the family for all of the wives who were left at home. none of my female relatives worked outside the home at this time. Even as late as the 50's, only two of my aunts worked.

1950s

(Betsy) I had been an only child for five years when I became a big sister to Molly in 1954. I carry that responsibility to this day.

Mother, like many women of that time, never worked outside the home a day in her life. Daddy worked in the oil fields from daylight to dark, every day except Sunday. On Sunday, mother took Molly and me to church



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while Daddy cleaned the house and cooked ‘Sunday Dinner’ - really! Did I mention that my mother lived the life of a princess?

Molly and I lived the life of two cherished little girls. We never had to clean our room. We never had to do the dishes or take out the garbage. We were clueless about ‘chores’. Because my mother had a very queasy stomach, she never forced us to try food that we did not want. According to our mother, “I didn’t have these children to work, I had them to play with.” We were not far behind her in the princess category.

Self-image can be a wonderful thing, and my parents instilled in us very healthy self-images. It is interesting that both my sister and I have always worked since that was not our role models. Like so many things in my life, it was not a question of would I work. I knew that I would.

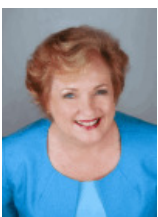
(Kathleen) All through my school years, there were no girls’ sports teams, because it wasn’t feminine to be athletic. Girls were relegated to being cheerleaders. At home, I could beat my brothers at basketball, but it didn’t matter outside the back yard. I had to keep my athletic yearnings under wraps.

We lived in a suburb of Detroit, one that was all-white. Still, I remember vividly being deeply disturbed during a visit with my aunt and uncle in Florida in 1954. When my cousin and I climbed on a bus, a sign said, “Colored people go to the back.” I knew that was inherently wrong, but I couldn’t put words to my adolescent distress as I had never been exposed to such bigotry.

Also in 1954, much to my parents’ shock, my mother was pregnant. She was 42 and my dad was 48, and it was ten years after my other brother’s birth. “How could you do this, Joan? We’re too old.” But mom would come back with, “Well, you were there, too.” I wasn’t supposed to hear that conversation, of course. Stuart was born on Valentine’s Day in 1955 and my folks were always assumed to be his grandparents.

My parents strongly believed in college education, even for my sister and me. Thinking like many men of that time, Uncle Alex told dad, “You’re wasting your money on those girls. They’ll just get married and stay home.” Mom and dad didn’t have money for us to go ‘discover’ ourselves, however, so we had two choices - nurse or teacher. Carol always knew she wanted to be a nurse; I always knew I didn’t.

My sister went to the University of Michigan in 1955. A ‘first chair’ flute player in high school, she couldn’t play in the University band because girls weren’t allowed. And college sports teams for girls? No funds, no teams. No need...girls weren’t made for sports, anyway. I graduated from high school in 1960, frustrated at boys who got athletic scholarships that weren’t available to me, no matter how much I needed financial help.



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1960s

In 1960, the drug company Searle received FDA approval to sell Enovid as a birth control pill, considered by many women as the most significant event in women's history.

(Betsy) Although my mother never worked, she was one independent little woman, so I come by my independent streak honestly. In 1961, when I was in junior high school, I wanted to run for cheerleader. At the time, I had asthma, triggered by the nearby cotton gin. Mother told me not to run (well, hm, I guess she forbade me to run). I ran anyway, was elected, and had a great time. I do not remember having an one asthma attack while cheerleader, though I'm sure I did. Interestingly, by the time I was in high school, I was horrified at the idea of being a cheerleader because it was so stereotypical. I wonder what happened to my thinking in those few years?

Girls sports were the norm by the time I got to junior high school. We had girl's basketball and track. Girls probably made up more than half of the high school marching band. In high school I was the manger of the girls basketball team. I was absolutely too short to play. I kept score, and helped the coach, coach. At that time, girls played half court basketball. Now, in 2007 we have professional women's basketball teams.

(Kathleen) At the university, girls had curfews but boys didn't, because girls needed to be protected, of course. Many a night I raced to get back to the dormitory before the deadline. Boys' and girls' dorms were separate, too - with not a thought that it would ever be otherwise.

