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THE UNTOLD STORIES OF WORKING WOMEN IN THE 1950s

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INVISIBLE WOMEN IN TRANSITIONAL TIMES: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF WORKING WOMEN IN THE 1950s

By

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ABSTRACT

INVISIBLE WOMEN IN TRANSITIONAL TIMES:
THE UNTOLD STORIES OF WORKING WOMEN IN THE 1950s

By

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Women's lives in the 1950s were much more diverse than is apparent in the mass media of the time, since those media likely were both reflecting the culturally proscribed value structure of the time and constructing a reality that the American power structure wished the rest of the world to see. A qualitative study of the way that women's lives were depicted in the nation's largest mass-circulation, general audience magazine of the day—*Life*, with a circulation of more than 6.5 million and an audience that spanned gender and ages—places the question within a cultural context, and provides important insight on the decade of the 1950s in America; a decade, it is argued, that was as volatile and conflict-ridden as those that preceded and followed it. By applying frameworks of feminist, cultural, and media theory to an examination of the way that *Life* portrayed women who worked for pay during a decade in which the social structure was built in part on the ideal of women being at home, it can be shown that the magazine, one of the most well read and influential of its day, also was providing a kind of rallying point for a culture searching for a sense of order and security. It also is likely that, in this transitional decade of America's culture and social order, women were at the center of an invisible revolution that would come to the attention of the nation during the 1960s. Indeed, the one-third of American women who worked for pay during the decade actually formed a new culture—a culture of working women—that still has gone unrecognized in a society where women and the roles they play often are held up as symbols of economic success

or social stability. While the productive 1950s housewife has been joined, thanks to the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, by the dissatisfied suburban homemaker in the nation's cultural history, their paycheck-earning sisters still are considered exceptions to the rule. Thus, they are marginalized and dismissed during a decade in which they actually led vibrant, productive, and diverse lives. A close look indicates that this culture of working women served as a metaforce that made wide cultural change inevitable.

To my parents, whose dedication to education inspired my own; to my husband, whose unquestioning faith and unequivocal support provide those timeworn essentials for success, roots and wings; and to my daughters, who like their grandmother are walking right into the rest of their lives: the ones they will build themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

More than anything, this is a study of stories told and untold, and for that I most gratefully acknowledge the ten women who so readily accepted me into their offices, homes and lives to tell me about their lives during the 1950s. Although their lives were very different, each told her story with deep pride and satisfaction. I admire each of them greatly, and am indebted to them for their trust and time.

I also acknowledge the guidance of my adviser and dissertation director, Dr. Gretchen Barbatsis, whose encouragement and enduring belief in the value of my work were invaluable; my guidance committee, who in addition to Dr. Barbatsis included Dr. David Cooper, Dr. Maureen Flanagan, and Dr. Joyce Ladenson; and the colleagues with whom I discussed my ideas and findings as they coalesced into this project, each of whom had an interesting story of her own to tell.

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INTRODUCTION

THE REST OF THEIR LIVES

In 1951 she was twenty years old, two years out of high school, and suddenly out of a job. The doctor for whom she worked—a highly respected family man whose practice was housed in a busy town seven miles down U.S. Route 2—had taken a liking to her and proposed that their relationship move beyond the professional level. He'd buy her a car, he promised, and a fur coat. His wife wouldn't mind, he assured her. She'd have everything she wanted and more than most girls from her small mining town in the rocky hills of Michigan's western Upper Peninsula.

Horrified, she balked; determined, he pushed. Finally, she took the only recourse she knew: she quit, walked out, and stepped into an unfair world full of promise and confusion, opportunity and roadblocks, a world that turned out to be nothing like she had imagined and yet everything she could dream.

Without knowing it, she was walking right into the rest of her life: the one she would build herself.

My mother—the young woman who walked out of that office as the United States entered the second half of the twentieth century—is seventy-one years old this year and talks matter-of-factly now about the things she has done. She is a teacher, a mentor, a mother, a spouse; a homeowner, a fun-lover, a traveler, a worker. The Cold War years of the 1950s, alternately defined as a time of unprecedented prosperity and promise for families and a time of domestic containment for the women within them, for her were a decade of challenges and work, of taking chances, of sudden adventure, of finding her way. They were not the 1950s I knew anything about. What I knew was what I saw on film and in the news and on television: someone else's decade.

Why didn't I know any differently? Why have I been so surprised, in recent years, at the things my mother has told me about that decade in her life? Sometimes she'll say, "When I think about it now, I can't believe I did that." Why is she just as surprised as I?

To a large degree, it's because the decade was constructed for us. It was constructed for her, as she lived it, by news-makers through the media, by profit-makers through advertisements, by the entertainment industry through film and song. It was constructed for me, since then, in part by the nation's need to hang on and harken back to a time that seemed less complicated and more certain—and, to an extent, by those same media-makers and their various mediated realities. It's a symbiotic relationship, today's theorists would say; the media-makers are not passive transmitters of the message, nor are the media users passive recipients of it. As communications theorist James Carey says: we construct our realities, and then we take up residence within them.[1]

The nagging questions, though, related to the construction of Cold War lives during that transitional time in American history are symbiotically connected as well: What was the construction, and why was it so? What did the media show of women's lives; what did the populace see? Why did the media construct that particular reality, and why did the nation take up residence within it?

A qualitative study of the way in which women's lives were depicted in the nation's largest mass-circulation, general-audience magazine of the day—*Life*, with a circulation of more than 6.5 million and an audience that spanned gender and ages—places the question within a cultural context and provides important insight on the decade of the 1950s in America. That decade, it can be argued, was as volatile and conflict-ridden as those that preceded and followed it, if only anyone had noticed. The number, variety, and form of the depictions of women are important; they indicate a recognition of the fact that women did play a variety of roles in society, although their work roles typically were depicted as less important and often were framed in a way that was, at

best, disparaging of the actual value of their work. In noting the trend in coverage over the course of the decade and in comparing the editorial content to the advertising content, it is particularly telling to compare not only the numbers, but also the types of coverage given to women as wage earners, and to note how that may be indicative that the magazine, despite its presumed role as an objective reporter of the news, was actually portraying and confirming a particular and changing view of the world.

All three aspects of the study are important in enhancing the understanding of women's lives: The decade of the 1950s, because it was such an unusual time in the nation's history (Andrew Cherlin, in fact, calls the decade the most unusual one, in terms of family life, of the century[2]) and yet has since been held up as the norm; women's lives, because it was their private-sphere roles as mothers, homemakers, and spouses that has framed the nation's memories of the decade; and the media, which in a free society both reflect and construct reality. The addition of the testimony of a select group of women who played a variety of roles during that decade should provide a better understanding of women's lives at the height of the Cold War in the 1950s and can raise questions for further examination.

Those family-centered roles that now frame fond memories were at the time the stuff of economic, social, and political policy, and were the rallying point of society. "... [T]he family is the chief conservator of our cultural and spiritual heritage—and so has a large share of responsibility," said Anne G. Pannell, president of Sweet Briar College, in a speech at the Second Annual Public Affairs Forum in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1951. "It traditionally sets the tone of our common life and influences standards of conduct more than all other factors. It is the traditional role of women to keep the home and

conserve the best elements of our heritage—to be in John Mason Brown's comparison 'The Typhoid Marys'—the Carriers and Transmitters of culture, civilization and religion, and not the exponents of today's three Cs—Cocktails, Canasta and Cynicism." Women, she notes, are "the hope of the future—the logical, practical sex, aesthetically responsible, wary, discreet, who need to extend their practicality to the consideration of world problems and the place of strong families in building a secure nation and world."[3]

Even while advocating for advanced education of women, Pannell placed women squarely in the center of the family and focused on the important role of child-rearing, which she called an intellectual occupation in itself; "It calls, and calls loudly—and often in vain—for carefully trained mental, as well as great moral powers," she said, and who could argue with that? This was a child-centered society. Stephanie Coontz, among others, noted that marriage was a bond universally praised, the family was considered the bulwark institution of the nation, and that the baby boom was a characteristic so integral to the culture that it spanned all classes and ethnic groups. Far from being an American ideal of the past, she notes, the idyllic family of the 1950s was a new invention—a kind of experiment, it can be shown, that bears further study in an effort to determine just how "right" it was for the men, women and children who lived within it.[4]

Yet as a part of that economic boom and stable economy, women increasingly found themselves juggling a variety of roles, just as did men: spouse, parent, sibling, son or daughter, and employee. The latter, in particular, has been a source of controversy and conflict for U.S. women and the culture in which they live ever since the Cold War ideal was constructed. For that reason, a focus in particular on the way *Life* portrayed women in their roles at work—work for pay, that is, as opposed to the unpaid work that they do

taking care of homes and families—allows an examination from a feminist theoretical standpoint, raising questions of gender construction in society. It allows an examination of the mores and values of the time, and raises intriguing questions about why some roles were visible, and others invisible, at this time in the nation's history. That, then, allows a better understanding of the familial and cultural demands of the decade, further enhancing the understanding of women's lives during the 1950s.

As noted earlier, *Life,* one of the most well read and influential publications of its day, most likely was both reflecting a reality of American life at the time and constructing it, while providing a kind of rallying point for a culture searching for a sense of order and security. Is also is likely that, in this decade of transition for American culture and social order, women were at the center of an invisible revolution that would finally catch the attention of the media and the nation in the 1960s. Women's proscribed lives, so often and so publicly held up as affirmation of the nation's greatness, were changing rapidly despite the nation's dogged determination not to notice. As Wini Breines noted in arguing that the conservative messages of the 1950s were part of an effort by government and industry to ensure that women stayed home, "It seems likely that the ideological message touting domesticity was as shrill as it was because for the first time masses of women had real options."[5]

Indeed, America's Cold War era provides a fascinating canvas for cultural, feminist, and media-related studies. Gaile McGregor remarked that cultural representations of the decade are windows to the enormous social transformations that swept the nation from the 1940s through the 1960s.[6] Culturally, the 1950s were a time in which the nation, collectively and individually, sought stability after years of war,

economic depression, and scientific and technological advances that were both remarkable and unsettling. The form, order, and tone of that search for order were set by the post World War II and Cold War concerns of Communist expansion. It preceded the highly visible, highly volatile decade of the 1960s; until recently, it was considered something of a dormant decade until historians began examining it through the eyes and experiences of women, of blacks, and of the others whose lives were all but invisible during that time period.

From a feminist and cultural perspective, this was a decade in which "domestic containment" meant not only the circling of the nation's collective wagons against Communism, but the containment of women in the private sphere as both fashionable and desirable. Homes in the post-War, Cold War years, meant safety and stability; women, for the most part, made the home within a patriarchal and capitalist structure in which that was deemed the norm. There was an American image that needed to be maintained: among Americans themselves, whose lives had been unsettled for decades by economic crisis within their nation and military crises worldwide, and, more importantly, to critics across the ocean who believed capitalism to be the work of the devil. America's white middle-class housewives became a political symbol for all that was right with American capitalism, particularly as contrasted with the hard-laboring Soviet women. Vice president Richard Nixon even played the appliance-filled home of the American housewife as his trump card in a meeting with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in a discussion that will forever be known as the Kitchen Debate, declaring that any advantage the Soviets claimed on the nuclear front was clearly less important than the United States advantage on the dishwasher front. "What we want," he said, "is to make

better the lives of our housewives." The vision of two of the world's most powerful men arguing about which country's women had the best kitchen appliances speaks volumes to the nation's devotion to domesticity in the 1950s.[7]

So immersed in public policy and culture was the role of women in the family that their image became a key component in the communication strategy of the National Securities Resources Board. The board's widely distributed illustration of "The National Civil Defense Pattern" shows a widening ring of concentric circles of protection. At the outer limit is the federal government; in the center, "The Individual," a man wearing a business suit, adjacent to "the family," made up of two women—one grandmotherly in dress, the other motherly—and two children, both of whom are clinging to the younger woman. That the man is step away from the women and children, bearing the "individual" label, indicates clearly his carefully defined presence in a different sphere, and is an important indication of the social, political, and economic mindset that accompanied the Cold War.

If indeed there was an invisible revolution in progress during the 1950s, it may be best represented by a cultural paradox: the measurable influx of women into the workplace, contrasted with the persistent insistence that, as Nixon declared to the world, women were happily homebound. Historian William Chafe even asserted that the entrance of women into the workplace was a defining characteristic of the 1950s. He and others have discounted the notion that World War II was the only reason for the growth in the number of women in the workforce in the 1940s. Claudia Goldin, in *American Economic Review,* cited a study that confirms that wartime work did not by itself cause the boom in women's employment, which ballooned from five percent in 1890 to sixty

percent by 1990. The war more likely caused a brief acceleration in what was already an established long-term trend: the entrance of women into the wage-labor force.[8]

Indeed, among the most notable changes in the U.S. labor force between 1940 and 1975 was the increase in the number of married women working for pay. By 1960, almost one-third of married women were employed outside the home, a significant increase from just fourteen percent in 1940. A total of 34.8 percent of all women were employed by 1960.[9] In part, that increase was due to new jobs created by a booming economy, which increased the demand for workers in typically female jobs—clerical and service sector positions—at the same time that fewer young, single, or childless women were available to fill them.[10] This practical economic need was in direct contrast to the visible ideal of women staying at home. That women were funneled into relatively low-paying, low-profile jobs may have soothed the Cold War angst over the conflicting roles, since their wage work could then be shrugged off as less important than their roles in the home. But women's work in nontraditional fields, such as police work, was growing as well.

Despite this movement, the image of the homebound nuclear family remained strong in entertainment, advertising, and news media. It seems likely now that the idealized 1950s suburban family was an integral part of the Cold War political structure. Kristina Zarlengo, in her 1999 examination of public information campaigns during the atomic age, noted that metaphorically, family, city, and nation were parallel structures. "National structure was simply a magnification of family structure, and a community's structure a miniature of the nation's. Their shared characteristics were said to be safety, earned with technical strength and defensive capability; sovereignty, based on

individuality and inventiveness amidst fierce competition; fortification in the name of freedom; and domestic security. The various structural levels of American life during the atomic age were portrayed as similar pieces that successively contained and filled one another, like a set of nesting dolls."[11] Elaine Tyler May is among the historians who have connected political and family values in the Cold War era, raising questions about whether the idealized family life of the time was an image used to further the patriarchal capitalist hegemony—and thus, of course, to ward off Communism. It's not that the image was forced on Americans; they needed it, May argued, to feel secure in the shadow of the atomic bomb that cast America out of World War II and into the Cold War. How else could Americans feel liberated from the past and secure in the future at the same time?

The 1950s were a time of transition, too, for media in the United States. While newsreels still were broadcast in theaters as one means of telling the story of American lives, television news grew out of its infancy during this decade and began to be a factor in the daily lives of the nation's citizens. Magazines, as they had throughout the century, continued to be a particularly influential means of communication. Nancy Walker noted that magazines, today just a small subset of the print, broadcast, and Internet-based media we receive, were a much more important source of information in a time when they had only radio and the telephone with which to compete. During the 1950s, she said, magazines helped both shape and reflect American values and aspirations.[12]

As it does at any point in American history, the media played a central role in framing 1950s life. Ellis Hawley, in analyzing America's efforts to establish an ordered society early in the 20th century, said that mass media had grown and become more

widely disseminated, and were firmly established as gatherers and dispensers of factual information.[13] In general, noted communications theorist Denis McQuail, news media are of critical importance in all modern societies. They are, of course, a source of information for the society, but they also are potentially a means of influence, control and innovation; an arena in which local, national, and international affairs are played out; a source of widely held images of social reality. In a free society, particularly, news media provide a benchmark for what is normal. In short, as Bill Kovach and Tom Rosensteil point out, while the press may not tell people *what to think*, it certainly offers people an agenda of what to think about.[14]

Both editorial content and advertising play a role in shaping that agenda. Media analyst R.F. Bogardus observed that mass circulation magazines have been a major force in the shaping of modern consumer culture, particularly in their advertising content; "Magazine ads were (and still are) scenes, each separately presented in time and space. If they were to be successful, readers had to pull them together in their own minds as unified narratives. The modern magazine format, especially in the advertising pages, required readers to complete the pictures presented, and they completed the pictures based partly on suggestions given them and partly on the complicated needs and desires that they brought to their readings."[15] Marilyn Hegarty, who studied the role that print media played in encouraging women to support the U.S. war effort during World War II, remarked that magazines were important both as entertainment and for information for busy wartime women; they functioned as "sites of multivocal discourses that complement, contradict, converge, and interact in many ways and that produce patterns which resonate with the reader's conscious and unconscious conceptions of male and

female 'nature.'"[16] And Gertrude Joch Robinson, in studying how women's work is depicted in magazine fiction, notes that the media help define the appropriateness of certain jobs for women—that media actively create aspects of reality as part of the construction process in which people interpret it. Media "select, structure, and evaluate what is considered important and good in the public discussion agenda. All media ... help in the public definition and legitimization of life and work in a variety of ways."[17]

The study of the media raises not only the question of the what, but also of the who. Who is chronicling the history? Writing the news story? Framing the photograph? Applying paint to the canvas? Who is doing the looking, and who is being looked at? Numerous feminist theorists have argued that the act of remembering—of chronicling, in fact—is at the core of the formulation of critical theoretical frameworks. One cannot look at history without first debating who is doing the "seeing," and for whom, for that surely will affect what is seen, sorted and recorded. This is not simply a postmodern notion of history as being constructed, or of media as being constructors; it is an argument that both the construction and the constructor are important

Feminist, media, and cultural theories can effectively mesh in the examination here. Media theorists, James Carey has noted, classify communication in two general ways. The transmission view, common in industrial cultures, defines communication in terms of the movement of information from one person or place to another. It's the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control, and those messages must be distributed—via book, magazine, newspaper, radio, or another means—to serve their purpose. The ritual view, on the other hand, considers communication a sort of ceremony that draws people together around a certain viewpoint.

Communication is less a means of transmitting information than it is the construction and maintenance of an ordered culture than can "serve as a control and container for human action."[18] Communication of news, then, becomes "a form of culture invented by a particular class at a particular point of history." News is, under the ritual theory, "not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and it invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it."[19]

If news editorial content is a drama of forces and action, advertising plays an additional role in affecting and reflecting the culture of the times. Communication scholars Kenneth Allan and Scott Coltrane have shown how advertising, particularly television commercials, provides insight into the meaning of gender in popular culture. Like programming content, it provides insight into the shifting nature of gender relationships. "Commercials present condensed typifications of gender relations, with men typically shown as active and dominant, and women shown as passive and dependent," they noted. Such imagery "molds cultural ideals of appropriate behaviors for men and women. Being exposed to consistent and repeated stereotypical gender images shapes cognitive structures, or gender schemes, and subsequently influences people's perceptions of themselves and of others."[20] Numerous studies have assessed the impact of advertising in women's magazines on women's perceptions of themselves and of their opportunities and priorities. A comparison of the advertising in the magazine to the editorial content can further confirm how the norm of women's lives—or the ideal—was constructed for women during that decade.

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Feminist theory allows the analysis to take place within a context of power—who has it, who wants to keep it, and who wants to gain it. It also allows gender to be viewed as a cultural construction, as opposed to being seen simply as the natural order of things. Mary Hawkesworth observed, "When culture takes up the task of molding human nature, then, its aim is to enhance its own construction of what is naturally given, to mark sex differentiations through language, characters, and roles."[21] In other words, cultures are in the business of surviving; to survive, they form power structures. Those structures are usually based on gender relationships, most specifically on who does the childbearing. Feminist scholar Susan Cahn and others have argued that social and political structures, beginning after World War I and extending through the Cold War era, conspired to keep women in their proper place—which meant, in her study, out of the athletic realm and other public arenas and safely ensconced in the home.[22]

In assessing the evolution of feminist theory, Jackie Stacey traced the connection from the early 1980s focus on women's oppression and social inequality to the post-modern, post-structuralist examination of the meaning of the category of "woman." Her case study on theories of the body focused on how women's bodies are used, portrayed, structured, or depicted, and in that sense, the connection of the ways women's bodies are constructed by society is particularly applicable to assessing how women's lives are constructed by the media. She wrote of the "return to matters bodily" in current feminist theory as perhaps the continued presence of discourses of Nature about social inequalities, noting, "No matter how often feminists have argued that the categories of gender, 'race,' class and sexuality are socially and culturally constructed, and not biologically determined, the appeal to Nature continues to frame many public debates. In

popular culture and media representations, for example, ideas about Nature are constantly invoked."[23]

Feminist theory also has challenged the bases for conventional theories and forced examination of the roots that guided them. One visible impact is the gradual acceptance, at least in some schools of thought, that one's personal experience can be an asset, not a liability, to a research framework. In doing so, it allows the examination of the consequences of definition by gender and offers a system of ideas that then can be applied to study of the causes of women's oppression, and possible solutions to it.[24] It also allows the inclusion of first-person testimony to be a viable addition such a study.

In applying a feminist framework to an analysis, under the ritual view, of the depiction of wage-earning women across the 1950s in *Life* magazine, the magazine can be seen as among the forms of communication—along with art, speeches, and others—that create a symbolic order designed to confirm, not only to inform; not to change minds, Carey would say, but to represent the underlying order of society at the time. Readers were not simply gaining information; they were getting a certain view of the contending forces in the world. In the act of reading, the readers then became players. In reading about the ongoing Red Menace, for example, they could support Communism or, more likely, rally around the benefits of capitalism; a story about the work of the great scientists of the age could elicit pride and confidence, or fear and dismay. The magazine offered, as Carey would say, a presentation of what the world was—an overall form, order, and tone about life and culture.

If that is true, we might expect the media to uphold the perfect image of family life—and for Americans to accept that. Even the media, which in a free society would be

expected to tell an accurate and balanced story of the happenings of the day, might serve not as a transmitter of a picture of truth, but, as Carey would say, a ritual point around which people would gather. This is consistent with historian Richard Hoftstadter's long-held, often-analyzed opinion that societies that are in good working order, such as the post-war U.S. capitalist society, have a kind of "mute organic consistency."[25] In other words, they are not particularly welcoming of ideas that don't support the status quo, and those that go against the mainstream often become lost within it.

May is among the recent scholars who have cast the 1950s in a different light from the *Happy Days* of television fame, noting that the decade may not have been all, to all people, that it was portrayed to be—that it was the happiest of times only for those in positions of high political or economic standing, who of course built their power and fortune on the images. The nuclear family, far from being a safe haven, often was instead a kind of societal bunker against the ills of the rest of the world; it was "isolated, sexually charged, cushioned by abundance, and protected against impending doom by the wonders of modern technology."[26] Susan Lynn referred to women's domesticity during the decade not as reality, or even as an ideal, but as a discourse, and a conservative one at that. Studies of women's domestic lives during that era have been flawed, she said, by their assumption of, rather than demonstration of, the domestic ideal, and by the notion that when women focused on home life, they did so to the exclusion of all other interests and activities. In fact, she said, the messages and images of women's mass movement toward homebound domesticity represented only the "conservative edge of public discourse" at the time.[27]

Carolyn Kitch, in discussing feminist scholarship, outlined four categories of research on the representation of women in media: the stereotypes approach, the search for alternative images, the examination of imagery as ideology, and the reading of images as polysemic texts. The third, and perhaps the one that most closely reflects the framework most appropriate for this study, focuses on the idea of women as symbolic of larger ideas and idea systems; it assumes that women are part of a larger American story, a cultural mythology that has more to do with national values and identity than it does with the literal description of women. It also assumes that the roles of women are intentionally constructed by societal leaders to perpetuate the political, economic, and social order of the United States; and/or that they constitute a patterned form of patriarchy, a symbolic system that reinforces sexist ideology. Although Kitch notes a shift now to the fourth type of research, she continues to see value in works that show that representational patterns are linked to larger societal forces, and that class and economic forces are important. She notes that ideological critiques are especially popular in studying war years.[28]

It is important, however, even within such a framework, to take into account the recipient's willingness to accept the symbols, and the reasons behind this. That is the importance of Carey's and of May's frameworks, which must be tightly tied in analyzing the representations of women and what those indicate of the culture of the time. As Kitch noted, historians now must assess the meaning of imagery itself, taking into account that the texts contain multiple meanings depending on who is reading them and on historically specific discourses that increase the likelihood of multiple readings. In other words,

audiences can decide the meaning of imagery "either by recognizing and responding to atypical imagery or through an even more active and personal reading of media."[29]

Culturally, it's clear that the American home wasn't the only institution that was outwardly peaceful, but inwardly unsettled. Historian Alan Brinkley, among others, observed that politically, the United States as a whole struggled with a rising conservatism and disagreement on whether the New Deal had worked or had simply pointed up to the liberals what the state could and could not accomplish.[30] A post-war fear of totalitarianism and accompanying wariness of centralized governmental power left the nation confused on some issues, resolute on others. Most prominently, the nation was resolute in its condemnation of Communism. It also still feared that the splitting of the atom had foisted onto the world a future that would be bleak indeed. Paul Boyer recalled his own memories of ominous news reports of the nuclear threat, and documented the resistance of the public to messages of the potential benefits of nuclear energy. Once the bomb was dropped, he noted, a shaken American public "grasped at straws, searched for hopeful signs, and tried to arrange scary new facts into familiar patterns."[31] The dangers of the bomb and of Communism became inextricably tied.

So, too, did the dangers of Communism permeate the everyday lives of women. "You always had that in the back of your mind; Russia. Korea," said one of the women interviewed for this study. "You had friends over there. We'd sit and watch the TV and worry."[32] Said another whose parents had immigrated to the United States from Croatia, "When you heard the term Communist, well, my parents knew what Communism was all about. My parents told me, 'They can't be trusted.'"[33] Blanche Wiesen Cook, in remarks at a conference sponsored by the Institute for Media Analysis at Harvard in 1988, said the

fear of Communism has had an indelible affect on American culture. "[A]nti communism has narrowed the American mind and has been responsible for the incredibly shrinking American heart," she said. "It has polluted our discourse; destroyed our national credibility; vitiated our democracy." Some of the greatest women of the twentieth century, she said, were denounced as communists and assailed as being dangerous and un-American.[34]

This, then, provided the framework for the reality that, as Carey says, Americans constructed and took up residence within: Fear of communism and fallout, literal and figural, from the atomic bomb; a belief that the image of a nation gathered within the home would fight off threats outside of it; a time of turmoil and promise and, it will be shown, invisible revolution. Yet what of the woman interviewed for this study, who, during the 1950s, was embarking on a career at Detroit Edison that would eventually see her rise to vice president of that organization? "If you look at the times . . . supposedly everyone wanted to have this nice idyllic family life, just like the television show; Donna Reed, you know," she said. "I was talking to a friend of mine, my vintage, the other day, and we both said we never had that desire. I never saw that as a wonderful thing."[35] Or consider the daughter of immigrants noted above, who during the 1950s—ostensibly a time when she'd have been happily homebound—was rising through the ranks of the Navy on her way, by time of her retirement in the 1960s, to a position as commander, second only to an admiral in rank. "I was determined," she said, "I was going to do anything I wanted to do. If in my own mind I wanted to do it, I knew I could go do it. The woman was out of the picture. I knew that. But it didn't bother me. I always felt, 'This is

America. My parents came here so that they could escape that repression.' I thought, 'I'm in America. I can do what I want.'"[36]

Indeed. Like so many other women, she seized the day and walked right into the rest of her life: The one she built herself.

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[1] James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 30. Specifically, Carey says, "We first produce the world by symbolic work and then take up residence in the world we have produced." He adds: "Alas, there is magic in our self deceptions. We not only produce reality but we must likewise maintain what we have produced, for there are always new generations coming along for whom our productions are incipiently problematic and for whom reality must be regenerated and made authoritative."

[2] Andrew Cherlin, ed., *The Changing American Family and Public Policy* (The Urban Institute Press: Washington, D.C., 1988), 4.

[3] Anne G. Pannell, "A Nation's Strength Begins in the Home: Parents Are the Real Molders of Character," in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 18, no. 5 (1951): 145.

[4] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 24-26. Coontz argues that the benefits of such pro-family cultural standards were borne out in the economic advances of individual families and the nation at large; the family became both a beneficiary of and a symbol of economic prosperity. People supported school tax levies, the addition of the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance, and the notion that the family was their source of happiness and success.

[5] Wini Breines, "Domineering Mothers in the 1950s: Image and Reality," *Women's Studies International Forum* 8 (1985): 601.

[6] Gaile McGregor, "Domestic Blitz: A Revisionist History of the Fifties," *American Studies* 34, no. 1 (1993): 5.

[7] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1988). In her book, May notes that although institutionalized racism and poverty kept most black American families on the fringes of the middle class, their demographic trends roughly paralleled those of white Americans during the 1950s. In general, she notes, American families of all ethnic backgrounds experienced high fertility rates and rising divorce rates. Most of the data she accesses, including the Kelly Longitudinal Study, were based on surveys of white families.

[8] Claudia Golden, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," *American Economic Review* 81, no. 4 (1991): 741-756.

[9] Figures on women's employment are from the U.S. Bureau of Census 1983b, p. 383, and are cited in several sources.

[10] Suzanne Bianchi and Daphne Spain, *American Women in Transition* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986), 166.

[11] Kristina Zarlengo, "Civilian Threat, the Suburban Citadel, and Atomic Age American Women," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24, no. 4 (1999): 931.

[12] Nancy Walker, ed., *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998).

[13] Ellis Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933* (New York: St. Martin's, 1979), 118. Hawley recognizes not only the rapid growth of mass media, but also of specialized and trade media designed to serve an industrialized society.

[14] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosensteil, *Warp Speed: America in the Age of Mixed Media* (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 1999), 3.

[15] R.F. Bogardus, "The Reorientation of Paradise: Modern Mass Media and Narratives of Desire in the Making of American Consumer Culture," *American Literary History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 519.

[16] Marilyn Hegarty, "Patriotute or Prostitute? Sexual Discourses, Print Media, and American Women during World War II," *Journal of Women's History* 10, no. 20 (1998): 114.

[17] Gertrude Joch Robinson, "The Media and Social Change: Thirty Years of Magazine Coverage of Women and Work (1950-1977)," *Atlantis* 8, no. 2 (1983): 94.

[18] Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, 19. Carey compares the ritual nature of media to the ritual nature of, say, a church ceremony. He notes that, as with a religious ceremony, news may not change much, yet the viewing of it is still intrinsically satisfying, and that like religious ceremonies, people engage in it as much from habit as from a need to know.

[19] Ibid., 21.

[20] Kenneth Allan and Scott Coltrane, "Gender Display in Television Commercials: A Comparative Study of Television Commercials in the 1950s and 1980s," *Sex Roles* 35, nos. 3-4 (1996): 187-188.

[21] Mary Hawkesworth, "Confounding Gender," *Signs* 22, nos. 3-4 (1997): 659.

[22] Susan Cahn, "From the 'Muscle Moll' to the 'Butch' Ballplayer: Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sports," *Feminist Studies* 19 (1993): 343-368.

[23] Jackie Stacey, "Feminist Theory: Capital F., Capital T," in Diane Richardson and Victoria Robinson, eds., *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 59.

[24] Sheila Ruth, *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1998), xi. Ruth introduces the notion of the examination of the consequences of definition by gender. Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg discuss the building of feminist frameworks to study oppression in *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations Between Women and Men* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984).

[25] Richard Hofstadter, introduction to *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1948), viii.

[26] May, *Homeward Bound*, 1.

[27] Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 11.

[28] Carolyn Kitch, "Changing Theoretical Perspectives on Women's Media Images: The Emergence of Patterns in a New Area of Historical Scholarship," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (1997): 482.

[29] Ibid., 485.

[30] Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontent*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 87.

[31] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 25. Boyer asserts that the cultural crisis that engulfed Americans after the bomb dropped was nearly immeasurable, and that the resulting anxiety drew the nation together to meet the challenges of the nuclear age.

[32] Donna Maki, personal interview with author, 3 July 2001.

[33] Mary Kovacevich, personal interview with author, 3 July 2001.

[34] Blanche Weisen Cook, "The Impact of Anti-Communism in American Life," *Science & Society* 53, no. 4 (1989-90): 407-475. Cook believed the fear of communism permeated American life to the point of detriment, and that as it united some, it divided the nation; "To think systematically about the impact of anticommunism on American life is to think about every aspect of American life," she said. "Every moment of our era has been touched, and diminished, by this crusade. While democrats, reformers, progressives, visionaries, and revolutionaries fight over every issue, anticommunist crusaders are united by their purpose: to maintain power and control, absolutely and against all opposition."

[35] Jane Kay Nugent, personal interview with author, 15 August 2001.

[36] Kovacevich, personal interview, 3 July 2001.

CHAPTER I

THE COLD WAR CONTEXT

As the second half of the twentieth century opened, President Harry S. Truman—as have presidents before him and since—used the pulpit provided by his State of the Union address to take a look back and a look ahead at the nation's progress and potential. On January 5, 1950, he stood before a Joint Session of Congress, identified the first half of the century as "the most turbulent and eventful period in recorded history," and then addressed the future:

> The swift pace of events promises to make the next fifty years decisive in the history of man on this planet.
>
> The scientific and industrial revolution which began two centuries ago has, in the last fifty years, caught up the peoples of the globe in a common destiny. Two world-shattering wars have proved that no corner of the earth can be isolated from the affairs of mankind.
>
> The human race has reached a turning point. Man has opened the secrets of nature and mastered new powers. If he uses them wisely, he can reach new heights of civilization. If he uses them foolishly, they may destroy him.[1]

Three days earlier, *Life*—as have magazines before it and since—used the pulpit provided by its first issue of the new year to take a look back and a look ahead at the nation's high points and hopes. On January 2, 1950, in introducing the second half of the century, the magazine's editors breezily summed up the American Cold War mindset:

> This week, instead of being concerned with the world around us, Life surveys an entire half century. In deciding to devote an issue to the spectacle of the U.S. when it was emerging as the most powerful of all nations, some rather arbitrary decisions had to be made. ...As the staggering amount of research that goes into a project of this kind got under way, it became obvious that there wasn't room for everything. Thus the world as a whole has been ignored except where it directly affected the U.S."[2]

America, it seemed, was at the center of the universe. If its citizens must, as Truman said, immerse themselves in the affairs of mankind worldwide for the benefit of all, they must do so, as *Life* said, with awareness that preservation of the American way was the reason. The nation must focus on the world so that it could remain great within itself. It must, as the National Commander of the American Legion said later that year, ensure that America remained "always American." "This is America," he reminded an audience at an Indiana Constitution Day celebration, "and we live the American way of life - - - Basically, it is a life of freedom. Freedom established and fought for by Americans for more than a century and a half. Freedom of religion ... freedom of speech ... freedom of our home, person and property."[3] Nowhere in the world was there another culture like it, and Americans would do well to remember that their lives, and lifestyles, needed to be protected.

It was, it seems, a decade of both fun, in a family-oriented, economically booming, technologically exciting time, and of fear, with the specter of the bomb and of the dangers of Communism always at hand. It has been called a conservative decade, and yet it can be shown that enormous advances were made in the 1950s for the rights of workers, of women, and of minorities. It has been looked on as a time when the economy hummed along efficiently, and yet concerns about employment and irresponsible spending hovered just beneath the headlines of daily news reports. Held up often and wistfully as the ideal, prototype American decade, it actually is quite distinctive; in terms of family structure and demographic trends, there never has been one like it before or since, despite a cultural insistence that it defines the American way of life. Indeed, as Andrew Cherlin has said, the

1950s family, which functioned neither as a production unit nor as a subsistence-level income-pooling unit, seems an odd consequence of a capitalist culture in uncertain times.[4]

In that uncertain world, postwar America craved a world order in which it was on top, in charge, and if it chose to be, isolated. Alison Light noted that most historical accounts of the decade view it as a time of consensus, "of the reconstruction and consolidation of the social order, as it realigned itself beneath the values of a powerful and growing middle class."[5] Yet Alan Brinkley has shown that the post-World War II years, following a grim view of what totalitarianism could lead to in other parts of the world, shifted liberal thought from a focus on reform to a focus on individual rights and liberties, especially as related to racial justice. Perhaps, as the war pointed up, society's challenges were not tied exclusively to class or to the economy. Perhaps they were linked, too, to race, ethnicity, religion, or gender—all topics scarcely addressed in the *Happy Days* image put forth by the popular media. During the war, Brinkley notes, America had firmed up its view of itself as a righteous society protected from the rest of the world by its own strength and virtue.[6] Afterward, it seemed clear to the nation that its victory had proved it right. America had succeeded because it was different. It was moral and prosperous. Its women, unlike the Soviet women, didn't need to work for wages; they were at home raising the next generation of Americans. Its men were strong, capable providers who had saved the world while at war and would protect their families now in a time of uneasy peace.[7]

As noted earlier, it also can be argued that the idealized 1950s suburban family was an integral part of the Cold War political structure—an image used to ward off Communism, a kind of societal bunker against the world. It was an image that fit only a

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fraction of the population. Despite ongoing tensions between liberal economic policies and postwar conservative rumblings, the image of the United States remained, most visibly, that of the white middle class. Both the Great Depression and World War II had challenged traditional American notions of family life, particularly as it affected women's roles, by welcoming women into service and wage-earning roles in unprecedented numbers. After the war, both the job market and educational opportunities expanded. Yet expectations for women's options narrowed, and instead of turning outward to embrace their new opportunities, women found themselves turned inward toward proscribed middle-class roles of consumption and family management. Those roles came into direct conflict with those offered outside the home, but it was as if a wave of what May terms as materialism, consumerism, and bureaucratic conformity had engulfed the nation—a wave, ironically, that was directly in line with the sort of decadent New Deal liberalism that the return to family was supposed to combat. As Jonathan Rieder observed, in this time before liberals and Democrats crashed to earth in the turbulent 1960s, there was nothing that could roust the middle class from a mood that was acquisitive and self-absorbed.[8]

Elaine Tyler May's notion of domestic containment meant not only the circling of the nation's collective wagons against Communism, but also the containment of women in the private sphere as both fashionable and desirable. In this sense, woman and family were inextricably tied; a healthy, secure and distinctively American family meshed the two identities so that one was not complete without the other. Such a framework of the world and the U.S. position in it would require that the U.S. lifestyle, particularly the lifestyle of its women, be presented in stark contrast to the widely agreed upon United States view of Soviet Communism.

That was the visible America. Its housewives, in fact, were its most visible manifestation of superiority, as evidenced by the Nixon-Khrushchev exchange. The nation was not of one mind during this decade—that becomes clear particularly when women's voices are brought into the public debate. However, Truman's State of the Union speech and *Life* magazine's context indicate that there were common issues faced by families during this height of the Cold War, and each can be briefly examined separately: concerns about Communism and the nagging, continual threat of war; the rapid development of science and technology, and with it the threat of the atomic bomb; the booming economy, and the worries about consumerism that accompanied it; and family and social changes that defied the visible, nuclear family image. Those common concerns hovered over the economic, social, and cultural characteristics of the time.

Always Overhead: Communism and War

In the autumn of 1950, the University of California Board of Regents issued a directive to its faculty: sign an oath saying that you are not a Communist. While many complied, some refused, arguing that such a dictatorial demand violated their rights to academic freedom.