In 1962, when I was a sophomore, my mother got a job at Best and Company, a fine women and children's clothing store. Suddenly, she was faced with the child care issues since she had stayed at home for the other four of us. She worked that out, not without guilt. She excelled in sales and picked up managerial skills for quick promotions. But when upper management needed a store manager, they skipped over her and hired two men in succession who failed miserably.

Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique in 1963. Radically, she proposed that men and women were created equal and attacked the notion that women could only find fulfillment through childbearing and homemaking. According to the 2006 New York Times obituary of Friedan, her book "ignited the contemporary women's movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States..."



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(Kathleen) President Lyndon Johnson spoke at my graduation in the spring of 1964, using the occasion to announce his Great Society plans. That fall, I drove with two friends to Fremont, California, where we had all been hired to teach.

In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex - explicitly including women for the first time.

(Betsy) Shortly after the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, Coleman High School, with a student population of 450, integrated. It was a very smooth transition, and we students were thrilled because our new colleagues helped us win football and basketball games. I do not recall one single incident of violence or even resistance. By the time my sister Molly was in high school, integration was the norm.

Molly's friends were a diverse group of teenagers. Mine were homogeneous to say the least.

I was married for the first time in 1967. I had been out of high school for two weeks! My, that seems so foreign to me now. My husband was 2 years older than I was and when we married, he was an electrician for the city of Coleman. Upon our return from our honeymoon, he opened his draft notice and the next day he enlisted in the Navy (so he would not have to go to Viet Nam). During his 4-year enlistment, he was off the coast of Viet Nam on the aircraft carrier Bon Homme Richard for nine months, was home for 3 months and then he was on Shore duty in Da Nang for one year.

Like most girls who graduated from high school in 1967 and planned to go to college, I expected to become an elementary school teacher. However, when my husband went to sea for nine months, I enrolled in a Business School instead of going to college. I took a nine-month secretarial course. Elementary teacher or secretary, could I have been more traditional?

I was quite untraditional however, when it came to birth control. To take the "pill" or not to take the "pill" was not an issue for me. I knew that I would go on birth control since I had no desire to have children.

By 1965, 6.5 million American women were taking The Pill, making it the most popular form of birth control. With a new ability to control child-bearing, women began entering the work force in increasing numbers and started envisioning having careers versus jobs.



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(Kathleen) By spring of 1965, one of my friends had become pregnant; although the pill had been invented, its use hadn't yet reached its peak. She married the father because being a single mother wasn't a socially acceptable option then.

Since I was supposed to get married in the summer of 1965, I went back to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I had been hired to teach fourth grade. My fiancé called off the engagement, but I stayed two years anyway. In 1966, my mother was at last promoted to store manager, a job she kept - and excelled at - until she and my father moved to Florida in 1971.

Ann Arbor was just one hour from home, with Detroit between us. When race riots blew up there in 1967, we could smell the smoke when the wind blew our way, and my parents and I worried about each other. The term "Civil Rights Movement" doesn't begin to convey the anguish, the hate, the trauma and violence that were convulsing our country. As overwhelmed as I was by my teaching responsibilities, I couldn't avoid being drawn in by what was happening all over the country.

(Kathleen) After two years of teaching fourth grade, I decided to leave the profession and started the rounds of looking for another job. "You're overqualified," was a frequent response. "Can you type?" was another. I quickly learned that, outside of education, my degree did me no good. In the post office one day, I saw recruiting brochures for the Navy and I applied, without telling my parents what I was doing. At least my college degree seemed to count for something in the military, I decided, as I could be an officer.

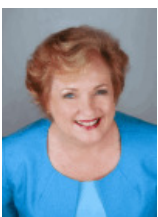
"By the way, mom, what's your naturalization number?" It was mid-July 1967 and I had called home to talk to my mother

Dead silence on the other end. My mother had come to America from Scotland when she was 11 and I could hear her brain straining as she tried to figure out why I would need her naturalization number. "Kathleen Vestal, what on earth are you up to?"

"I've applied to join the Navy!" I said cheerfully.

"Wait till I tell your dad!"

I'll wait," I said.