Said the regents: sign or resign. One stepped down; twenty-seven others who refused were ultimately dismissed. Recapping the struggle, *Life* said, "At the University of California last week, a very sad fact was being proved. The fact was that in opposing Communism, Americans sometimes create another evil."[9]

Make no mistake; the threat of Communism seemed very real to American families in the 1950s. Concerns about its creeping spread were the reason the nation stepped into

Korea; when communist North Korean soldiers crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea, it became clear the nation could not let its guard down for even a day. The climate of fear that hung over the nation elicited a series of dramatic responses in the workplace, in political and social policy, and even in personal decisions that played out as publicity stunts. It contributed to the demise of the United Electrical Workers' Union, which shortly after World War II led a successful strike against General Electric and sparked a mobilization of women's trade union activism, but unraveled after it was attacked as being Communist, eventually to be replaced by a more conservative organization.[10] It sparked the FCC investigation of performers and broadcast producers for alleged communist affiliations. And it prompted Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Mininson, at the request of a company that built back-yard bomb shelters, to spend their two-week honeymoon in an 8-foot by 14-foot underground fallout shelter (the grateful builder, who gained enormous attention for the publicity stunt, then paid for a honeymoon to Mexico for the two).[11] "[T]he fighting in Korea is but one part of the tremendous struggle of our time—the struggle between freedom and Communist slavery," President Truman told a conference on children and youth in Washington, D.C., in December 1950.[12] Said *Life*'s editors: "The mid-century American is called upon, first of all, to resist the Communist threat to his world. Which is to say, to rally his world to battle for the life and freedom of all men. And this is to say, to make his world a place and his century a time of freedom everywhere."[13]

It was unsettling, this constant reminding that one's way of life could be snuffed out in moment. It was unnerving to feel that the nation was constantly looking over its shoulder. Not everyone agreed the nation should be in Korea; the troops seemed inadequately trained and equipped, and in the backs of their minds Americans feared this

was leading to a third World War. The president and his general, Douglas MacArthur, disagreed so vehemently on some issues that Truman finally recalled him as commander, sparking further concern and a national debate over whether the general or his president was right. Americans distrusted the Communists, but some wondered also about the motives of their own government following the rampant rise in McCarthyism—and subsequent actions like the one the regents took again the University of California professors. David Anderson is among the scholars who argue that Truman oversold the threat of communism to the point that citizens were less unified than they were angry or frightened; the public disagreement between MacArthur and Truman "suggested a deep fissure in American opinion."[14]

While certainly affecting hundreds of thousands of Americans whose friends and relatives were involved, the war in Korea was in fact looked upon by others as a sort of nagging interruption of prosperity—a kind of forced look at the rest of the world that they would rather not take, given the choice. Had the government not persisted in reminding the nation that this was not about Korea, but about Communism, not about someone else's life, but about their own, one wonders whether the public would have acknowledged the situation at all. Far from rallying as a nation in support of the cause, Joseph Goulden said that to Americans who wished to spend their time going to baseball games and their money buying new cars, "the Korean War was an unwelcome interruption of postwar prosperity. The five years from 1945–50, from V–J Day to the start of the Korean War, indeed were among the most pleasant in American history, a few economic and political bumps notwithstanding....To read that hundreds of American soldiers died at such geographical locales as Heartbreak Ridge and No-Name Ridge does not excite public

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support for a war."[15] While the war on one hand pointed up the need to be on the constant alert for the spread of Communism, it also pointed up the conflicts within the nation, personified in the very visible one between Truman and MacArthur. By its end, it seemed, there was even more confusion about what was right and wrong for the nation in this previously black-and-white battle between good and evil.[16]

By the middle of the decade, Cold War tensions had relaxed somewhat following the 1953 death of Soviet Premier Josef Stalin and the 1954 censure of Senator Joe McCarthy for his inflammatory anti-Communist witch hunt. The U.S. economy was on an extended upswing, and new topics were finding their way into daily conversations and into the news media. There was school desegregation in Arkansas, the new rock–and–roll fad among the nation's youth, and the development of the Salk vaccine against polio. *Life* opened the year 1955 with a special edition devoted to the world's food supply, acknowledging the nation's abundance, the good work of the scientists who had helped formulate it, and the critical role the United States would play in feeding the world.[17]

The Red Scare, though, was still prominent, even in such uplifting stories. Food, and control of it, the magazine noted, was the United States' greatest weapon in the Cold War. A series of articles and editorials in the spring and summer of 1955 indicate the combination of skepticism and hopefulness that characterized the public. In April, following a Chinese incursion onto the island of Matsu, *Life*'s editors said: "The President is meeting Congressional leaders this week for a grave purpose. It is to discuss the question of whether—and in what circumstances—the U.S. may soon again be at war." Rather than worry about throwing its weight into a situation in which it didn't belong, they said, the nation would be better served by cutting off the threat; "It would even be better

to lose those islands while fighting for them than to lose the world while fighting the elephantine inhibitions of our own musclebound might."[18] In May, senior European reporter Emmet John Hughes followed the Russians' acceptance of a treaty with Austria, and their stated willingness to meet with other chiefs of state, with a cautionary note; changes in Soviet tactics, he said, must be viewed skeptically. "The year 1955 may rule the lives of the unborn more sternly than any year in the memory of living man. This is neither theory nor exhortation; it is fact. Upon men and emotions and events now at work can turn the destiny of Europe, the very existence of the United States and the hope of freedom anywhere."[19]

In July, the magazine reminded its readers that while it was the responsibility of each American to contribute to the good of the nation, they must remember that "God's is still the only truth that can really make and keep men free."[20] It also published a story by former Marshall Plan administrator and auto executive Paul G. Hoffman, author of the 1951 book *Peace Can Be Won*, in which he expressed his profound belief that peace was within the nation's, and world's, grasp. Now, he said, it was on our doorstep, thanks to leaders "wise enough to see that to win the peace we had to wage it with as much boldness, daring, and imagination as we would apply to waging war." He wrote,

> Everyone is aware," "that the struggle between the free world and the Communist countries is entering a new phase, one which is already witnessing a relaxation of tensions and which may produce some more at next week's Meeting at the Summit in Geneva. We should not expect too much from all this, as the President and others have warned, since the basic realities of the struggle endure. But it is highly important that the American people understand why this relaxation is taking place. The reason for it is the biggest news of our time: the fact that after a decade of costly struggled *we are finally winning the peace*.[21]

Yet by the decade's end, there was more to worry about. Fidel Castro was carrying the flag of Communism in Cuba; Vice President Richard Nixon was telling Soviet Premier Mikhail Khrushchev that while both nations want peace, "both of us possess great strength and neither of us can or will tolerate being pushed around." [22]

Science, Technology, and the Bomb

The dropping of the atomic bomb, ostensibly to end the war that was to end all wars, certainly gave visible evidence to the scientific advances that hurled the nation headlong into the second half of the twentieth century. This would be a decade not only of the development of the Salk vaccine, but of birth control pills, color television, and the kind of satellite technology that allowed the nation's President in 1958, Dwight Eisenhower, to broadcast a Christmas greeting to the world. It also was the decade in which the United States space program would become a darling of the public fancy; its space monkeys, with names like Old Reliable, Able, and Baker, were figuratively embraced by Americans ranging from school children to grandmothers, and the original seven astronauts were as recognizable in many circles as movie stars.

The nation took pride in its scientific and technological accomplishments in part because it deemed them evidence of U.S. superiority over the Russians. Following Eisenhower's Christmas greeting, *Life* reported, in a thirteen-page feature on satellite technology: "Though technical considerations prevented the voice being heard direct throughout the world, it was relayed by the United States and was even grumpily acknowledged by Russian newspapers."[23] There is evidence, too, that the nation's fascination with technological advances was at least in part due to its belief that it would

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help preserve the white, middle-class American dominance that was the nation's hallmark. Reporter Robert Coughlan, in his report about the need for birth control in a world in which the population is multiplying at an unprecedented level, does not address the now often-cited U.S. baby boom at all. Of greatest concern was that the boom was at its highest in undeveloped countries, and that those nations might turn to Communists for help. "Forty years from now," he wrote, "the world will be seventy percent Afro-Asian. Adding in some of the Latin countries, one finds that about three fourths of the world's population will be living in today's least developed areas. What kind of life can these new billions have? The living standard of the present generations is miserably low. ...What is almost certain to happen instead, unless the birth rate falls, is a lowering of standards until human misery finally puts a brake on breeding—probably not, however, until democracy has been chucked overboard in favor of some form of dictatorship. The likely choice is Communism."[24]

Yet if science might be the savior of democracy, the bomb it created might destroy it—and everyone else, if some sense was not brought to the rapid and multidirectional changes in technology. It was an odd and enervating juxtaposition, this linking of science, which might save the world, to the atomic bomb, which might destroy it. Science should not, could not, advance in a vacuum; must not be practiced without the good of the nation in mind, lest its discoveries cause more harm than good. Max Ways, former senior editor of *Time* magazine, wrote about the confusion following Khrushchev's much-heralded visit to the United Sates in 1959, noting that technology is a "common disintegrator" of political disorder in that it "gives people a Godlike confidence in what they can do through their national governments." "We can act with firmness and look forward to achievement

only when we recognize our purpose—when we see that what we are trying to do is build situations of order and freedom under morality and law." Without order, science would not advance the nation. The result would be chaos, and disintegration of the nation's standards.[25]

Good Times or Rampant Materialism?

Linked to scientific and technological advancement was consumerism, still another aspect of American life that on the surface seemed a good thing, but that brought with it nagging concerns about whether the nation's people had their priorities straight. If the American ideal was the white middle class, and a key characteristic of that ideal was to have a home, a car (or even two), stylish clothes, and the proper gadgets, acquisition of those things clearly was a sign of achievement. The nation's leaders believed that the more its citizens were able to buy, the happier they would be—and the more visible that happiness was, the more other nations would see the superiority of capitalism over communism. In fact, that was a key component of the Kitchen Debates between Nixon and Khrushchev. May refers to it as "the new American work-to-consume ethic," and notes that the opportunity to purchase a home became a key motivator for those in the working class who wanted to move up in the world.[26]

But whose middle class was it? Coontz and others note that the middle class, living in that $3,000- to $10,000-a-year income bracket and presented as the norm in forums ranging from international summits to television comedies, was not where all Americans took up residence. In 1958, for example, sixty percent of Americans over age sixty-five had incomes below $1,000. A quarter of Americans were poor in the middle of the

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decade, a third of them by the decade's end.[27] The widely touted prosperity of the decade likely was based at least in part on a widening gap between workers in stable, secure jobs and those whose employment was less certain.[28] The workforce included what *Life* called "pockets of poverty" that caused "poverty in the midst of plenty," noting that inconsistencies in employment had left some five million U.S. workers out work and built into the American system a clear set of haves and have-nots.[29]

Those firmly ensconced within the middle class found it astonishingly difficult to save any money. In a 1959 feature article that spanned twelve pages of the magazine, *Life*'s Ernest Havemann put a face on the problem when he featured a typical American—that is, a working man—who with his wife spent as much as he made. At age twenty-eight, he was a technical writer earning $12,000 a year, placing him well into the comfort zone. Of course, he had three children, one car—he'd like to buy a second for his wife—and a house that they had outgrown. Once monthly expenses were covered, with a bit of fun included, there was precisely $29.23 left over—hardly enough to begin saving for that bigger home.

"While many readers of this article who have to struggle along on far less than $12,000 may be tempted at this point to send the young St. Louisianan a long-playing record of Hearts and Flowers, his is in many ways a typical 1959 American family," Havemann wrote. "Most of us are making considerably more money than we would have guessed five or ten years ago and far more than our grandfathers ever dreamed of making. Our pay checks say we are rich. The monthly bank statement and the stack of unpaid bills on the pantry shelf say we are stone broke. We have to ask ourselves a sad, bewildered question: 'Where does the money go?'"[30]

Where, indeed? In answering the question, it became obvious that the must-haves for the middle class were yesterday's luxuries, and they cost money. True, the graduated income tax didn't help families like Havemann's "typical 1959 American family," but there was more to it than that. "At the same time there are hundreds of expensive and seductive new luxuries to which he [the executive] feels, as a successful man, at least moderately entitled." Sure, the American penchant for buying on time as opposed to paying cash is part of the problem, but let's face it, that was rapidly becoming the American way; "To get to the job nowadays, many men need a car. ...many men who want to start a family have to buy a house. To help their wives with the housework they can no longer supply a maid and a cook, who can be paid by the week, but must instead supply an electric washer, a drier, a toaster, broiler, mixer, vacuum cleaner, refrigerator and dishwasher, all adding up to a lot of money."[31] Most interesting are Havemann's conclusions, for after raising the questions and framing the concerns, he finally closes by saying that in America, there's really nothing to worry about:

> We could, of course, balance our books at any time by giving up some of our comforts—for example, by walking to work with a lunch pail as our grandfathers did. But nothing that we do seems actually extravagant. Everybody has a car. Everybody has a television set. Soon everybody will have an air-conditioned bedroom. Can it be that everybody is also broke? . . . Are we then a nation of lost hedonistic souls? By the moral precepts of our ancestors (who often did not save very much either, despite all their talk) perhaps we are. By the standards of many modern economists, however, we are perhaps very virtuous indeed. ...It will worry us perhaps even more than we are worried now—but we will manage.[32]

Amid abundance, there were those who had nothing; amid all the spending there was nothing to save. The nation worried about that, and then worried because it was worried. "Like the atomic stockpile and the price of wheat," *Life*'s editors said in June

1955, "more of America's domestic problems seem to be problems of abundance." Citing the UAW's demands for higher wages and a Carnegie Corporation report that indicated that too many people were crowding the nation's colleges, it noted that both were examples of Americans expecting more opportunities to succeed than may be reasonably made available. In the same issue, it asked, "[I]s abundance a good enough thing, by itself for Americans to take pride in?" Finally, with a nod and a sigh in recognition of the American way, it said, "There is this to be said about abundance, however. The problem is unique (so far) to North America. Only those who have lived with it can answer it—and that means us. ...We must sweat it out ourselves, hearing the critics without losing confidence in our own expanding democracy."[33]

In 1959, the magazine used Easter as an excuse to raise the concerns again, this time in defense of Americans who tried always to do the right thing. "The triviality and self-indulgence of American life, so roundly criticized by Adlai Stevenson and others are only part of the blight of secularism. Our affluent society is rich not only in barbiturates and banality but in unsung heroism and hard work."[34] That same year, it asked anthropologist Margaret Mead about the issue, and she expressed concern that the American commitment to work was in conflict with the American opportunity to live life to its fullest. "We talk about our high standard of living in this country. What we have is a high standard of work," she said. "Usually the peaks of civilization have been periods when a large proportion of the population had time to *live*. I don't think we're doing this today. I think the people who *could* live are still spending their time and supplementary resources on making a living."[35]

That there could be a difference between living and making a living was one that that *Life* addressed head on in its year-end issue with a feature on the good life. Hard-working Americans, it wrote, suddenly found themselves with leisure time and plenty of ways in which to spend it: gardening, floating in a pool, cheering at sports events, dancing, building furniture, painting. "For the first time," it wrote, "a civilization has reached a point where most people are no longer preoccupied exclusively with providing food and shelter."[36] How did that happen? Automation had freed workers from some of their drudgery; the nation's collective wealth had done the rest. And now that the nation was at leisure, *Life* scolded, it had best make the most of it and improve itself. "Never have so many man-hours of leisure energy been available for high achievements in all the arts and sciences. The opportunity is so unprecedented that if Nurse Leisure plays no favorites, American civilization ought to be freer and bolder than the Greek, more just and powerful than the Roman, wiser than the Confucian, richer in invention and talent than the Florentine or Elizabethan, more resplendent than the Mogul, prouder than the Spanish, saner than the French, more responsible than the Victorian, and happier than all of them together. American civilization, whatever anybody may think of it, has scarcely measured up to that opportunity ... certainly it falls short of what it might be and that—the potential American civilization—is the issue."[37]

The *Family: Within Itself, Within the Social Context*

As noted above, the nuclear family functioned as the main unit of consumption in the American economy of the 1950s, but its most important role loomed much larger. It was, in fact, a microcosm of the nation itself, in structure, function, and potential. And the

fact that women were tied so closely to it placed them in an important position indeed: that of keepers of the American way. In chronicling changes in the structure of American families, feminist scholar Susan Toliver said, "Presumably, the entire social order depended on the status quo of the family structure and the universality of the nuclear family model. It was thought that the nuclear family model was the best and only family form. Any other conception or configuration of family would be deficient, even deviant."[38] Indeed, the family structure was deemed the primary defense against attack, and not only in the official information campaigns to help the public safeguard itself against the dropping of an atomic bomb on an American city. *Life,* in a 1950 feature on the subject, used a similar parallel image of the home, its neighborhood, and the surrounding city as sorts of buffers for an attack when it came—layers of protection built in to the geographic and sociological structure of the 1950s suburban lifestyle.

As noted earlier, the traditional 1950s family was really anything but the national norm. In fact, as Cherlin has said, this was probably the most unusual decade for family life in the twentieth century.[39] The birthrate was on the rise, doubling for third children and tripling for fourth between 1940 and 1960;[40] in 1950, sixty-one percent of all households were composed of three or more people, compared to forty-six percent some thirty years later, and twenty percent of 1950s households contained five persons or more.[41] As the rate of divorce declined from the previous decades, people were marrying young, sometimes alarmingly so; that helped account for the fact that nearly ten out of every 1,000 girls between 15 and 19 gave birth in 1957.[42] *Parents Magazine*, among others, lamented the trend. The fact that there were more than a million married teen-agers in 1958, it said, clearly was an indication that the youths lacked satisfying relationships in

their parents' nuclear homes and were seeking them on their own. The magazine went on to advocate against marrying young, citing the potential waste of talent and broken careers.[43]

Media chronicled the concern shared by parents and school officials alike over the delinquency and dropout rates; some cities were cracking down on rock and roll parties because parents, without understanding exactly what their children were doing, were worried about the influence of the new music.[44] Other against-the-status-quo movements surfaced in the 1950s, too, with much less exposure. For example, one of the major predecessors to the gay and lesbian liberation movement, the Daughters of Bilitis, was founded in 1956; by its decline in the late 1960s, it had played a major role in expanding the lesbian social and political movement.[45]

The labor force, too, was changing; with one of the most notable changes in the U.S. labor force between 1940 and 1975 was the increase in the number of married women working for pay. By 1960, almost a third of married women were employed outside the home, up from just 14 percent in 1940. A total of 34.8 percent of all women were employed by 1960.[46] More than ten million married women were employed by 1952, almost three times greater than the number in 1940, and in fact by 1950 married women comprised more than half of the number of women employed.[47] In part, that increase was due to new jobs created by a booming economy that increased the demand for workers in typically female jobs—clerical and service sector positions—at the same time that fewer young, single, or childless women were available to fill them.[48] This practical economic need was in direct contrast to the ideal of women staying at home, but of course in line with the tension between these roles noted by May. That women were funneled into

relatively low-paying, low-profile jobs may have soothed the Cold War angst over the conflicting roles, since their wage work could then be shrugged off as less important than their roles in the home. But women's wage work in nontraditional fields was growing as well.

On the one hand, women streamed into the workforce because the 1950s economy needed women to do the lower paying, less rewarding jobs. As Cherlin noted, this was a time when inflation rates were relatively low and men's wages, as well as their productivity, were on the rise. However, there was another reason: gradually it was becoming clear that there truly was a dollars-and-cents cost accrued by the family pocketbook when women stayed home.

Consider the family featured in *Life,* whose wage-earning husband brought home an impressive paycheck and yet which could barely save a nickel. Reporter Havemann makes note, two-thirds of the way through the story, of the fact that one of the factors in the struggle is that young couples forget that when a woman becomes pregnant, she'll have to quit her job; they spend her money as a matter of course and don't take into account that it will disappear.[49]

By the end of the decade, alternatives to the traditional family were becoming more visible—and were roundly dismissed. One *Life* feature in 1959 compared two American families—one in Hutchinson, Kansas, the other in Venice, California. The presentation of the latter clearly raised some eyebrows. The Hutchinson family lived what the magazine called the good life, "closely knit around the family, geared to the happiness of the children," a teen boy and a girl. The husband worked for International Harvester; there was no mention of employment for the wife. In Venice, "Family life...centers on a

pad, as the beats call their domicile, where the emphasis is all on 'creativity' with no interest in physical surroundings." Featured artist Arthur Richer lived there with his wife Bette and their four children; "I would enjoy serenity," he said, "but I am called to the frontier of so-called civilization, as bizarre as it is. I must find chaos. My expression drives me."[50]

With the economic concerns, the agitation over youth and alternative lifestyles, and the concern about civil defense came recognition of the fact that issues such as the segregation of schools and the civil rights movement were becoming more and more a part of people's everyday lives. Hoxie, Arkansas, in 1955 stepped out of the usual bent of southern cities to look for a chink in the antisegregation armor and simply opened its schools to black children, concluding after a series of interviews with parents that integration was "morally right in the eyes of God."[51] Most cities, though, struggled mightily with the issue, and there wasn't a clear consensus. In Little Rock, Arkansas, where 44 teachers were fired because their segregationist school board deemed them soft on integration, aroused citizens criticized Governor Orval Faubus and the board.[52] When a black student at Indiana University was named the campus beauty queen, it drew headlines and a photo feature; "Negro Queen of Coeds," read the headline, and the story noted that the woman won the title over fourteen white coeds.[53]

Indeed, far from being insulated from change, there seemed a recognition among some during this decade that social and cultural change were not only necessary, but welcome. Students at Mills College, a private women's college in Oakland, California, said that racial integration and civil rights were the key issues of the day.[54] Welfare advocates began encouraging mothers eligible for the Aid to Dependent Children program to look

for employment or training if it were possible for them to do so, noting the positive impact it had on poor families when the mother was employed.[55] Economists and educators alike urged women who had attained college degrees to dust them off and use them; such talent, they said, should not go to waste. In fact, a growing concern about whether the United States was competitive in the race for technological superiority prompted UCLA to establish a gifted student program—and more than forty percent of those accepted into the science-based programs were women.[56]

The urge to change, to consider new ways of thinking, and generally to loosen up gradually became evident in the media as well. In fact, by 1960, *Life's* editorial stance had shifted toward a less worrisome tone. With a new decade looming and the United States talking peace with an apparently conciliatory Russia, the magazine announced a new series on "Democracy Around the World," featuring nations governed freely by their own people. The Cold War still drew attention—there was a feature on how to build a comfy fallout shelter, for example—but it typically was included in coverage of that year's presidential election. In fact, in August, the magazine took to task Americans who believed that they somehow must measure up to values espoused by others. Most people, it concluded, had unrealistic expectations of perfect lives. Their best bet: enjoy being "abnormal," and stop worrying so much.[57]

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[1] Harry S. Truman, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 16, no. 7 (1950): 194-198.

[2] "From the Editors," *Life*, 2 January 1950, 3.

[3] George Craig, "For This We Fight: Our Constitution—the Bulwark of Our Freedom," a speech at a meeting of the Indiana Constitution Day Committee in the Auditorium of the Indiana World War Memorial, Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 21, 1950. In *Vital Speeches of the Day* 17, no. 1 (1950): 17-20.

[4] Andrew Cherlin, "Changing Family and Household: Contemporary Lessons from Historical Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 51-66.

[5] Alison Light, "Writing Fictions: Femininity and the 1950s," in *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction,* ed. Jean Radford, (London: Routledge, 1986), 149.

[6] Alan Brinkley, "Legacies of World War II," *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 107.

[7] Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1994), .Under historian Alan Dawley's framework, the roots of postwar culture likely were tied to imbalances in the social order. In his analysis of the nation's changing social structure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dawley believed that the volatile years of social change were related to differences in industrial relations, race, gender, and liberal thought between the North and the South—and externally, visible in the United States' handling of class, gender and race issues, economic challenges, depression, and conflict against its counterparts elsewhere in the world, particularly in Germany. He notes that not only was the social order sharply divided by class, gender, and culture, but also that there was a clear imbalance between dynamic, modern society and the existing form of the state. The nation was moving from the individual to the social; from less government to more. In needing to view itself as a nation that was part of a world in flux, American society was held together against its own inner contradictions only by hegemonic forces rooted in the intellectual belief, particularly on the part of the governing elite, of the primacy of the democratic mission. It is hegemony of nationalism that initially dismisses class and race, but must eventually incorporate them as it evolves.

[8] Jonathan Rieder, "The Rise of the Silent Majority," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 248.

[9] "The Regents vs. The Professors," *Life*, 2 October 1950, 43-46.

[10] Lisa Kannenberg, "The Impact of the Cold War on Women's Trade Union Activism: The UE Experiences," *Labor History* 34, nos. 2-3 (1993): 309-323.

[11] "Their Sheltered Honeymoon," *Life*, 10 August 1959, 51-52.

[12] President Harry S. Truman, "Self-Reliant Individuals: No Easy Road for Youth," in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 17, no. 5, 158.

[13] "The American Task: It Is to See that Free Men, Strong in Their Freedom, 'Shall Not Perish From the Earth,'" *Life*, 2 January1950, 28.

[14] David L. Anderson, "China Policy and Presidential Politics," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1980): 80.

[15] Joseph Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982) xvi. Goulden goes on to indicate that the America public, particularly its youth, were more concerned about their individual futures than about the nation's. During a beery discussion soon after my graduation from high school in 1952, in a strongly militaristic Texas community, a classmate summed up the attitude of those of us who were now eligible for the draft. "Boys," he said, "there's two things we gotta avoid: Korea and gonorrhea."

[16] Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986), 1. Alexander asserted that Korea forced the nation to take a hard look at its attitudes toward war and communism at a time when the nation's citizens were not necessarily ready to do so. The war, wrote Alexander, "made real the fear of direct communist aggression against the West ... It appeared to validate the existence of a world-wide communist conspiracy of conquest. This specter of a far-reaching plot, actual or not, insured that the McCarthy-era witch hunt for Red agents and sympathizers would be supported by many...American response to the attack crystallized the practice of confrontation diplomacy with the communist world in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, and that affected American policy all the way through the Vietnam War Years. ...Yet by the end of the Korean War, it had become manifest to many Americans, though by no means to all, that the simple verities about total victory and the conflict between good and evil that had guided American policy for many years were inadequate in the dismaying world that arose from World War II."

[17] *Life*, 3 January 1955. The package of stories ran throughout the magazine and ranged from one on the American luxury diet to stories that depicted various aspects of food production.

[18] "A Scrap is Not Armageddon," *Life,* 4 April 1955, 40.

[19] "The Chances for Peace in 1955," *Life*, 30 May 1955, 19-23. Hughes was adamant that the United States not see the Soviets' apparent acquiescence as somehow a sign that Russia accepted the U.S. self-proclaimed position as the world's most powerful nation. "It would ... be welcomed if some people in Washington stopped citing the word 'sincerity' to define its test for Communist conduct. The term seems an elusive one to apply seriously to any national policy—and applied to Communist behavior, it seems profoundly irrelevant," he wrote. "A sounder criterion for judging Soviet behavior would seem to be almost the precise opposite: manifest self-interest. In political fact a Soviet action based on self-interest is the most serious and substantial, for no other Communist action can be assumed to have lasting value."

[20] "The Two Revolutions," *Life,* 4 July 1955, 16.

[21] Paul G. Hoffman, "The Peace We Fought for is in Sight—and We Can Win It," *Life,* 18 July 1955, 94.

[22] "The Vice President in Russia/A Barnstorming Masterpiece," *Life,* 10 August 1959, 22.

[23] *Life,* 5 January 1959, 10.

[24] Robert Coughlan, "World Birth Control Challenge: Science is Near Success in a Search for Way to Curb Runaway Population," *Life,* 23 November 1959, 162.

[25] "The Confused Image America Presents," *Life* 47, no. 14, 1959, 157. Ways, chief of *Life*'s London bureau when he wrote the piece, believed that the United States had lost an opportunity to explain to Khrushchev "the way in which we relate power, prosperity, and freedom to each other. This relation, the key to understanding the United States, will determine the way we deal with other nations." The confusion may lie, he believed, in the nation's own confusion about what it was trying to accomplish. "For two decades our efforts in the world have had disappointing results because we, as a people, have been muddled about what we were trying to do. We can act with firmness and look forward to achievement only when we recognize our purpose—when we see that what we are trying to do is build situations of order and freedom under morality and law."

[26] May, *Homeward Bound,* 164.

[27] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 29.

[28] Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, eds., *America's Working Women: A Documentary History 1600 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 289.

[29] "Amid Boom, Faces of the Jobless Haunt U.S.," *Life*, 13 April 1959, 32. The article prompted a letter a few weeks later from Eleanore Sackman of Bakersfield, California, who wrote, "If employers would stop turning away 'too old to work' people and instead turn away wives who want extra luxuries, there would be more jobs for fathers." *Life,* 4 May 1959, 20.

[30] Ernest Havemann, "Why Nobody Can Save Any Money," *Life,* 15 June 1959, 121.

[31] Ibid., 122, 125.

[32] Ibid., 132.

[33] "Abundance I: It Problems," "Abundance II: A Criticism," and "Abundance III: Whose Problem?" *Life,* 13 June 1955, 51.

[34] "Why Are We Here?," *Life,* 30 March 1959, 26.

[35] "Student and Teacher of Human Ways," *Life,* 14 September 1959, 147.

[36] "Editor's Note," *Life,* 28 December 1959, 4-5.

[37] "Leisure Could Mean a Better Civilization," *Life,* 28 December 1959, 62.

[38] Susan Toliver, "20/20 Vision: A Perspective on Women's Changing Roles and the Structure of American Families, Past and Future," *Frontiers* 9, no. 1 (1986): 27. Toliver goes on to recognize that scholars at the time were wrong; "We were late in discovering that the family as ripe for change," she wrote, "and that many of the changes that the family has undergone have been for the good."

[39] Cherlin, *The Changing American Family and Public Policy*, 3.

[40] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 217.

[41] Toliver, "20/20 Vision," 27.

[42] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were,* 39.

[43] Mildred Gilman, "Why They Can't Wait to Wed," *Parents Magazine*, November 1958, 46.

[44] *Life*, 18 April 1955, 166-68

[45] Kristin Esterberg, "From Accommodation to Liberation: A Social Movement Analysis of Lesbians in the Homophile Movement," *Gender and Society* 8, no. 3 (September 1994): 424-443.

[46] Figures on women's employment are from the U.S. Bureau of Census 1983b, p. 383, and are cited in several sources.

[47] William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 182.

[48] Suzanne Bianchi and Daphne Spain, *American Women in Transition*, 166.

[49] Havemann, 128.

[50] "Squaresville vs. Beatsville," *Life*, 21 September 1959, 31-37. The article drew diverse response from readers, published in the 12 October 1959. Tom Robbins of Richmond, Virginia, wrote, "Surely there is a middle ground between contrived insanity and inherent mediocrity." From Alexander Gross of New York came, "If the values of a Kansas town are so uncannily excellent, why have they not satisfied everyone?" Clearly, not everyone agreed that the traditional Kansas family was living the good life.

[51] "A 'Morally Right' Decision," *Life*, 25 July 1955, 29.

[52] "Aroused Citizens Strike at Faubus," *Life*, 8 June 1959, 22.

[53] "Negro Queen of Coeds," *Life*, 25 May 1959, 40.

[54] Ravenna M. Helson, "The Mills Classes of 1958 and 1960: College in the Fifties, Young Adulthood in the Sixties," in *Women's Lives Through Time: Educated American Women of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Kathleen Day Hulbert and Diane Tickton Schuster, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993) 191.

[55] Alice E. Mertz, "Working Mothers in the Aid to Dependent Children Program," *Public Welfare* 51, no. 1, (winter 1983): 10-11.

[56] Diane Tickton Schuster, Lois Langland, and Daryl G. Smith, "The UCLA Gifted Women, Class of 1961: Living up to Potential," in *Women's Live through Time: Educated American Women of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Hulbert and Schuster, 212-213.

[57] Ernest Havemann, "Who's Normal? Nobody, But We All Keep on Trying," *Life*, 8 August 1960, 78-90.

CHAPTER 2

"WHATEVER IT TAKES:" OTHER WOMEN'S LIVES

It was 1951, and Mary Kovacevich—the middle child of eleven born to immigrants from communist Croatia—already had earned a bachelor's degree in nursing, served a tour of duty in the Navy, earned a second bachelor's degree in nursing education, and worked at two of the nation's leading hospitals, Henry Ford in Detroit and Carney in Boston. She had been accepted into the master's program at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. "Then," she said, "Korea came along." With her recall to the service, her educational career ended, but her military career took flight.

A lieutenant JG when recalled, she soon was promoted to lieutenant, then lt. commander, and by 1957 to commander. By 1970, when she retired and returned to her hometown in Michigan's Upper Peninsula—building a new home right next to the one in which her parents raised those eleven children—she had served her country during World War II, the Korean and the Vietnam wars, and served on Guam.

> "I was happy to be in the Navy," she said. "That's what I wanted all my life. As a child I saw this picture of a Navy nurse, and I thought, 'Oh, if I could get in the Navy that would be something.' That was my ambition all my life.
>
> "I was determined I was going to do anything I wanted to do. If in my own mind I wanted to do it, I know I could do it . . . My parents said, 'If you can do it, if you think you can do it, do it. Whatever it takes.' "[1]

It was 1957, and Lucile Belen already had advanced from juggling office jobs and an at-home transcription service to a full-time career running the family's bustling flower

shop in downtown Lansing. Smack in the middle of Michigan's capital city, the business hummed with work from nearby neighborhoods, shops, funeral homes and the Capitol. She was immersed in her community, particularly politics. Her mother had been among the first women elected as a state representative, and the three Belen children were required to read the daily newspaper and engage in family discussions about what was in the news.

"We were sitting around the table, talking," she recalled, "and Mayor Crego dropped by. There was an opening on city council in the Third Ward. I said, 'Who do you think is going to run for this ward?' He said, 'Why don't you?' I ran, and I got elected."

The city's first woman council member, she would serve thirty-seven years, under five different mayors, re-elected each term as the city grew and changed.

"I never expected to be an office worker," she says, recalling now the variety of jobs she held in the 1930s and 1940s, prior to her business and political career.

> I expected to take physicians' training. All during high school I didn't take business training; I took the courses you needed for college. Then I started at [Michigan State University]. The Depression was on, you know. My adviser, a woman, she told me the medical profession would be very hard. She discouraged me from it.
>
> One day, I got a call from a man who said he had a job for me downtown... I knew that money was scarce. It was spring break, and I said, "sure." He said, "If you can get down here in a half hour, the job is yours."
>
> Well, I was literally running downtown and what do you think ... I passed my mother. She asked where I was going and I told her I was going to check out a job. She said, "No you're not; you're going back to school." I said, "No, I'm going to go get this job." I kept right on going. And I got that job.[2]

It was 1959, and Eva Evans was weighing her options. She was finishing up her bachelor's degree at Wayne State University, having transferred there from Eastern Michigan University to complete her final year of studies, and found herself during her

off-hours immersed in conversations in the Mart Room of the student union, where students gathered to talk and laugh and wrestle with the issues of the day. They were, she believes, the people that future U.S. President John F. Kennedy would call the best and the brightest generation. "We'd gather there at lunch and we'd talk politics," she said. "The fate of the nation. Getting into law school. Getting into med school. Passing physical chemistry. We were going to change the world. I remember us debating who was going to do what."

Her mother was a teacher in the Detroit Public Schools; her father, a postal worker. As a child she had studied dance, music, piano. For years, she recalled with a laugh, she was confident that she would eventually become "the first black prima ballerina of the Metropolitan Opera Company." By time she graduated from Detroit Northern High School in 1956, she had a career in education on her mind; she had college to look forward to, a future ahead, the world at her feet, the sky as her limit. She was an only child, and her parents had given her the two things she needed to succeed: Roots, in the southern black heritage that her grandparents, aunts, and uncles brought as they migrated north to Michigan, and wings, in the form of opportunity and expectations of excellence.

> I knew that I was going to college. It was just [a matter of] which one. Not only for me, but for all of my friends. I grew up with the children of physicians, lawyers, school teachers like my mother. That was what you could be. If there were professional men and women in Detroit they were part of my social circle. Luckily. Luckily.
>
> I'm a '50s values person; in my household, in my life... we held certain values: everybody stands on somebody's shoulders and moves on. You help the race move on. In our household, we felt you had to be as good as you could be, because you had to be twice as good if you were going to get a chance.
>
> The whole feminist movement was a puzzle for awhile for African-American women. We finally got it after awhile; we didn't resent the movement. But we didn't resent the same things that white women resented. Our husbands

> weren't anywhere where we could be taking power from them. It was different. It was more detrimental in this country to be black than to be female.[3]

The Cold War decade of the 1950s was, as May has said, a decade of containment: of women, of families, in a sense of the American way. Personally and politically, the concept of containment was "the key to security." From a public policy perspective, it would keep Communism in Russia; from a safety perspective, it would keep the exhilarating, terrifying power of the atomic bomb in the United States' "sphere of influence."[4] At the center of this contained world would be the American family—and at the center of that, the American woman. The image of her as safe and secure in the American household, with concentric "spheres of influence" and protection gradually unfolding beyond her, is one that repeated itself many times in not only popular culture and media, but also government communications initiatives of the 1950s.

But Mary Kovacevic wasn't "contained." "We were allowed to pursue whatever field we wanted to," she recalled. "There were no limitations. My mother would say, in Croatian, 'Whatever bed you make, you sleep in it.' That was the way it was."[5] Lucile Belen didn't play the game; "I had the nerve to speak out," she said. "There must have been something about me; I was on the council just two years when I got named president of the council."[6] Eva Evans? "Nobody ever said to me, 'you can't be this, that or the other,'" she said. "It never occurred to me that I couldn't be this, that or the other. I had to hone my skills. Men wanted to be superintendents, and so did I."[7]

Who are these women, and are their stories surprising? Some would say that they are exceptions to the rule, remarkable in their difference. That's too easy an argument. It is too easy to disqualify their experiences, to make them invisible, because they don't fit

what has become a cultural norm. Mary and Lucile weren't married. Does that disqualify them from the norm during a decade when both men and women married young and devoted themselves to family? Eva? She married soon after she earned her degree and began her career, but she was black, so that makes her an exception to the rule in which it was the white middle class that symbolized American might. Right?

What of Donna Maki, a telephone operator in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, who married a handsome young miner she met at a bowling alley, quit work six months pregnant in 1951, had two sons in quick succession, then was in and out of the workforce until later in the decade? Was she the norm? For a while she worked in the shoe store that her parents owned; for a few more years, as a seamstress in a town over the Wisconsin border that required her, with two young children at home, to hop a bus each morning for a forty-five-minute commute westward while her husband traveled north and east an hour to the copper mine. She enjoyed her work, but she never had another job like the telephone operator's job; it was the best of the bunch. "We were the highest paid women in Ironwood," she says now. "We made thirty-five dollars a week. We made a lot more than the girls in the dime stores...I liked all the girls I worked with. I liked the guys who repaired the equipment. It was hard work, especially when there was a big fire over in Hurley; it was nothing for them to call me out at midnight to come and work the switchboard. And I liked the people. It was a lot of fun."[8]

What of her high school classmate, Anita Schanning, the self-professed "people-liker," who forged a career as a nurse, married one of her patients—a soldier made a paraplegic in Korea, with two sons from his first marriage—and for years was the sole income earner in her household? What of Hortense Canady, a young black woman

struggling to choose between a fellowship to study genetics, a place in the work world, or a role at home with children as her husband established a successful practice as a dentist? Could they all be exceptions to the rule?

Or was the rule, the norm, the standard, really not the norm at all?

It's hardly a new concept to postulate that not all women during the 1950s were happily homebound. As history has been informed by feminist perspectives and by African-American and other frameworks, scholars have increasingly recognized that, Cold War culture or not, women played a variety of roles, had diverse hopes and dreams, and lived many stages of their lives during the 1950s. Clearly, the many roles women played were important, and in many cases their work was sought out by those who would benefit from it. But while scholars have recognized this, the culture has not. Women not happily homebound were, it seems, the invisible women of the decade, in this culture's media and in many ways in its memory. They were, it seems, not the symbols the nation sought.