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And my beloved dad? Dad was upset, so upset that he wouldn't talk to me for months. When I said, "I'm going to join the Navy," he heard, "I've decided to become a prostitute." In his thinking, respectable women did not join the military.

I drove to Newport, Rhode Island, in October 1967, a stunningly beautiful time for a trip across the northeast. Officer Candidate School (OCS) was in a building next to Narragansett Bay with a fabulous view. What fun this will be! I thought. My class was about 30 women who came from all over the country. Yes, a women's class; the men were down the street. Separate...and clearly unequal, we were. There was but one female Captain in the entire Navy whose job was head of WAVES (women); when she finished that tour, she reverted to Commander. There were no female Admirals.

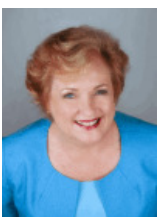
The winter bridge coat - same design as the men's - had no lining in the sleeves. Black gloves were ladylike but my fingers screamed for fuzzy mittens as they froze individually. Legs hanging out beneath the bridge coat quickly turned orange and blue. "Wear pants!" you say. Ah, but there were none. Pants were unladylike - not an option for female officers. Neither was pregnancy. As soon as a woman became pregnant, she was dismissed from service. Dependents were not allowed, either, which was a concern for me as my parents had asked me to care for my youngest brother if they died.

After four intense months, and spit-shined like our shoes, we graduated mid-February 1968, then trooped off to our first duty stations in the real Navy. Lucky me, I got San Diego.

I worked at the Fleet Computer Processing Center on Pt. Loma, a beautiful spot overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The Commanding Officer (CO) was a Captain, whom I considered god. There were five Commanders who served as department heads; they were semi-gods.

Inspections followed me here, too. Quarterly, we'd shine up and line up for the CO to check us over. He walked steadily up and down the lines, glancing casually at the sailors and officers. But then he got to me. He stopped, he grinned, he looked me over from hat to shoes. As his gaze went down my body, a blush went up my neck and face. "I don't think he's treating me like one of the men," I thought. His eyes moved slowly back up my body. "You look just fine, Ensign Vestal," he said, and finally moved on.

A few months later, I was sent on business to San Francisco with two of the department heads. We were attending a week-long school on computer systems, so were lodged in a motel. For some reason, Commander Kent was in a different one than Commander Barry and I.



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The three of us ate dinner that first night. Afterwards, Commander Kent dropped off at his motel while Commander Barry and I continued. “He’s friendly,” I thought, “not a stuffed shirt.” Polite, too. He asked, “Would you like to come to my room for a glass of wine?” The night was early, and I had nothing else to do. “He’s a Commander, by definition an officer and a gentleman. What harm could there be?” I thought to myself. I was just surprised that he wanted to talk to a lowly Ensign.

I stood in his room - junior officers don’t sit down when their seniors are standing - waiting for him to bring the glass of wine. But he set it on the coffee table and, much to my astonishment, threw his arms around me and kissed me. I was totally shocked! “Commander Barry, sir, please stop!” I pushed him away.

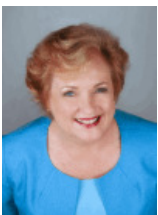
He pleaded, he whined, as I backed toward the door. “You don’t like me because I’m too old.” “Sir, look at the ring on your finger, sir; you’re married, sir.” “So?” was not the answer I wanted to hear. I left, confused, disillusioned, not sure how I’d get through the rest of the week. The concept of ‘sexual harassment’ in the work place didn’t exist yet.

Although I was officially an officer, it soon became clear that women weren’t wanted in the Navy. When a new male officer checked in, everyone assumed he would perform well, but a new female was assumed to be incompetent until she proved herself. Women received equal pay as men, but not equal respect. When enlisted men saw me on a street, they would cross to the other side, or turn around and walk the other way, or even aggressively walk past and dare me to say something if they didn’t salute.

1970s

(Kathleen) After two years in San Diego, the Navy sent me to the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where students wear civilian clothes. However, that first day I was checking in, I was required to wear my uniform. Walking around the campus, I was keenly aware of all the men staring at me. It turns out I was one of only four female students.