One irony of this cultural icon is that there seems such a conflict between two vastly different ideals: the symbolic homebound woman, which the nation wanted, was also one it worried about, even as it held up sexy, potentially disruptive women like Marilyn Monroe as important symbols, too, of American freedom. Both had the potential to be very powerful people. "The girl who married dear old Dad, indeed women in general, have been libeled as monsters of momism, models of domestic submissiveness—the undercover cradle rocking rulers of the world," *Life*'s editors cheerily wrote in the spring of 1959. Dubbing women "the not-so-weaker sex" and "forceful and faithful and pioneering on the frontiers of yesterday, today and tomorrow," it notes that on the one

hand, they rode with their husbands out west and are now supporting them as they travel into space; on the other, there's Marilyn, a man's woman instead of a woman's woman, and both, after all, are what America is fighting for.[9]

If America was a contained culture, then, it also was a confused one. Indeed, a carefree and very busy bachelor featured in *Life*'s January 26, 1959, issue had to admit that, when he finally settled down, "I guess what I'm really looking for is a chorus girl with a Radcliff mind."[10] How could a society hold up (quite literally) both Marilyn Monroe's 1953 *Playboy* magazine centerfold and June Cleaver's tidy television kitchen as symbols of the benefits of American capitalism and American freedom? As America, in Carey's terms, constructed the reality that it took up residence within, what were its expectations? Would the real American symbol please stand up?

Symbolic Contributors: Family, Society, Economy

May and others have argued that both men and women were confined to their proscribed gender roles during the decade. A look at the attributes assigned to homebound women indicates that they can be classified not only as consumers, but also in a larger sense as contributors in the culture in which they functioned. As such, they contributed in three important categories. First, they contributed to the definition of the American family and to its success. Secondly, they contributed to the success of others: their husbands, their governments, their society. Finally, they contributed to the economy not as producers of products or as earners of pay, but as consumers of products produced, and with pay earned, by others. This symbolic life played out so visibly that it became the

basis of public policy, political campaigns, marketing initiatives, movies, and other media. It became integral to the culture, a sign of superiority.

Anne G. Pannell, then president of Sweet Briar College, summed up the confusion surrounding what women stood for in a speech delivered in Birmingham, Alabama, in fall 1951. Entitled "A Nation's Strength Begins in the Home: Parents are the Real Molders of Character," it neatly aligned preservation of family with preservation of the American way of life, and by the time she finished speaking, she used the terms "woman" and "family" almost interchangeably.

"Woman's primary responsibility must continue to be the home, for in these days of strain and insecurity the family unit must be improved and intensified," she said. "But at the same time she must prepare herself to play her role in public affairs. . . . except in the direst emergency I feel we must be sure the ability of women are being used in the wisest way for the greatest good of this country. For this reason, I am concerned about the drive for younger women to enlist in large numbers in the Armed Services." It's a dual danger, she said, to the American home and to the fields of education, medicine and nursing in which women play major support roles. Ostensibly, Pannell was worried about the possibility of women being drafted, but her framework clearly shows the identification not only of the American woman with family, but of the family with the woman: "The married women bear and rear children and thus create families; a great many unmarried women bring up the children of others or assist in family life . . . The strong, good Home creates friendly attitudes n the Community, Nation and World. Women have their greatest opportunity and responsibility here. This is why one prefers to hope there will be no drafting of women except for the gravest national emergency and to

hope for Education of Women which will fit them for building the finest and strongest homes in which they will mould the characters of fine, strong children—the greatest asset a nation can have." [11]

Pannell discussed parents in the plural several times during her speech, but it is interesting to note that for Pannell and for others, it is the woman, and her role, that actually defines the family unit. One could surmise from this speech, and from other communication initiatives of the time, that a family can exist without a man, but not without a woman. As in the public information of the National Security Resources Board, the man could stand apart as the individual: the family clung to the woman. The image of married, middle-class motherhood as the norm and the ideal for women so permeated the nation's conscious that at its extreme, it was treasonous to recognize any other structure. Sheila Brennan has argued that Ethel Rosenberg's death sentence for treason in the 1950s was at least in part due to the fact that she didn't meet the conservative gender-role expectations of the Cold War 1950s: as a labor organizer and a woman not given to emotion. Rosenberg was considered a threat above and beyond her association with her treasonous husband Julius, Brennan argued.[12] Blanche Wiesen Cook noted that during the Cold War, some of the greatest women of America were "denounced as communists; all followed and hounded by the FBI; all assailed as un-American and dangerous," because they didn't fit the niche.[13] And as women became more active in labor unions, that activity became further evidence of their potential subversiveness if they bucked the symbolic trend. The perceived connection between union women and Communism cannot go unnoted in determining the forces in place to keep women in the home during this period in American history.[14]

The tied-to-family image was particularly important during time of war, whether an active war or the hovering cloud of the Cold War. Susan Zeiger, in her 1996 study on motherhood and war, examined state manipulation of moms and their relationships with their sons during World War I as an example of a moment in history when the personal became political. "Just as an eroticized and youthful 'pinup girl' was the paradigmatic construction of wartime femininity in the 1940s," she noted, "the white, middle-aged American 'Mom' was the predominant image of womanhood in the war culture of the First World War."[15] Arguing that the mobilization of motherhood as a national symbol during World War I was closely linked to the first national military conscription in United States history, she said that creators of the war culture "managed" the problem of the draft, of antiwar opposition in general and women's activism in particular, by coding these national and political issues in gender and family terms. That, she said, required forms of mothering other than those deemed acceptable—activist, for example, or overprotective, or overly emotional—to be condemned as disloyal. Those norms were played out in popular media of the time, particularly motion pictures.

The image carried over through the decades, running into direct conflict with the pinup image during World War II. Marilyn Hegarty, in her 1998 study on media images of American women during World War II, said the two collapsed into what she calls the "patriotute." Women, she said, had civic duties both in the factory and the dance hall; print media reflected and reinforced concerns about these sexy women, and the line between them collapsed in a confused jumble of images. Deviant women who were sexually active and spread disease among male soldiers were "saboteurs close to committing treason;" yet the campaign against them was "complicated . . . by a

concomitant effort to mobilize female sexuality in support of the war effort."[16] May argued that containment of sexuality was in fact a key component of the containment philosophy of the decade. Women who were homebound could channel that sexuality in healthy, normal ways. It would be to everyone's benefit; as May says, "wives in the postwar era were recognized as sexual enthusiasts whose insistence on conjugal satisfaction would contribute to erotically charged marriages. Sexual containment—unlike sexual repression—would enhance family togetherness."[17]

Thus, every aspect of a woman's life helped tie her to, and helped define, the construction of the American family. American life would not exist as it was without her. To George Craig, National Commander of the American Legion, the Korean War was made real to Americans once they realized that "Already as a result of the fighting in Korea there are a score of Gold Star Mothers in Indianapolis alone:"[18] the war wasn't real to the nation until its mothers were affected by it.

Consistent with her contributions to the definition of family, a woman's role as contributor to her spouse's success was equally as important, since that was tightly tied to the success of society as a whole. The January 19, 1959, issue of *Life*, for example, showcased the new Congress by pairing a story about the new incoming elected officials—among them Main's Margaret Chase Smith—with a seven-page photo spread on ten incoming first ladies, focusing on the roles that the women played in getting their husbands elected. In two instances, the magazine notes that the wives' obvious beauty were a factor in their husbands' success.[19]

Such supportive roles also captured the spirit and the imagination of a society that still sought heroes and looked for those who made them so. In the late 1950s, the nation's

fascination with the burgeoning space program sparked an enormous number of feature stories and news items about technology, space travel, and the astronauts themselves. The nation wanted to know all about the astronauts, including about their families; by September of 1959, that prompted *Life* to feature the seven wives of the astronauts in a cover story, with a headline that captured them in their support roles: "Astronauts' Wives/Their Inner Thoughts/Worries."[20] The editor's note summed up the report: "It stars the seven attractive women above who tell, with intimacy and feeling, what it is like being married to a man who may soon be shot into space...it has produced individual statements of faith and courage which are variously romantic, religious or homely—and invariably warm and womanly."[21] Each woman was profiled separately in her supportive role, and each clearly considered herself a partner in the astronauts' success. "It is perfectly natural for any wife to look at things with almost the same point of view as her husband," said Jo Schirra, whose husband was astronaut Wally Schirra. "You're just as excited about the exotic new things your husband does as the wife of a bank clerk is when her husband is promoted to vice president."[22]

The juxtaposition of the story in this issue with a story about Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's upcoming visit to the United States is particularly telling, since this is the first *Life*'s readers see of the man called the World's Number One Communist as a family man. He is coming "in a blaze of nightmare portents, stained with blood, promising peace and shooting rockets toward the moon," the editors warn.[23]

As they contributed to family and then to society in their support roles, women also contributed to the economy as the managers of the household budgets. It was a critical role in a culture that needed to keep up appearances to those who might believe

other economic or political systems were superior. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh observed that consumerism, with its emphasis on egalitarianism, was an essential element of democratization and that the gendered bias inherent in the weighting of social values—of production as the venue of men, consumption of women—was closely regarded by advertisers. After World War II, she said, they "extolled the virtues of women returning to the home from the paid labour force, but to a new home where freedom of choice over domestic spending was deemed true autonomy. Indeed, a very important public space for women was the department store."[24]

As was the case with their family roles, the roles women played as consumers often seemed inextricable from their gender, and the two often were pulled together seamlessly in the public dialogue. A *Life* article on American politics refers to the influence of "the housewife," but actually is discussing the rise and fall of food prices in the market: the two go hand-in-hand.[25] Mei-ling Yang, in her 1996 study of women's pages in the *Washington Post*, commented that the newspaper rejected a request by then-women's page editor Marie Sauer to move to a more neutral "lifestyle" section from a typical women's section; the ease of selling advertisements on the traditional pages played one part in the decision, she noted, but the segregated-by-gender approach to news was also due in part by the paper's immersion in the acceptable gender roles structures of the time.[26]

Said Betty Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique*: "Why is it never said that the really crucial function, the really important role that women serve as housewives is to buy more things for the house? In all the talk about femininity and woman's role, one forgets that the real business of America is Business. But the perpetuation of

housewifery. the growth of the feminine mystique. makes sense (and dollars) when one realizes that women are the chief customers of American business."[27]

Symbol vs. Statistics

If women indeed were businesses' chief customers. as Friedan said. it seems likely that more and more of the money they spent was their own. The decade was. as has been noted. a boom time for women to enter the workforce. This was not strictly related to the increased number of women who joined the workforce during World War II. Claudia Goldin noted that. in fact. about half the wartime entrants into the labor force exited by 1951. meaning that those women working during the 1950s were not necessarily the wartime employees. Just 20 percent of those working in 1950 entered the labor force during World War II. and it seems more likely now that the rise in women's employment was due to the increase in the need for clerical employees and the rise in women's education levels.[28] Unlike up-and down trends in birth. marriage and divorce rates. said Andrew Cherlin. "the arch of mothers into the labor force has been steady and relentless. Even during the family oriented 1950s married women were increasingly taking jobs outside the home."[29] Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that both the number of working mothers with children under age 6 and with children age 6 to 17 rose steadily during the 1950s.[30] And women accounted for 34 percent of the labor force at the beginning of the decade. said Diane Crispell. a figure that rose to 38 percent by the start of the next.[31]

Education played a part. Janet Zollinger Geile linked rising educational levels to participation in the labor force: in 1952. more than half of college-educated women

between the ages of 45 and 64 were in the labor force, compared to only 39 percent of high school graduates.[32] Donald Brown and Rosemary Pacini indicate that during the 1950s, students from Vassar College juggled employment into their activities, along with traditional expectations: 86 percent of women who graduated in 1957-58 went to work, with more than half entering teaching or retail, and 55 percent married within one year.[33]

In part, the leap forward in the number of working women was due to a growing number of jobs created by a booming economy that required more clerical and service sector workers. More and more, however, the numbers also reflected a growth in young, single women seeking satisfaction and adventure. Ruth Rosen argued that while some women late in the 1950s visibly rebelled by taking up the Bohemian lifestyle of the Beats, many others sought jobs in the nation's rapidly growing urban areas, where they formed their own "singles subculture." Unlike the generations of working women before them, who may have lived in boarding houses or in their parents' homes while they worked, they forged their own lifestyles and spent their money as they pleased.[34]

Increasingly, too, the jobs women held also were in non-traditional fields, such as police work. As Dorothy Moses Schulz pointed out, the growth in numbers of policewomen during the decade was nothing short of remarkable. The 1950 United States Census reported 2,610 publicly employed policewomen, slightly over one percent of all police and detectives. The 1960 Census counted 5,617 policewomen, or about 2 percent of the total police workforce. The greatest growth was in metropolitan areas; in Los Angeles, for example, women made up more than two percent of the force by 1956, including eleven sergeants and a lieutenant. By 1958, the New York City Police Department counted 249 women in its ranks. The city of Detroit had a female

commissioner and gave women opportunities for promotion; by 1956, the force included six female sergeants, five female lieutenants, and one appointed chief.[35]

Among the policewomen of the 1950s was Kay Werner, who entered police work in Lansing, Michigan, in 1958 at the urging of the city's first policewoman, Clarissa Young. College educated, single, and determined to do work that was important; she found that although patrol work in this mid-sized city was strictly for men, she could have an impact as a detective and a youth worker.

"This was before the police academy was a gleam in anybody's eye yet, so I got on-the-job training," Werner recalled. "I would go to class in the afternoon for a couple of hours with the guys and we learned basic procedures—none of these guys had had any police training either. My recollection is that I wasn't in class for more than a couple of weeks. They issued me a gun before I knew how to use it.

"The thing that really attracted me to police work was it never got boring. It was always something different every day. The only thing I didn't like was the reports I had to write. You never went to work knowing what was going to happen; anything could happen. Anything was possible.

"You always had a case load—cases that you were assigned to investigate. They were all different kids of things. You'd come in, look at your case load, take any new cases that were assigned to and plan your day around whatever was necessary—interviewing kids at school, interviewing parents...We had court appearances; sometimes we had to file petitions in probate court, for kids who were in need of the court's protection. We had statutory rape cases; those were quite common. We had court cases; your day might include one of those."[36]

For Werner, police work both paid the bills and provided a source of satisfaction and adventure. On one case, she worked with federal agents investigating a group that was selling liquor illegally across several state lines. On another, she was involved in nighttime surveillance at a school where vandalism had become problematic. Forty years later, she still has a stack of news clippings from other cases on which she worked, and recalls with great pride the difference she was able to make through her work.

Although Werner's role as a police officer was restricted by her gender, women officers in other parts of the country found their roles expanding in the 1950s. According to Schulz, that was sparked by the reestablishment of their professional association, coupled with the fact that they were entering the field with different backgrounds and different goals. These "second generation" policewomen, as Schulz categorizes them, were often military veterans, were middle-class careerists, and actively sought promotions and expanded assignments. Their uniforms may have differed from the men's—many avoided wearing ties, for example, and most carried their .38-caliber revolvers in pocketbooks that included built-in holsters—but their work had moved far beyond that of matrons assigned to watch over female prisoners. "They formed a bridge," she says, "between the upper-middle class, college educated, feminist, Progressive women who had served as policewomen before them and today's women officers, most of whom are comparable to the overwhelmingly working class, high school educated men with whom they serve."[37]

Several studies of educated women in the 1950s have indicated a diversity of interests, concerns, and lifestyle, although most show at least some connection to familial priorities. Janet Zollinger Geile called women born in the 1930s and 1940s a transitional

group, expected to play traditional roles but establishing a "new, multiple-role pattern" of marriage, motherhood, paid work, and sometimes continuing education while in their 30s.[38] They found themselves in an odd position: there was a booming demand for teachers and clerical workers at the same time that women were marrying and having children, and employers found that they had to hire married women and older women to be teachers, for example, or they'd have no one to hire at all. Ravenna Helson, who studied women attending Mills College in Oakland, Calif., in 1957-1960, found those women to be socially conscious and active. They identified racial integration and civil rights as key issues of the time. They also included marriage and family among their future plans; about twenty percent were engaged to be married by the fall of their senior year, and they expected to conform to the "social clock" of marriage, children, and a commitment to following the husband's career path so that he can advance. About a third of the women married within a few months of graduation.[39]

In her speech on the importance of women to the family, Pannell cited other Census Bureau statistics that help structure the reality of women's lives during the decade: While the number of females age fourteen and over had increased about six million since 1940, the number of single women had decreased in the 1940s, particularly in the younger age groups (18-19 and 20-24). While in 1940 three-quarters of women age 18-19 were single, in 1950 that proportion had dropped to two-thirds; while half of women age 20-24 were single in 1940, in 150 that had dropped to less than one-third. Of the 20- to 24-year-olds, it was expected that 200 of every 1,000 would bear children, compared to 125 a decade earlier; in the 25-to-29-year-old age group, the expectation was the 160 out of 1,000 would bear children, up from 114 in 1940.[40] Clearly, many women

were married, or would be, during the decade, and with that role would typically come the role of parent.

Published interviews of women who lived during the 1950s indicate that many women may have questioned the stereotyped realities of their lives even as they lived within them. In 1986, Benita Eiseler showed photos of proscribed 1950s nuclear families to friends who had reached adulthood during the 1950s. She was surprised at the intensity of some of the responses. One photo, of a traditional nuclear family grilling lunch on the beach, drew particular ire from a woman described as "most ladylike:" "I thought I was free of sexist rage... until I saw that penis-oriented fantasy: the ghoulish middle-class male with his hot dogs at the ready, his umbrella erected, his palm trees erupted, having spawned three kids without ever removing his J. Press swim trunks!"[41] Nancy Walker, in looking at popular women writers of the late 1940s and the 1950s, saw a decidedly feminist subtext in their humorous stories and books, which poked fun at the women's lives: their relationships with their husbands and children, their day-to-day dealings with neighbors, their experiences with childbirth. She argued that writers such as Betty MacDonald (*The Egg and I*), Shirley Jackson (*Life Among the Savages*), and Jean Kerr (*Please Don't Eat the Daisies*) should not, as Friedan advocated, be discounted because they were not "real housewives." Instead, Walker saw unease and restlessness beneath the humor, and in fact found in it origins of some of the major themes of the feminism of the 1960s.[42]

For other women, the disparity between what the culture expected of them, and what they craved for themselves, was all but overwhelming. Poet Adrienne Rich recalled her struggle to prove that she could have what she calls a full woman's life by merging

what the culture demanded with what she desired; to find ways "in which the energy of creation and the energy of relation can be united." The 1950s emphasis on domestication seemed to make that impossible. "[I]n those years I always felt the conflict as a failure of love in myself," she wrote. "I had thought I was choosing a full life: the life available to most men, in which sexuality, work, and parenthood could coexist. But I felt, at twenty-nine, guilt toward the people closest to me, and guilty toward my own being." As she recalled,

> ...People were moving out to the suburbs; technology was going to be the answer to everything, even sex; the family was in its glory. Life was extremely private; women were isolated from each other by the loyalties of marriage. I have a sense that women didn't talk to each other much in the fifties—not about their secret emptinesses, their frustrations. I went on trying to write; my second book and first child appeared in the same month. ...I had a marriage and a child. If there were doubts, if there were periods of null depression or active despairing, these could only mean that I was ungrateful, insatiable, perhaps a monster. . . . About the time my third child was born, I felt that I had either to consider myself a failed woman and a failed poet, or to try to find some synthesis by which to understand what was happening to me. What frightened me most was the sense of drift, of being pulled along on a current which called itself my destiny, but in which I seemed to be losing touch with whoever I had been...I was writing very little, partly from fatigue, that female fatigue of suppressed anger and loss of contact with my own being; partly from the discontinuity of female life with its attention to small chores, errands, work that others constantly undo, small children's constant needs. What I did write was unconvincing to me; my anger and frustration were hard to acknowledge in our out of poems because in fact I cared a great deal about my husband and my children.[43]

Not until very late in the decade was Rich able to write about her own recognition of herself as a woman, independent of the expectations of her as a woman. Even then, she recalled, she wrote in pieces, as her children napped or after one of them had awakened her in the middle of the night. In "Snapshots of a Daughter-In-Law," written 1950-1960, she wrote:

"You all die at fifteen," said Diderot,
and turn part legend, part convention.
Still, eyes inaccurately dream
Behind closed windows blankening with steam.
Deliciously, all that we might have been,
All that we were—fire, tears,
Wit, taste, martyred ambition—
Stir like the memory of refused adultery
The drained and flagging bosom of our middle years.[44]

What the Media Said

Clearly, there were differences between the way that women lived their lives, and the cultural expectations of them. Numerous studies have debated whether there also was a disconnect between media portrayals of women's lives and whether those portrayals changed over time. Gaye Tuchman is among those who have seen little difference in the way that women generally are portrayed in the media. Since 1954, she noted, about forty-five percent of the people shown on TV have been women; about twenty percent of those are shown as members of the labor force. In women's magazines women were, and are, defined in terms of the men in their lives. In advertisements, they are in the home; in audio voice-overs, they are almost nonexistent. Jacqueline Blix found that newspapers and magazines in the 1950s featured more children and nuclear families than did their counterparts in the 1890s, but that those1950s media also presented a more rigid picture of gender. Women typically were less visible in the newspaper, were less likely to be employed and were typically identified by marriage, family, or both.[45]

Print media advertising shows a similar trend. A decade after publication of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* Alice Courtney and Sarah Wernick Lockeretz, in a study of advertisements in seven popular magazines, including *Life,* in the 1970s, noted

that only twelve percent of workers shown in advertisements were women—and if they factored out professional entertainers of both sectors, the proportion dropped to seven percent. About half of the men were shown in working roles; less than one-tenth of the women were working. More specifically, they noted that not a single woman in the issues studied was shown as a professional or high-level executive; they were clerks, stewardesses, assembly line workers, engaged in food preparation, teachers, or generic "working women."[46] Louis Wagner and Janis Banos followed that study by noting an increase in the number and variety of roles in which women were depicted, noting: "While a number of critics have maintained that advertising is not moving fast enough in correctly portraying women's changing role in society, it is desirable to point out that over fifty percent of married women are not working outside of the home and that a substantial percentage of those employed still consider their role as a homemaker important."[47] Linda Busby and Greg Leichty, in their study of traditional women's magazines from the 1950s through the 1980s, note that the early editions showed women almost exclusively in gendered images that indicate male dominance; later editions showed women more independent, self-centered and concerned with youthfulness. They link the change with the evolution of the feminist movement.