There were 30 in my section (or class) - 29 men and me. I was a novelty! Once they got past their amazement that I could think and did study, they took me under their wing. It was like having 29 very protective brothers. “I heard you were out late last night,” said Charlie. And Howie cautioned me, “You really shouldn’t date fighter pilots; they’re trouble.” But, just like a sister, I didn’t listen very well. I dated the fighter pilot anyway...and eventually married him.



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Flack, my future husband, and I loved playing racketball, but he'd have to sneak me in the side entrance because women weren't allowed in the base gym. When Admiral Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, put out one of his famous Z-grams requiring officers to be physically fit, I saw my opening and requested that women be allowed to use the gym, too...just a couple hours during the day, a couple days a week. Most of the men were furious at us for disturbing their sanctuary, though a few wondered what had taken so long to change with the times.

(Betsy) In 1971, after his obligatory four years in the military, my 'original ex-husband' as I now lovingly refer to him, went to Texas State Technical Institute to become a computer programmer. Computers at that time were as large as a house. I worked in an office on campus (that business school training really paid off).

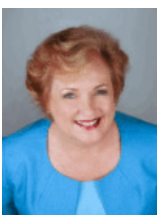
Two years later, he graduated and we moved to Austin, Texas, where he went to work for a large computer company.

(Betsy) In January of 1974, I enrolled as a freshman at the University of Texas. I was twenty-five years old and had been married for seven years. I was categorized as a SOTA, Student Older Than Average. My first semester I took all of my classes at night because I was working at Montgomery Wards. Subsequently, I quit work and became a full time student. In those few years between high school graduation and moving to Austin, I realized that working with children was not what I wanted to do. No elementary teaching for me! True to form, three years later I graduated from UT a degree in Psychology/Social Work. I loved college! I loved learning and I loved living in Austin, Texas.

My first job out of college was with the city of Austin Parks and Recreation as the Director of a Senior Citizens Center for the well elderly. All of the participants were mobile and the attraction to the center was a very low cost lunch.

(Kathleen) After we had both graduated, Flack and I married in July 1971 and were stationed together in Norfolk, VA. "Together" meant that I went to Atlantic Fleet Headquarters while he deployed to the Mediterranean for 30 of the next 36 months.

In 1973, Title IX (of the Education Amendments of 1972 to the Civil Rights Act of 1964) was passed which required that schools which receive federal funding provide equal opportunities for members of both sexes. Among other things, female sports could finally be funded. The deadline for implementation was 1978.



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In one of those rare months that Flack was home, his CO suggested that the two of us take a cross-country flight in an F-4 fighter jet. Keep in mind, there were NO women in Navy planes then.

To become qualified, I went to two days of survival training. I spent time in the pressure chamber, looping out from insufficient oxygen. A half day in the pool included the Dilbert Dunker: picture an airplane cockpit - without the plane - on a roller coaster track aimed at the water, and I HATE roller coasters! They strapped me in, sent me down the track...the cockpit hit the water and turned over! The challenge? Unstrap myself and get out before I drowned.

Next, I was strapped into an ejection seat which shot UP a rail. Now, there are two ways to eject from an F-4: you can yank the flap over your head and pull it down over your face which helps hold your head in place so you don't break your neck; or, there is a handle between your legs. Pull it, and you eject. They lectured me, "Don't pull this handle! Do not pull it!"

All qualified, I borrowed a flight suit and boots from the shortest, smallest guy in the squadron. Still, I had to roll up the sleeves and legs, stuff my long hair in a helmet, and off we went from Naval Air Station, Virginia Beach, Virginia, to McDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida.

Two other guys from the squadron flew there in another plane, landing shortly before we did. When they took their golf clubs out of the blivet (storage unit attached to the plane), the Air Force crew was impressed. "You Navy guys really know how to travel!" The F-4 Lieutenant said, "If you think this is something, wait till you see what's on the next plane!"

The Air Force crew waited, and they gathered all sorts of other folks to wait, too, "to see what was on the next plane." When we landed, our plane was circled by dozens of curious people. With goggles, helmet, and flight suit, I looked passably like a man. But when I took off the helmet and shook out my long hair, they stared, dumbstruck. Jaws dropped. "Sir," one man said admiringly to Flack, "you really know how to fly!" Flack flippantly replied, "It's so much easier than trying to find a date."

When we flew out the next day, the crowd had doubled because word of this WOMAN in an F-4 fighter jet had spread. Once again, I swished up my hair, tucked in into the helmet, and climbed in the back seat labeled LT K. Logan. Off we flew, leaving an astounded Air Force base in our wake.

By 1973, 10 million American women were using The Pill. Also that year, the Roe V. Wade Supreme Court decision held that a woman, with her doctor, could choose abortion in earlier months of pregnancy without



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restriction, and with restrictions in later months, based on the right to privacy. It seemed the days of illegal and dangerous abortions were over.

(Kathleen) The resentment of women in the Navy lingered among many men. On an official flight to Washington, D.C., in 1973 with a plane full of officers, the Lieutenant next to me asked, “Don’t you feel guilty taking a man’s job?”

By late 1973, I was pregnant. I wore my uniform until I couldn’t zip the zipper any more, then went to talk with my boss. “Captain J., may I please have permission to wear civilian clothes to work?” There were no maternity uniforms then.

Navy regulations had changed by this time, so I could have stayed on active duty. However, Flack had orders to San Diego, so I decided to get out. One day in March, 1974, I signed all the papers to become a civilian. The very next day, I went to the Navy Hospital to pick up my medical record.

“I’m sorry ma’am,” said the hospital Corpsman, “but your husband will have to pick this up. We can’t give medical records to dependents.”

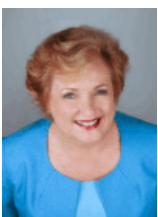
“But yesterday I was a Lieutenant. You would have given it to me then!” I protested.

“Yes, ma’am, but today you’re a dependent,” he said, and turned his back to me. I felt instantly diminished, demoted, and put in my place.

1980s

(Kathleen) Despite the Civil Rights Act, Title IX and other laws promoting equality, it takes time for significant social change to take root. My husband, for example, had been selected to be Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier USS Lexington which was home-ported in Pensacola. It was designated AVT, a non-combatant aviation training carrier (as opposed to a CVA, or combat carrier). Women were not allowed on combatant ships, though there were some on repair and supply ships. When Flack took command in May 1988, there were a few women on board USS Lexington, but his goal was to have 50%. By his Change of Command in 1991, the crew was approximately 40% women, and they had performed well.

I graduated from the University of Texas with my undergraduate degree in 1977, three years after enrolling as a “student older than average”. I enjoyed my job with the senior citizens (many who were not much older than I



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am as I write this book); however, when my mentor from undergraduate school called with an opening in her Community Education program I jumped at the chance to work with her. She was working on her Master's Degree and I started thinking seriously about graduate school.

My husband was seriously thinking about divorce. I had a sense of foreboding when he started showering and shaving before going to his co-ed softball practice on Sunday afternoons. What did I do about that sense of foreboding? I joined the team and THEN learned to hit and throw.

I'll never know if it was my entry into softball or my determination to continue my education that gave him the impetus to tell me he was leaving me.

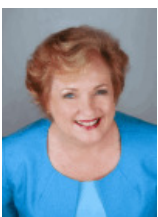
As I reflect on that time, I see clearly that I had changed a great deal during the twelve years we had been married. Twelve years of marriage and I was twenty-nine years old! He on the other hand had remained very much the same good old boy from Coleman, Texas population 6,000.

I worked full time in Austin and attended graduate classes at Texas A&M (a ninety mile drive) two times a week. I took a leave of absence in the summers to "do my required residency" at A&M. I finished my masters in two years.

The eighties were a terrific decade for me. I was in my thirties, but since I had been married all my life, I reverted to thinking and acting like a twenty year old. I reinvented myself. I worked hard, played hard, studied hard and now have beautiful memories. The eighties were the time of fern bars and Urban Cowboy. Bras were optional. The worst and newest sexually transmitted disease of the time was herpes.

It was during my masters program that I first heard the term "marginal women" in a course on sexism and racism. In this instance, "marginal women" are myWomen who were raised in a very traditional home, but who struggled with wanting a career outside the home, with or without children. We are in the margin between June Cleaver and (I am woman singer).