On television, the trend was similar. Donald Davis, in his 1990 study on portrayals of women in prime-time, notes that in 1954, sixty-eight percent of all characters during the most-watched TV hours were men, and that has changed little today. Women typically were portrayed as overly emotional, dependent, less capable, dominated, and less intelligent, and were—and are—more narrowly defined in their roles.[48] Joseph Dominick found that women typically were portrayed in situation

comedies and were shown more often as housewives or housekeepers in the 1950s than they were in the late 1970s.[49] Interestingly, Margaret Finnegan found that early 1950s TV characters, such as Annie Oakley and Connie Brooks, were independent, strong and resourceful; they gave way to stereotypical housewives and sexual objects by the 1960s as male characters became central to ongoing TV series.[50]

Television advertisements during the 1950s occasionally showed women in their work roles, but as Kenneth Allan and Scott Coltrane noted, those roles were limited to just two of the standard categories: clerical and sales and service workers. They typically were passive and dependent, and almost 30 percent of the time, they were depicted as doing housework.[51]

And in movies? Not surprisingly, numerous studies have indicated that there, too, women typically were depicted or defined in terms of their relationships with men. Margaret Marshment, in her studies of the representation of women in popular culture, notes that the strong, independent female stars of the 1940s, such as Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Marlene Dietrich and Barbara Stanwyck, all but disappeared in the 1950s, and that when women were portrayed as strong, they also were portrayed as somehow flawed.[52] Janet Thumim, in assessing the evolution of Katharine Hepburn's constructed persona on screen from 1945-1960, argues that reviewers' assessments of Hepburn's performance rose and fell with how consistent her role was with the constructed expectations of the time, and that her most independent characters—as a lawyer in *Adam's Rib*, for example, and a journalist in *Woman of the Year*—consistently learn that there's a price to be paid by a woman who is strong and independent.[53]

That price, and the tension it causes—between what women want, and what they *really* want—shows up not only in the way women are depicted on screen, but in the way men's characters are constructed. Steven Cohan, for example, in examining the way actor William Holden represented desired masculinity in the movie *Picnic*, shows the confusion between what women supposedly want in a man—the man in the gray flannel suit—and what women *really* want, which is character Hal's brand of masculinity. Constructed in the movie supposedly to appeal to women's hidden desires, it's a familiar image in 1950s cinema: Hal's rippled bare chest is seen in the movie stills, on promotional ads and in multiple scenes in the movie itself, showing him to be a "natural man" but also in response to a "nostalgic yearning for an obsolete form of masculinity—that is, one made antiquated by the suburban American ranch house and back yard—it is still the spectacle of his bare chest...that sparks the action from scene to scene, continually attracting the camera's gaze and establishing the male body as the film's primary image of sexual difference."[54]

In the 1950s context, of course—the context constructed by the society of the time—the ideal man wears a nice gray suit, commutes to work each day from the 'burbs, is married to a faithful wife and gets great pleasure each evening out of returning home to her and the children. His power lies in his image. Hal's power lies in his chest muscles—not unlike, frankly, Marilyn Monroe's. It's particularly interesting that Cohan puts this in light of the Kinsey report, which in the early 1950s presented to men the uncomfortable fact that women reached their sexual prime at an older age than men, and that women's prime lasted quite a bit longer. Hal's power is that he can give the women, both those in the movie and those in the audience, what their "own" men cannot. No wonder women

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needed to be contained in the home; who knew what havoc that sex drive might cause if they were out and about?

Others found either a feminist subtext or strong evidence of feminism in magazines of the 1950s, including women's magazines—a particularly intriguing thought, since the bulk of content of such magazines is driven by advertising rather than editorial value. Shelley Budgeon and Dawn H. Currie, for example, noted in their study of *Seventeen* magazine a tension that arose in 1951 between the assumption of the publishers and advertisers that women primarily wanted traditional roles, and editorial messages praising the non-traditional goals of individual self-accomplishment and self-expression for young women. In looking for feminist subtext in *Seventeen*, they compared issues from 1951, 1971, and 1991, and although they found fewer feminist images in the 1950s magazines, they were surprised to find that they did indeed exist. Of the ten nontraditional images of women scattered among the mascara ads and how-to-attract-boys stories, three were contained in fiction stories, raising the question of whether nontraditional roles at that time were still just a teen fantasy.[55]

Kathryn Keller noted that the typical women readers of magazines in the 1950s could find validation for their roles whether they were at home full-time or in the workplace.[56] In all, it seems that there was at least some diversity in the ways magazines presented women's lives.

On the Edge or Perfectly Normal?

It was 1947, and Hortense Canady was at a crossroads. At age nineteen, she had just graduated with a biology degree from Fisk College in Tennessee and then joined her

husband in Lansing, Michigan, where he had moved a year before to establish a dental practice—the first by an African-American in the city. A fellowship to study genetics at the University of Michigan was hers for the taking; "My husband, he said, 'If you go, you won't come back. You'll want to get your Ph.D.' He had been very patient, waiting for me. I knew he was right. I said to myself, 'I'll give this marriage a chance.'

She took a job analyzing specimens in a state public health laboratory—work she enjoyed. A year later, expecting their first child, she was contacted by a group seeking a woman with a college degree to take over the directorship of a community nursery school. She took the job, and then, in July of 1948, stepped out of the workforce when their child was born. "I stayed home—much to my chagrin," she said with a sigh. "My husband, he couldn't see having someone who would be less efficient taking care of the children.

> But let me tell you the opportunities that arose from that. Because I had the time and the energy, I was able to be very active in the community. I was treasurer for the United Way. I was active with the YWCA, which led me to the national board. I was active with the NAACP, and was very involved with the efforts toward desegregation of the Lansing schools; that was a great position. That then led me to become a member of the board of education.
>
> In the mid-1970s I stepped back into workforce. I had been very active in the community, and people would call me up to recommend people for jobs. I had a call from Lansing Community College wanting someone who could work in financial aid. I said I could do it. He said, "Do you have a college degree?" I said, "Somewhere!" I found my transcript, took it down there and was hired immediately. While I was working part-time there I got a master's degree from MSU in higher education administration, then began working full-time.
>
> I remember talking to my mother...I was unhappy about my husband wanting me to stay home. A lot of housework and that kind of thing. My mother says, "You're supposed to be an intelligent woman. Don't you see how that frees you up? You can do things in this town that others can't because you aren't beholden to an employer."
>
> "Cooking? Housework? Do what everybody else does: eat beans and hire someone else to do it. Have someone else come in and help you with the ironing. Don't bother your husband about it; just do it."

> "Have you ever noticed that how once a door is opened, other opportunities open beyond that first door?"[57]

Hortense and Donna both married while they were still in their teens. Hortense, African-American, born in Chicago, was the daughter of a pharmacist and a social worker; she attained a college degree. Donna, white, born in a small Michigan town, was the daughter of a businessman and a homemaker; she passed up the chance to go to college to step directly into the workforce. Neither fits the construction; each has a different story to tell, and neither is the story the nation might have expected to hear.

Says Donna, a widow now, still living in the Upper Peninsula town where she was born: "I got married too young...you shouldn't go from your mother's house to your husband's house. You should have some time in between."[58] Says Hortense:

> I still like genetics. And just look what's happened in the field, since the days of the very rudimentary type things. Wouldn't that have been an exciting field to be in? I think about that every now and then, but not with any sense of loss. It's just a turn in the road, of what might have been, in another time and place.[59]

Clearly, there were differences among women's experiences as they forged their lives in the 1950s. Clearly, there were differences between the symbolic woman, a la the Nixon-Khrushchev Kitchen Debate, and the women who forged their own ways in the world of work, education, politics, activism, and home. And while society as a whole claimed to embrace into the symbolic image, individuals of both genders struggled with it. If American freedom was linked to capitalism, patriarchy, and even militarism; if, as Robert Shaffer maintains in his assessment of author Pearl S. Buck's anticommunist subtexts, militaristic societies encourage sexist behaviors, and the development of the

atomic bomb both reinforced male patriarchal power and impulses, and separated men from women and children;[60] and if women's sexual power was so great that, as both Buck and May maintained, it must be contained for the good of the country (or at least, purported to be so); then the American way seemed to require a gendered approach to everything from foreign policy to the marketing of washing machines.

Within that context, how did *Life* tell the American story in the 1950s, and whose story did it tell? Who were the invisible women—and why are their stories not told?

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[1] Mary Kovacevich, personal interview with author, 3 July 2001.
[2] Lucile Belen, personal interview with author, 11 July 2001.
[3] Eva Evans, personal interview with author, 28 July 2001.
[4] May, *Homeward Bound*, 13-14.
[5] Kovacevich, personal interview, 3 July 2001.
[6] Belen, personal interview, 11 July 2001.
[7] Evans, personal interview, 28 July 2001.
[8] Donna Maki, personal interview with author, 3 July 2001.
[9] "Editor's Note," *Life* 20 April 1959, 2.
[10] "Blessings of Bachelorhood," *Life* 26 January 1959, 98.
[11] Anne G. Pannell, "A Nation's Strength Begins in the Home," in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 18, no. 5 (1951): 146-47.
[12] Sheila Brennan, "Popular Images of American Women in the 1950s and Their Impact on Ethel Rosenberg's Trial and Conviction," *Women's Rights Law Reporter* 14, no. 1 (winter 1992): 43-63.
[13] Blanche Wiesen Cook, "The Impact of Anti-Communism in American Life," *Science & Society* 53, no. 4 (1989-1990): 471.
[14] Kate Weigand, "The Red Menace, the Feminine Mystique, and the Ohio Un-American Activities Commission: Gender and Anti-Communism in Ohio, 1951-1954," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 3 (1992): 70-94. In her 1992 study of gender and anti-Communism in Ohio in the early 1950s, Weigand notes that the nation was so reluctant to recognize women's activism in both the labor movement and the Communist party that the Ohio Un-American Activities Commission severely underestimated women's contribution to both. The commission's belief that women followed their husbands' beliefs and supported only their husbands' initiatives was inaccurate, she says; women actually were often leaders in both areas, and the commission's reluctance to recognize this actually hampered its work.
[15] Susan Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to Be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 7.
[16] Marilyn Hegarty, "Patriot or Prostitute? Sexual Discourses, Print Media, and American Women During World War II," *Journal of Women's History* 10 no. 2, 1998: 120.
[17] May, 102.
[18] George Craig, "For This We Fight," in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 17 no. 1 (1951): 18.
[19] "Political Fights, Parties, Pretty Women and Pathos: Old Order Yields in the 1959 Scene," *Life* 19 January 1959, 16-27.
[20] *Life* 47, 21 September 1959, 1.
[21] Ibid., 2.

[22] Ibid., 152. Three weeks later, in its 12 October 12 edition, *Life* ran responses from two readers that nailed both ends of the spectrum. Wrote Evelyn Fergle of St. Clair Shores, Michigan: "Congratulations on such a heart-warming article as the one on the Astronauts' wives. I got the feeling that whatever success the Astronauts achieve by their common assignment will be due chiefly to the bond of love, understanding and faith of their wives." That was offset by Mrs. Richard Neuman of Havelock, North Carolina: "After reading the article about the 'inner thoughts' of the Astronauts' wives I can understand perfectly why some of the Astronauts would be glad to be in outer space. All that 'togetherness' is enough to send anyone into the wild blue yonder." *Life* 12 October 1959, 16.

[23] Ibid., 42b.

[24] Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, "Smoke and Mirrors: Gender Representation in North American Tobacco and Alcohol Advertisements Before 1950," *Social History* 31, no. 62 (1998): 186. Her study takes into account both United States and Canadian practices.

[25] Earnest Havemann, "War and Politics," *Life* 28 August 1950, 109.

[26] Mei-Lei Yang, "Women's Pages or People's Pages: The Production of News for Women in the *Washington Post* in the 1950s," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (1996): 364-379.

[27] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963), 197.

[28] Claudia Goldin, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," *American Economic Review* 81, no. 4 (1991): 750, 755.

[29] Cherlin, *The Changing American Family and Public Policy*, 5.

[30] Ibid., 47.

[31] Diane Crispell, "Myths of the 1950s," *American Demographics* 14, no. 8 (August 1992): 38.

[32] Janet Zollinger Geile, "Women's Role Change and Adaptation, 1920-1990," in *Women's Lives Through Time: Educated American Women of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Kathleen Day Hulbert and Diane Tickton Schuster, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993) 38.

[33] Donald Brown and Rosemary Pacini, "The Vassar Classes of 1957 and 1958: The Ideal Student Study," in *Women's Lives Through Time*, eds. Kathleen Day Hulbert and Diane Tickton Schuster, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993) 162.

[34] Ruth Rosen, "The Female Generation Gap: Daughters of the Fifties and the Origins of Contemporary American Feminism," in *U.S. History as Women's History*, eds. Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 313-334.

[35] Dorothy Moses Schulz, "Policewomen in the 1950s: Paving the Way for Patrol," *Women and Criminal Justice* 4, no. 2 (1993): 5-30.

[36] Kay Werner, personal interview with author, 11 August 2001.

[37]Schulz, i5-30. Schulz also indicated that the 1956 rebirth of the International Association of Women Police—a revival of the International Association of Policewomen, which had existed from 1915-1932—clearly helped draw the distinction between women in police work and those in social work, as well as furthering women's goals within their chosen field. The efforts of activist policewomen in the 1950s so advanced the field that, by time the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, they had already challenged in court the civil service regulations that limited their police roles. "When women first went on uniform patrol in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not an isolated event," she noted (p. 6). "It was part of a continuum that led them out to form a specialized, gender-based role in policing into genderless, general assignment policing...Although Title VII [of the Civil Rights Act] has been called 'a cornerstone of the women's movement,' its place in policewomen's demands for equality in policing was not to create the desire for equality, but to provide the legal support for changes that began in the 1950s."

[38] Geile, in *Women's Lives Through Time*, 42.

[39] Ravenna M. Helson, "The Mills Classes of 1958 and 1960: College in the Fifties, Young Adulthood in the Sixties," in *Women's Lives Through Time*, eds. Hulbert and Tickton Schuster, 191.

[40] Pannell, *Vital Speeches* 18, no. 5 (1951): 145.

[41] Benita Eiseler, *Private Lives: Men and Women of the Fifties* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1986), 4. Later, the same friend would confess to Eiseler: "Did I ever tell you I crossed my fingers when I repeated my wedding vows?"

[42] Nancy Walker, "Humor and Gender Roles: The Funny Feminism of the Post-World War II Suburbs," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1985): 98-113.

[43] Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose*," eds. Barbara Charlseworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 173-174.

[44] Ibid, 11-12.

[45] Jacqueline Blix, "Which Family? A Case Study of Family and Gender in the Mass Media of the 1890s and 1950s" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1995), abstracted in *Journalism and Mass Communication Abstracts*, 33 (1995): 6.

[46]Alice E. Courtney and Sarah Wernick Lockeretz, "A Woman's Place: An Analysis of the Roles Portrayed by Women in Magazine Advertisements," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8 (February 1971): 93. In their study of *Life, Look, Newsweek, The New Yorker, Saturday Review, Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report*, Courtney and Lockeretz note that the women were typically framed by one of four stereotypes: A woman's place is in the home; women do not make important decisions or do important things; women are dependent and need men's protection; men regard women primarily as sexual objects and are not interested in women as people. They conclude that while few of the ads could be considered offensive, they certainly would be "considered by feminists to by highly unflattering."

[47] Louis Wagner and Janis Banos, "A Woman's Place: A Follow-up Analysis of the Roles Portrayed by Women in Magazine Advertisements," *Journal of Marketing Research* 10 (May 1973): 214.

[48] Donald M. Davis, "Portrayals of Women in Prime-time Network Television: Some Demographic Characteristics." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 23, nos. 5-6 (September 1990): 330, 331.

[49] Joseph R. Dominick, "The Portrayal of Women in Prime Time, 1953-1977," *Sex Roles* 5, no. 4 (1979): 405-411.

[50] Margaret Finnegan, "From Spurs to Silk Stockings: Women in Prime-Time Television, 1950-1965," *UCLA Historical Journal*, 11 (1991): 1-30.

[51] Kenneth Allan and Scott Coltrane, Gender Display in Television Commercials: A Comparative Study of Television Commercials in the 1950s and 1980s," *Sex Roles* 35 nos. 3-4, 1996: 185. Interestingly, Allan and Coltrane believe that television advertising supercedes programming in importance— that the primary purpose of the shows is simply to create an audience for the advertising, providing "a backdrop for an attractive display of consumer goods...the images of gender presented in television shows tend to conform to the 'pictures' of gender presented in commercials."

[52] Margaret Marshment, "The Picture is Political: Representation of Women in Contemporary Popular Culture," in *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*, eds. Victoria Robinson and Diane Richardson (New York: New York Univesity Press, 1997): 143.

[53] Janet Thumim, "Miss Hepburn is Humanized: The Star Persona of Katharine Hepburn," *Feminist Review* 24 (Autumn 1986): 71-102.

[54] Steven Cohan, "Masquerading as the American Male in the Fifties: *Picnic*, William Holden and the spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film," *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*, nos. 25-26, 1991: 49.

[55] Shelly Budgeon and Dawn H. Currie, "From Feminism to Post-Feminism: Women's Liberation in Fashion Magazines," Women's Studies International Forum 18, no. 2 (March-April 1995): 177.

[56] Kathryn Keller, *Mothers and Work in Popular American Magazines*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994).

[57] Hortense Canady, personal interview with author 25 July 2001.

[58] Donna Maki, personal interview with author 3 July 2001.

[59] Canady, 25 July 2001.

[60] Robert Shaffer, "Women and International Relations: Pearl S. Buck's Critique of the Cold War," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 151-175.

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CHAPTER 3

WHOSE LIFE WAS IT?

The young woman looked intently into the microscope, her curiosity clearly piqued. "Last term I wouldn't have been caught dead peering through this microscope after class. That was only for squares," she said, in the advertising copy adjacent to her photo. "Everyone else was watching the world go by from the soda fountain. It took *Life* to make me realize how small my world was. How? In pictures and stories that got me interested in spite of myself...*Life*'s series on Darwin was so lively, and *Life*'s color pictures of insects he saw were so beautiful that I wanted to see them real close up...So here I am. Don't get me wrong. *Life* hasn't made me a square. But it has made me well-rounded. Guess Dad knew it would when he got me the *Life* subscription."[1]

Such is *Life*'s summary of a key part of the role it played in the 1950s, as summed up by this and a series of similar house advertisements that ran throughout the decade. In one, actor Jimmy Stewart reflects on his initiative to record his children's lives in a scrapbook, and notes that *Life* has a similar mission on a broader scale; "In much the same way, *Life* does this for the world. It's really a super scrapbook, a photographic record of our times."[2] In another, a woman shown behind the wheel of her car is holding the magazine up in front of her; "I always seem to be taking someone somewhere but never going anywhere myself. That is, until I started reading *Life* regularly. *Life* is my ticket to the whole world—to all the places where news is made..."[3] A third asked boldly, "What have you discovered lately?...every story...every advertisement is an invitation to learn, to dream, to question, to form an opinion—at your own pace, in your

most comfortable chair..."[4] Clearly, the magazine's editors and publishers saw it as a window to the world. In stories and pictures, and indeed in its advertisements, it would deliver to the masses a picture of the life they lived, and the world in which they lived it.

Life, perhaps more than any of the five mass-circulation news-oriented magazines of the 1950s, served as chronicle of the nation's culture. With a circulation of more than 6.5 million and an audience that spanned gender and ages, it could frame American culture and society with words and pictures in a way few other mass circulation, mass appeal news sources could match.[5] Far more than its counterparts—*Time, Look, Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*—it was focused on the visual depiction of stories, and most stories were heavily illustrated with photos. In some cases, the photos themselves were used to tell the stories, with copy limited to cutlines that described the photos. It was unabashed it its advocacy of photography as journalism, and of the impact it could have: "[M]any of *Life*'s great triumphs have been crusades for good causes," its editors wrote in 1959. "Our crusading got under way over twenty years ago when our famous Birth of a Baby story (April 11, 1938) struck a blow against harmful ignorance. At the same time, by proving photographs can handle touchy subjects with honesty and taste, we were crusading for our own new medium, photo-journalism."[6]

The magazine took its self-defined, outwardly acknowledged role as chronicler of culture seriously. "*Life*'s franchise is life with a small 'l'," its editors wrote in March 1959, as they announced recent awards won by the magazine. "A major part of this franchise is the week's news. When we report it particularly well we don't expect readers to jump up and click their heels. We're satisfied to have them say, 'So what? It's what we expect from *Life*.'"[7]

As a part of its editorial coverage, the magazine introduced each year with an assessment of the key issues and challenges of the nation and world at large. In general, each week the magazine included coverage of political issues or events, such as campaigns and elections; coverage of the entertainment industry, including television and motion pictures; coverage of economic or work issues, such as the booming economy or the auto industry; and coverage of the everyday lives of Americans, from the delight of holiday celebrations to the tragedies of plane crashes and earthquakes. The magazine also typically covered international issues, including unrest in other nations and the struggles of those in less developed countries. Each week, it indicated on its editorial page the opinion of its editorial board on issues of importance at that time. Not surprisingly, that page often corresponded to the viewpoint of *Life* publisher Henry Luce, well known for his strong opinion that America's destiny was to lift mankind (that is, the part of mankind not yet capitalist) up to the level of U.S. standards of independence and self-reliance.

On its cover, it swung easily from hard-hitting topics one week to light-hearted topics the next—from a cover story on Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall on December 18, 1950, to a special magazine devoted to children's activities a week later; from Marines on reconnaissance on September 4, 1950, to America's fashion elegance a week later; from golfer Ben Hogan on August 8, 1955, to General MacArthur the following week. It spanned a range of topics, too, in its news coverage, from tough topics like school desegregation, increased numbers of lynchings in the south, and the Korean and Cold Wars, to lighter topics such as unusual elections or weather patterns. Some topics were tackled in great depth, and those, too, were of diverse interests: there were multiple-week series on religion in the modern world, on America's "Old West," on

Jimmy Hoffa's powerful Teamsters. Feature stories often focused on fashion and entertainment, and indeed readers could count each week on extensive coverage of entertainers' lives and latest projects.

It had a large staff of reporters, photographers, and correspondents, and both men and women served as chroniclers of the news, although no women were on the editorial board or in the editor's or publisher's seat. Its photographers—among them Margaret Bourke-White—were considered among the world's best photojournalists, and in fact while photos almost always were credited to their makers, the stories that accompanied them often went without a reporter's byline.

The magazine often ran bylined guest stories, however, by key federal officials, prominent economists, or authors who could lend unquestionable authority in an analysis of a situation or event. That those prominent officials saw *Life* as a viable venue for their viewpoints speaks well to the authority the magazine carried.

Readers took the magazine's role in chronicling culture seriously, too. The weekly letters column was filled with the opinions of those who believed that *Life* showcased America to the world—and, too, those of readers who thought the magazine showed the world to America. "Congratulations to Life and Wayne Miller for the beautiful color portrait!" wrote Dorothy May of Omaha, Nebraska, in response to a feature on the ties that bound Americans to one another. "I think the rest of the world should see Americans as normal, happy people."[8] Transplanted Frenchman Frank S. Dessayer of Glendale, California, on the other hand, wondered about the magazine's view of his countrymen:

> Dear Sirs
>
> I live in this country since one year. Whenever I find an article about France in *Life*, it deals with one of the following topics:
>
> Love
> Models
> Mad dressmakers (inspired)
> Inspired painters (full of madness)
> Existentialism
> Kissing (with or without models)
> Apparel for millionaires' wives
> Art
>
> For a magazine that forms a good deal of this country's public opinion, it is wrong to give its readers the impression that 45 million bearded Frenchmen, with broad-rimmed hats and dreaming eyes, sit day and night in sidewalk cafes, sipping sinful drinks, gauging *petites femmes*, inventing new dresses or arguing about the questionable art of some crazy painters ... .[9]

If both *Life* and its six million readers throughout the United States viewed it as a chronicler of culture, a study of the magazine could indeed inform discussions of how women's lives were structured during the decade, and why that might be so. In particular, a study of the ways that their lives as paid workers were depicted offers strong evidence that Cold War culture, in conjunction with the combined feminist, communications, and historical/cultural frameworks, in fact expected a certain rallying point that was based on one symbolic role for women, rather than the diversity of roles women played.

The study assesses both the number of times women were depicted as workers in the magazine, and more importantly, the way in which those women were depicted; how they were framed, how the reader was called to view them, or how, as John Fiske says, readers are "hailed" to the story. In order to communicate, he says, the entity delivering the message must first "hail" potential readers to the story, "almost as if hailing a cab. To answer, they have to recognize that it is to them, not to someone else, that we are talking."[10] A magazine directed at women likely would hail its readers differently from

one directed toward men; teen magazines clearly seek female readers, and hail them differently than, say, sports magazines typically seeking males. *Life,* as a magazine designed to appeal to millions of readers of both genders, would need to take that diversity of audience into account in effectively hailing its masses.

To determine how often the magazine depicted women in roles as wage-earners, three years' publications of *Life*—fifty-one issues in 1950, fifty issues in 1955, and fifty-one issues in 1959—were assessed for pictorial and word content in both advertising and editorial content. A photo feature about a single photo journalist that included numerous photos of the same woman at work was assessed as one depiction; a photo feature about an aspect of health care that showed women in three areas of work (as a nurse, for example, a receptionist, and a billing clerk) would be assessed as three depictions, since it showed three different women, each in a separate and distinct role. A similar framework was applied to advertisements that were at least a quarter-page in size. As each article, photo, or advertisement was noted, it also was assessed to determine how the working woman was depicted, raising the question as to why that was so.

The numbers alone indicate that the magazine regularly depicted women in their roles as wage-earners, but that depictions of women's roles in the entertainment industry or as models far exceeded any other role in which they were shown. More importantly, the hailing of those depictions sheds light on the cultural mores of the time. Women were most often depicted in certain types of jobs, and the way in which their work was framed was often disparaging of the actual value of the work they were doing.

Women's Work, in News and Features

In 1950, women were depicted as working for pay in 102 instances, with 44 of those reports focusing on women's work in the entertainment industry and ten more showing them as professional models. Of the fifty-one magazines assessed, twenty-eight featured women on the cover, and of those, thirteen depicted women as actresses, singers, dancers, or other such entertainers. The other most popular forms of work depicted were as nurses, with seven such reports, and as artists or some type of work in the arts, with six such reports. Women were depicted three times as journalists, teachers or educators, secretaries or office/clerk workers, or in roles as professional athletes; twice as waitresses, and then once each in a wide variety of other roles, from police officer to call girl, pediatrician to salesgirl, shop owner to politician to auto worker.

By 1955, the pattern changed slightly. About the same number of stories portrayed women in roles as working for pay—101 in all—but far fewer were depicted in roles as entertainers or models. Although the entertainment industry predominated with thirty-seven reports, women also were shown more frequently in a much wider variety of other professional roles. They were depicted seven times as teachers or educators; six times as nurses or as food industry workers (such as work in a cannery or fish processing plant); four times as being on the business end of the fashion industry (as designers, for example, in contrast to five reports as models); three times as doctors, as nuns, or in miscellaneous manufacturing roles; twice as executives, politicians, or office workers; and then again singly in a wide variety of other work, from dietician to weathercaster to child care provider. Women were shown on the covers of thirty of the fifty issues published that year, including fifteen times as entertainers.

By 1959, the number of working women shown zoomed to 254, but that was heavily skewed by the fact that they were shown 109 times as actresses, dancers, singers, or elsewhere in the entertainment industry, along with nineteen depictions as models. Still, that means that women were shown as working for pay in other fields 126 times, far more often than had been the case in either of the previous years assessed. Those depictions included a variety of occupations not shown in previous years, albeit in limited numbers: once each as an agricultural expert, for example, a tour guide, a dog trainer, and as someone who caught tropical fish to be sold to aquarium owners. Women were shown sixteen times in non-management office roles, such as secretaries, receptionists, or clerks; twelve times in roles as professors, teachers, or educators; eight times as nurses; five times in politics and as nuns; four times as salespeople; three each as maids or housekeepers, bank tellers, shop owners or business owners, and producers; twice each as business executives, professional athletes, and flight attendants. Women were shown on the covers of the magazine twenty-three times that year; eleven as entertainers.

One could explain the changes in the number of reports of women wage earners in part simply by saying that as the number of women in the workforce rose, so too did the number of women shown in working roles. That likely is too simplistic. Gaye Tuchman, among others, takes issue with scholarship that assumes "a direct correspondence among media organizations, their content, and the everyday world."[11] Why should we expect that reality will mirror the media, or that the media should present viable role models? In fact, a look at *Life* the following year, 1960, indicates that the number of women depicted in roles as paid workers dropped considerably from 1959, and of course they were not then dropping out of the workforce. That type of fluctuation likely would be due to the

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fact that the 1960 presidential campaign and election dominated the magazine's coverage, and similar fluctuations during other years of publication likely also would be explained by the fact that the news of the day would take precedence over other types of coverage.

For that reason, it is telling to compare not only the numbers, but also the types of coverage given to women as wage earners, and to note how that may be indicative that the magazine, despite its presumed role as an objective reporter of the news, may actually have been portraying and confirming a particular and changing view of the world. Editorially, *Life* not only established the centrally powerful position of the United States in the world, as noted earlier; it also opened the second half of the twentieth century by defining that century thusly: "It belongs, predominantly and uniquely, to the American of 1950." And it noted, "The mid-century American is called upon, first of all, to resist the Communist threat to his world."[12] As "his world" changes, then, we would expect that worldview, as much as the numbers, to have an impact on the magazine's content.

Take, for example, the coverage of the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in the January 9, 1950, issue. It refers to the "ten thousand men of science" attending the meeting, although it later highlights the work of zoologist Irene Deller and geneticist Ruth Dippel. It headlines a photo of some of the most esteemed of the group as forty-one "eminent men of science," despite the fact that two of those pictured, anthropologist Margaret Mead and nutritionist Clara M. Taylor, are readily identifiable as women.[13] A report on nineteen aspiring young artists includes three women, but their descriptions are sharply different than those of the sixteen men. Each of the women is identified as married, and each of their husbands' occupations are carefully noted; one is a cartoonist, the second a professor, the third an ex-ski trooper.[14] None of

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the male artist's identifications mention marital status; while the men in the women's lives are apparently critical to their identities, the women in the men's lives are invisible.

More often, women's wage work is framed as nonessential, frivolous, or at a great personal cost to the woman undertaking the work. A story about Lettie Faucett, society editor of the 36,000-circulation *Abilene News-Reporter*, notes that she covers "everything from high life to Herefords" and that's she constantly on the move, but that the work, in her words, is "just seeing my friends."[15] A report on award-winning journalist Marguerite Higgins, who covered the Korean War for the *New York Herald Tribune,* focuses less on the demands and danger of her work than that she was "winning the battle of the sexes on the Korean front" and that she still managed to look attractive even when covered with dust—so much so that soldiers sometimes whistled at her while she worked.[16] And when "Dotsie" Davis (her real name is not reported) is elected mayor of Washington, Virginia, she first is identified as the mother of three children and the wife of a Unites States Department of Justice attorney. She is called "the prettiest mayor this side of Neptune, a twenty-eight-year-old housewife who wants to tackle the heady issues of stray dogs and overgrown weeds." No doubt, the reporter opines, that Dotsie's good looks had swayed a few votes.[17]

And what of women who take their work seriously—who view it as something other than "just seeing my friends" or worrying about weeds? A subtext of 1950 editorial content clearly is that regrettably, dedication to one's work might leave a woman without husband or children. A feature about Salvation Army commander Evangeline Booth notes that, although she is a handsome woman and was often proposed to, she never married; her work, it seemed, came first.[18] More direct is a feature story about Miss Lois

Jane Winter, a kindergarten teacher. She is slender and pretty, the magazine notes, but likes teaching too much; "better than anything else in the world—better than the imported camera she cannot afford on her $3,325 a year salary, better than the husband her friends tell her she can and should find, better than the golf and swimming she foregoes to attend teachers conventions..." She is "absorbed in the future of others...and neglectful of her own."[19] In other words, her commitment to a paying job is indication not of her careful provision for her future, but of her disregard of it.

Stories of women as career-oriented teachers, journalists, and politicians also are offset by stories of women who work in entertainment. One, on women who act in the Broadway musical *Peep Show*, shows women covered only in bubbles.[20] Another, on TV actress Faye Emerson, discusses and depicts pictorially the controversy over her cleavage, which seems to get more visible the later in the evening her program is aired.[21] Finally, the magazine makes a point of offering a word of advice from one career woman to another. In reporting on Winifred Robb, M.D., celebrating her forty-ninth year of practice, who is encouraging other women to enter the medical profession: "Go ahead, my dear, and be of courage. You'll need a lot of courage."[22]

What *Life* is doing, under the ritual view of communication, is helping create a shared culture—in this case, the tension-filled Cold War culture that, as May has noted, was built around the philosophy of containment, of both women in their homes and of American society within its capitalistic constraints. While the magazine can't ignore the fact that women are wage-earners in 1950, it can, and does, depict those roles as being invisible or unimportant—or, in the case of the entertainers, as being for the benefit of

others who might enjoy seeing them in those roles. It is giving reality a certain form, order, and tone that is consistent with the culture of the time.

By 1955, Cold War tensions had relaxed somewhat following the 1953 death of Soviet Premier Josef Stalin and the 1954 censure of Senator Joe McCarthy for his inflammatory anti-Communist witch hunt. The U.S. economy was on an extended upswing, and new topics were finding their way into the pages of *Life* with greater frequency. It chronicled school desegregation in Arkansas, the new rock-and-roll fad among the nation's youth (parents, it noted, were worried about that one), and the development of the Salk vaccine against polio. It opened the year with a special edition devoted to the world's food supply, acknowledging the nation's abundance, the good work of the scientists who had helped formulate it, and the critical role the United States would play in feeding the world. The Red Scare, though, was still prominent, even in such uplifting stories; food, and control of it, the magazine noted, was the nation's biggest weapon in the Cold War.

And how was women's wage work depicted in these bountiful times under the Cold War umbrella? Coverage of them in canneries and as teachers was more common than at the beginning of the decade, and presented in a matter-of-fact way, as a part of routine news coverage that showed them simply contributing to the business that needed to be done. Coverage of them in situations that emphasized their sexuality or mocked the seriousness of their work still was more prominent, however, an indication that the expectation—the culturally constructed norm, and the assumptions of women on which it was based—was more visible than their routine lives. The January 31 issue included a report on Clare Booth Luce, Ambassador to Italy, and a report on a female television talk

show host aptly named Volupta; the difference in the size of the photos was remarkable, with Volupta clearly having the advantage.[23] A story in March on the boom in women as television weather forecasters focuses not on their skill, but on the fact that "the only thing as variable as the weather is the ways of women," and that stations were replacing men announcers with women with the acknowledgment that "a pretty girl can make almost anything look more interesting."[24] Working women still were occasionally deemed invisible, even when they appeared in photographs, as with the photo of two men and a woman at work in a lab studying the cause of a heart attack; the men are both identified by name and as doctors, but the woman is not identified at all.[25] And their skill at work takes a backseat to their physical attributes even when they are professional athletes; coverage of the Wimbledon tennis tournament shows a male athlete diving and making remarkable returns, while the woman athlete featured is shown from the rear with her skirt flipped up during a serve.[26]

There were still the obligatory actress-in-the-bubble-bath photos, the Las Vegas showgirls with their physical attributes prominently displayed. But there was also a report on photographer Margaret Bourke-White that, save from noting that she was the first woman to fly with a U.S. Air Force on a mission, does not specifically refer to her gender. It shows her atop the Chrysler building, in the Arctic, and covering a war zone, all in a way that emphasizes her professional skill. That's a sharp contrast to depictions of journalists Higgins and Faucett in 1950, which emphasized how unusual it was for women to work in these professional roles.[27] In several 1955 issues, women were shown in the critical roles as administrators of the Salk polio vaccine. And in a way never seen in the 1950s editions, women were shown in professional settings that were more

inclusive than exclusive of the important roles they played. A special feature on new designs for the executive office points out that "he or she" can relax in a modern, well-organized office, and the photos include a section on offices for women executives.[28] And a story about new developments in the airline industry matter-of-factly shows Dr. Janet Travell of Cornell Medical School explaining the benefits of newly designed airplane seats.[29]

From actresses in bubble baths, to faculty at the Cornell medical school ... was *Life* changing with the times, or were the times changing? By the middle of the decade, the magazine may have been exhibiting the kind of ambivalence that marked not only the media, but also the society at large. Feminist scholar Joanne Meyerowitz is among those who have taken issue with the notion that women were depicted in the media in only a narrow, predictable fashion. Her studies of magazine coverage indicate that along with celebrating domestic activity, the media also historically have celebrated women who achieved public success, performed public service, and strove to meet their individual goals. Articles that featured women featured them regardless of marital status, particularly the African-American magazines, and some did not mention their marital status at all. More than anything, she notes a real ambivalence in the ways women are depicted: a "tension between individual achievement and domestic ideals," in which the magazines seem willing to test all sides of the issues.[30]

Still, *Life* struggles with what might be the extreme and what might be the norm; there is confusion between the exception and the expectation. An excellent example: a feature on the Vassar class of 1940 reunion, which includes not only information on the families of the women featured, but a page on "Satisfying Jobs in Varied Fields." One of

the women is a pediatrician; another, an executive; a third, a legislator. There's an art conservator and an actress. Of the five, the art conservator is noted as being single; the actress, divorced and the mother of a son. The other three all have children and husbands, but they are not identified solely by those roles. They are women, the reader assumes, accomplished in their own right, with diverse and full lives, and this seems to be a good thing. On the other hand, also prominently featured is "Sibby:" Priscilla Lamb, the former president of student government. "Today, as Mrs. Harold Howe II, she is a kind of composite of her class. She is married to an Ivy League graduate (Yale) who is a combination executive and professional man (high school principal), lives in a city (Cincinnati), does volunteer work (League of Women Voters, PTA, etc.) and has three children." A full page of photos shows her ironing, painting, and reading to her children.[31] One wonders why she, rather than one of the women who has forged a career for herself, is deemed a composite of her class; the article does not say, but the reader is left to assume that this is the average woman—that this is the expectation, not the exception, and that it carries with it great satisfaction.