I began my masters program in 1979 and completed it in 1981. Part of my final process was to apply for the doctoral program. My advisors insisted that I do this, that I could have instant access should I decide to pursue my PhD. Two years after completing my masters degree, I applied for a transfer to a new Community School that was opening in my district. They selected someone else for the position that I considered was the perfect job for me.



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In July that summer, I went on a camping trip to Colorado with friends from the former marriage and others. We really roughed it. We made our own latrine, etc. Every morning I would wake up before dawn and watch the sun ride over the mountains. I hiked up the face of mountains in my Nike sneakers (my colleagues all had hiking boots). I hiked across a snow patch one morning and then later in the afternoon jumped into the pool of water made from the melting of the snow.

One morning I went “down to town” and made three life changing phone calls. First, I called my major professor at Texas A&M and told him I was ready to work on my PhD and that I was quitting my job. He was happy for me and told me he would have an apartment and a graduate assistantship ready for me when I returned home. Second, I called my boss and gave him my two weeks notice. The third call was to my Mother. She was shocked and asked if I couldn't take a leave of absence rather than quit. No, I was not going back to that job! My Father didn't know exactly what working on a doctorate was and asked if I planned to go to school for the rest of my life.

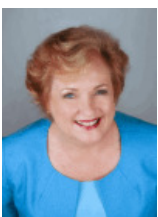
I quit my job, withdrew my retirement, and enrolled in the doctoral program at Texas A&M in 1983. I was a graduate assistant making \$600.00 a month. I had enough school loans to be a medical doctor! I defended my dissertation (finished my program) in August of 1985. Then, I began the search for a job. I worked at the university almost a year before be selected for a Dean's position at Pensacola Junior College in Pensacola, Florida. I was thirty-seven years old.

1990's

I began my career at Pensacola Junior College in the fall of 1986. I started as the Dean of Continuing Education and was one of two senior executive females at the college. The college had new president and executive vice president and they were proactive in promoting women.

I was promoted to provost within three years of my arrival. The promotion is a story!

I was hired by and reported to the Executive Vice President. I sat on President's Council, but reported to the Exec. At one of the monthly Board of Trustees meetings, the president announced that he was promoting me to Provost of the Open Campus. I had not been consulted, nor had my boss been consulted. This was during a very turbulent time with our faculty union and the board room was overflowing with faculty and the press; therefore, I did not stay for the meeting. My significant other (who later became my husband briefly) was at the meeting. He called me irate that I had not told him about the promotion. I was stunned.



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As honored as I was, the strategy, or lack of strategy with which this promotion occurred had long lasting negative affects. Each board member received an anonymous letter accusing me of sleeping with my boss to get the promotion. Another hot rumor was that I was gay. It was a hard lesson on being tough, holding my head up proudly and continuing to work professionally and effectively.

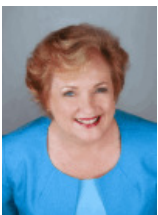
Not long after my ascension to provostdom I remarried. The night before the wedding, my friend from graduate school who was in town for the celebration, and I had a heart -to-heart talk. I knew that marrying this man was wrong -and - I went through with the marriage anyway. Three years later, I initiated the divorce.

2000s

(Kathleen) One of the female officers on USS Lexington was a Lieutenant Commander who Flack felt exhibited excellent seamanship and leadership skills. He, and others as she moved on, mentored her and encouraged her growth. Later, she was selected to be CO of a ship, and by 2007, she was selected to become an Admiral, something unimaginable in my Navy years.

We women have indeed come a long way in a relatively short time, not just in the military, but in all businesses and organizations. Young women now consider it normal to play sports, choose from a wide variety of career options, advance on their merits, be free of sexual harassment, and decide when they want to have a baby. Yes, there are still gender disparities, but the gap is closing inexorably.

So what does it all mean for us? It means that historical events during our lifetime planted the seeds for American women's continued growth at a time when we're 'supposed' to be quiet and content with aging. Now, for the first time, the stars align for us to have a 'Second Blooming'. We can anticipate a fulfilling and abundant stage of life that our mothers never dreamed of. Let's seize the opportunity!



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