Ritual theory would indicate that Sibby is preeminent in the coverage because American culture still rallies around her image, although the more balanced and representative coverage of women wage earners in important roles would indicate that the culture is slowly shifting. Still, the article that gets by far the most play, the most response from readers, and elicits the most follow up is, in fact, an article about a woman who works an eighty-hour unpaid week—as a homemaker.

It takes eleven pages and twenty-three photos in the August 15, 1955, edition to tell the story of Gloria Tweten, a mother of three and wife of a Carnation milk truck

driver, who is awakened each morning by her hungry eldest son and then plunges headlong into her day's work. She is, the magazine notes, one of 34 million American housewives, the "hardest working, least-paid occupational group in the country." She has an automatic washer and drier, a vacuum cleaner, and other modern conveniences, but "finds that she must still work at least eighty hard, confining hours each week ... that leave her virtually no time she can really call her own."[32] It's particularly interesting to contrast *Life*'s treatment of Gloria Tweten with that of Lois Jane Winter, the teacher who was equally devoted to her life's work. Both women indicate they're pleased with their choices, but despite Winter's professed satisfaction with her work, she is portrayed as a woman doomed in the end to a less fulfilling life; despite Tweten's acknowledged exasperation, she is portrayed as a woman who clearly has all that matters.

The letters to the editor that follow Tweten's story are telling. Of the nine that are printed, eight are in praise of the article; "it is so genuine that I recognize my own happy, hectic living in it," writes Mrs. R.S. Brown. The one letter that takes *Life* to task does so indignantly because the magazine portrays a American housewife as frazzled and disorganized; "I resent your slur upon American womanhood!" writes Mildred Freeman. "Why don't you show the world a well-managed American home?" And finally, a letter from a professional nurse, while not criticizing the housewife's choices or role, suggests that the woman really must get organized if she's to be effective in her role.[33]

Apparently, plenty of people agreed. A few months later, *Life* published a follow-up article about a team of experts from the Heart Association of Washington who descended on Tweten's home to show her how to organize her life, and thus lessen her stress. She needed to rearrange her kitchen, to schedule her time, and to provide for break

periods for herself, just as if she were in an office setting. Afterward, her response in the story indicates, she seemed reluctant to adapt their suggestions; she was quite happy with the way things were, and couldn't really see what all the fuss was about.[34]

May would argue that such a depiction concurred with the culture's efforts at that time to "professionalize" housework, thereby assuring that women who had a yearning for professional satisfaction could find it right there in the management of their homes. Hardly slaves to their work, homemakers were "domestic engineers," organized and efficient, running their homes with the same sorts of skills that their husbands used at the office. Walker notes this trend, too, in discussing how women themselves viewed their roles.[35] Culturally, May notes an overall trend for 1950s American families to seek out professional experts to help solve their problems. In turning the troublesome parts of their lives over to the experts, she says, the families could feel better about their place in the world, rather than trying to change it.[36] That helped offset the tension the families, and particularly the women, felt about their ambivalence toward their proscribed roles.

That tension is reflected, too, editorially, as the magazine continues to fret about America's abundance. The UAW's demands that Ford Motor Company offer workers a chance to buy stock at a reduced price, coupled with demands for a guaranteed wage, seem to *Life* to be "high on the hog." There's a concern that maybe too many Americans are going to college; shouldn't we limit it to those who can profit most from the experience, and discourage others? Is it possible that America is offering *too* much opportunity, to too many people, to succeed?[37]

By 1959, the magazine was again re-examining the nation's priorities; its editorial on June 22 indicates that the current trend in commencement speeches to demand more

rigorous standards of mental effort is clearly a welcome trend away from the familiar recent theme of being a nonconformist.[38] Its feature on the new American leisure challenges Americans to use their free time to find "the neglected unknown within themselves...Some of those few may even enlarge the boundaries of human thought, and thus fulfill the highest purpose of any civilization, which is to learn new truth about the human spirit and its maker."[39] It examines with great admiration the political successes of the Kennedys and the technological successes of the space program; continues to wonder about the arms race; tracks and acknowledges successful advances in civil rights and school desegregation; and in general balances out Cold War concerns with extensive, if cautious, stories about America's good life.

Culturally, America was re-examining itself, too. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith's 1958 best-seller, *The Affluent Society*, questioned whether the nation truly could thrive if its focus continued to be on growth in production for individual benefit. Other economists questioned President Dwight Eisenhower's economic theories, advising that that the nation's greatness depended on expending resources in nations other than the United States. Both the mindset of the nation and its individuals seemed directed toward the larger picture, and toward opening up minds and policies.[40]

At times, that open-minded attitude is reflected in *Life's* 1959 depictions of wage-earning women. They are less likely now to be featured with a figurative nod and a wink; more likely to be shown because their work, opinions, or achievements are of note. An editorial quotes Dorothy Dodd, state librarian of Florida, urging libraries to take out of circulation a series of books that she considers unsuitable for children.[41] A story about three prominent best-selling authors, all of whom are women, dubs them the queens of

fiction because of their "massive success."[42] A feature on photographer Bourke-White, the previously featured *Life* staff photographer who had shot the magazine's first cover in 1936, mentions only once that she was the first woman to fly in combat; otherwise, gender is ignored as it treats her as the prototype professional, "the incorrigible pro." When she shot that first cover photo, the editors note, "we already knew her as a genius with the camera. In the years since, we have come to know her as one of the most fearless people in our profession...She pushes, cajoles and waits with grim determination until she gets her story—always a distinguished one."[43]

Women also appear more often in routine coverage, such as in a photo of workers leaving the Convair aircraft plant in San Diego that illustrates problematic pockets of joblessness in the nation.[44] A six-page feature on the U.S. State Department—"one of the world's most complex and important bureaucracies, charged with a function vital to every man and nation"—discusses the work performed by almost seven thousand workers, and the first photo that greets the readers is of receptionist Maryann Ferko, smiling directly into the camera, wearing a soft sweater and three strands of pearls at her tidy desk. Later in the feature, readers see Mrs. Lydia Mae Richardson imprinting, with an historic press, the great seal of the United States on official documents. Although the men who are in prominent positions dominate the coverage, clearly, the work of both women is deemed integral to the work of the department.[45]

A feature updating readers on the nation's thirty-one Miss America pageant winners, dating back to 1921, is an interesting contrast to the 1955 story featuring the women of Vassar. Here, while looks are predictably noted and photographs designed to showcase them, women who have forged professions are held up in admiration. One,

Marilyn Mesek, now forty-one and married to a pilot, is a "successful—and outstandingly pretty—piano teacher."[46] Some are actresses; one works at a high-fashion dress shop; another, part-time at a travel agency; a third is vice president of a Phoenix advertising firm she runs with her husband. Miss America 1944, Venus Ramey, was "mishandled by promoters, a failure in show business, a loser in attempt to be nominated for Kentucky legislature," and since has taken her two boys, left her husband and vanished; in contrast, Miss America 1945, Bess Myerson, "with an income today of six figures, from television, where she hostesses The Big Payoff...more than any other winner has turned the title into a career."[47] Although it notes that the biggest interest of commercial actress and 1958 winner Marilyn Van Derbur is to get married, for the most part the women are framed here as successful if they have been successful in their chosen careers; in fact, that seems to be almost an expectation.

A similar feature—a sequel on the four Daly sisters who were determined, successful "career girls" ten years earlier—updates readers on their continued success and everlasting good looks with equal amounts of approval. A decade ago, they were anomalies; now, they're admirable, "a quartet of comely career girls who were all openly out to make good and already earning $100,000 a year. In those days only two of them were married and they had only two children. Today...they have all been married, collectively have nine children and earn about twice as much money."[48] Marguerite produces fashion shows and has a daughter; Kathleen, with three children, is vice president of a New York ad agency. Maureen, with two children, writes books; Sheila writes a teenager's column for the Chicago Tribune and has three children of her own. Even more admiring treatment is given to anthropologist Margaret Mead, who has

studied Pacific Island villages for thirty-five years; "Today, as America's best-known woman scientist and a shrewd critic of the natives at home in the U.S., Dr. Mead is in constant demand for TV appearances and lectures. An energetic fifty-eight, she works fifteen hours a day, constantly learning more about the ways of man and passing on what she has learned to her students." It refers to her father, an economics professor, and her mother, a sociologist, as well as her grandmother, a schoolteacher. As a third-generation working woman, Mead clearly now is framed, unapologetically, as a success—as opposed to her being "invisible" to the headline and cut line writers covering the AAAS meeting in 1950.[49]

Instead of depicting women in the entertainment business strictly through the benefits that they provide for the consumers of that entertainment, *Life* takes a look at the benefits to the woman doing the work. A four-photo spread on actress Tammy Grimes, married to actor Christopher Plummer, notes that she "likes working the same hours as the man of the house;" there's a benefit to her marriage, we can surmise, in her chosen career.[50] More striking is the magazine's portrayal of a film actor Martha Hyer. "Martha Hyer, a beautiful woman of Hollywood, leads the life that, in whole or in part, many Americans would like to live—a life of independence and elegant luxury," it notes as part of an eight-page photo feature. "She loves, openly and single-mindedly, only the nicest, most lusciously expensive things...Happily for Martha Hyer, she can afford the things she covets. She is a success in a lucrative profession—movie acting—and she has worked hard doing leads in westerns, second leads in bigger films." It does show photos of her on a date, having dinner with a man in her home, but also notes: "One of the joys success has brought Martha is the privilege of being alone when she wants to be—to read, listen

to music, enjoy her possessions, admire the view. She says, 'I have to be alone a great deal to be me.'"[51] Clearly, the payback to Hyer of her professional achievements is to be admired, even envied.

Still, the magazine on occasion trivializes women's work roles, sometimes to the extreme. Witness this feature on a Kansas City court reporter: "In fiction the beautiful Blonde, escorted by stoic cops, comes into the courtroom as the teary-eyed defendant ... But in Kansas City the beautiful Blonde appears smilingly in court every day. She gets an appreciative but businesslike welcome from the police and the judge and is largely ignored by the others, most of whom are despondent drunks, vagrants or petty yeggs up on minor charges. The real-life courtroom beauty is Pat Rice, a twenty-year-old worker for the city's parole office. By any measurement she is the most decorative figure in the Kansas City Judicial system, a surprisingly winsome participant in a dreary routine seldom blessed with light and beauty."[52] The four-page photo feature includes five photos, among them one of her reading F. Scott Fitzgerald as she relaxes in a bubble bath. It notes that she lives with Mrs. Jeannette Dalton and her son; she dates seldom, travels little, but loves to read. The only reason, it seems, that the magazine features her is because of her beauty—and perhaps, because she is willing to be featured.

Those types of stories, though, are rare in 1959. Readers, too, seem to be admiring women as much for their achievements as for their assets, and don't mind pointing out to the magazine when it has missed the mark. Said Ellen S. Johnson of Kingston, Pennsylvania, in response to a feature story on actress Joan Crawford's charms: "It seems to me that Joan Crawford became popular not only with her 'polish, plans, and push,' but also because she was an astute business woman and lady."[53] By 1960, recognition of

diverse roles has reached a point that *Life* runs a story about hungry teen-aged cooks; "With so many mothers holding down regular jobs and with servants as evaporated as milk," the magazine notes, "teen-agers not only cook for their own food-laden get-togethers, but often pitch in to prepare family meals."[54]

Has the invisible revolution, the steady but unacknowledged change of women's lives during the 1950s, become visible, then, by the end of the decade? If, as noted earlier, America's homes were indeed in a state of invisible revolution during the 1950s, it may have been because the lives of women outside the home were largely invisible to those other than themselves. Even while many women's magazines and other mass media reported women's participation in a variety of roles, as Meyerowitz noted, *Life*'s coverage indicates that the mass-circulation new media may have continued to present not the revolution, not the movement, but the underlying order of things. Like the Cold War itself, it drew people together in a ritual of fellowship and commonality that served the needs of society at the time. As those needs changed, so did *Life*'s coverage. As culture became willing actually to see women's lives, perhaps the magazine did too.

In that way, *Life,* although a general-circulation magazine, likely was exhibiting some of the characteristics that Kathryn Keller notes in her study of women's magazines. The presence of women in the workforce was deemed appropriate, she says, for either of two reasons: If the man of the family couldn't provide for its needs, or if the woman had "a unique talent or skill that society admired." A woman working for the good of the family certainly needn't be ashamed; no could anyone look askance at a woman of considerable physical attractiveness taking up a career in which that was valued. The women's magazines, however, "presented the prevailing ideology that work was an

exceptional event that did not interfere with the feminine roles of mother and housewife."[55] In other words, it was deemed the exception, not the expectation.

All this was absolutely consistent with May's assertion that the Cold War ideology and the domestic revival were working to reinforce one another—that containment of women in the home, and of Americans within the capitalist, consumer-oriented structure, was the key to security. Clearly, such a framework of the world and the United States position in it would require that the U.S. lifestyle, particularly the narrowly defined lifestyle of its women, be presented in stark contrast to the widely agreed upon United States view of Soviet Communism and the drudgery of Russian women. Perhaps that's one reason that, throughout the 1950s, women who work in the United States are so much more often depicted in glamorous professions in which their beauty and talent are apparent—and essential to their success.

Women's Work, in Paid Advertising

Women's lives were constructed not only by the editorial content of the magazine, but by the paid advertisements designed to elicit a certain type of behavior. Typically, that behavior involves spending money on the product at hand, but sometimes it could mean something less tangible: consideration of a life insurance policy, for example, or the undertaking of a certain type of activity (which in the end usually would involve spending money on something). Sometimes ads were purchased and published to build confidence in a certain company or initiative—again, with the hope of an eventual financial benefit. If indeed consumerism is essential to democratization, certainly the ads

rected toward the potential consumers would be an essential part of the story being told bout America's women.

In assessing the ads, it was clear that they depicted men and women in five elatively broad categories: as consumers, purchasing goods or services; as workers, on he job; as objects, placed in the ads simply to get the attention of the viewer; at leisure; or as caretakers of others. A man and woman looking at Hotpoint appliances as they make the decision to purchase a new refrigerator, for example, are shown in their roles as consumers; the suit-clad salesman depicted in that same ad explaining to them the benefits of his product is in a worker's role. An ad that depicts an attractive woman in the background while the foreground is a photo of a pair of men's socks is an object; she's not essential to the ad, but is simply used to decorate it. A young couple out picnicking is shown at leisure; a man helping his young son get dressed in the morning, as a caretaker.

Not surprisingly, both men and women were shown most often in their roles as consumers, and women were shown far more often than men in that role. This is a function not only of the reason the ads were published, but of the consumer-oriented economy in which women in particular were expected to help the economy thrive by spending on the goods and services provided through it. As the decade continued, the number of times they were shown at leisure increased, and often when they were shown at leisure men and women were depicted together.

Numerically, some features of the ad count mirrored those of the editorial count, and some were in stark contrast to it. When women were shown in a wage-earning role, they were far more likely to be entertainers than anything else. However, the numbers of women depicted on the job declined steadily through the three years studied. In 1950,

when women were depicted 170 times on the job in advertisements, seventy-one of those were in the entertainment industry. In 1955, when they were depicted 119 times, thirty-one were as entertainers; in 1959, of eighty-two depictions, nineteen were as entertainers. Obviously, the proportion of entertainers verses non-entertainers in the women's work force is worth noting; in 1950, entertainers made up forty-one percent of the depictions; in 1955, thirty-one percent; in 1959, thirty percent.

There were some notable differences in the kinds of work in which women were engaged in the ads. For example, of the ninety-nine non-entertainment depictions in 1950, the greatest number—eighteen—were as secretary or office/clerical workers; eleven were in the fashion industry, including as designers; ten were telephone operators; seven, nurses; six, involved in sales; and five each were teachers or educators or employed in the food industry. Four were waitresses; three each, housekeepers, journalists, dental assistant, scientists, and athletes; and the rest were scattered by ones and twos among a variety of other professions, including as manicurists, interior designers, and in the military.

By 1955, a total of eighteen of the eighty-one workers outside the entertainment industry were secretary/clerical, but the next largest number was a job not noted in 1950: That of the "home expert." Sixteen times women were shown in the roles that May would describe as professionalizing the home front: as experts on cooking or childrearing, as home economists, even as experts in etiquette, a la Emily Post. Women were depicted as nurses thirteen times; as airline stewardesses seven times; in the fashion industry, as telephone or television assembly people, and as athletes, four times each; three times as housekeepers; and then across categories as salespeople, telephone operators, computer

›perators, and bank tellers. In 1959, the number of women shown as home front ›rofessionals dropped to four, and the largest number of workers depicted of the sixty-:hree who weren't entertainers were secretarial/clerical, with eleven; nurse, with nine; fashion industry, teacher, and again home expert, four; and three each in the food industry, as stewardesses, as housekeepers, and as interior decorators or designers. A few new jobs not seen in the earlier years showed up by ones and twos, such as advertising agent, professional photographer (not a journalist), occupational therapist, rental car agent, and what can be deemed as business/professional: office jobs in which the women appeared to be colleagues of the men shown, rather than support staff to them.

As with the editorial content, although the number of depictions is important, it is essential to look not just at those, but also at the manner in which working women were portrayed in the magazine advertisements. As with the editorial content, major changes were noted, too, in the ways that women were portrayed, particularly as the decade progressed, but the trend did not parallel that noted in the editorial content.

In 1950, several companies featured women at work in advertisements that were designed less to get consumers to open their wallets and make a purchase than to build consumer confidence in the company. Bell Telephone, for example, consistently showed women in their working roles, and clearly cast those roles as essential to the company's success. One shows women striding purposefully out of the building in which they work; "Over 600,000 Bell Telephone people are helping to get things done," says the headline, and clearly women are a part of that initiative.[56] Another features two women—and operator and a secretary—and two men on the job, under the headline "A Business with 200,000 Employee/Owners."[57] A third features a woman telephone operator under the

headline, "She Makes Us a Nation of Neighbors."[58] Western Electric, the company that built the telephones that Bell used, had a similar series of ads framing its workers as crucial to the products success, and it, too, featured women prominently.[59] And ads for recruitment into the armed services showed women in uniform, on the job; "Many thousands of service men and women now study everything from English to differential calculus under educational-development program of U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force," says the ad.[60] There are benefits to be had for women who work for these entities, as well as to the public they serve.

Food production companies undertook similar campaigns. Swifts Premium, which produced and sold canned meat products, refers to women shown working in its processing facilities as "skilled workers using modern methods in ideal food-kitchen surroundings."[61] The American Meat Institute features a woman inspecting sliced bacon for quality among the four workers shown in a bacon advertisement.[62] And Duff's Kitchen, which manufactures kitchen mixes, shows a woman identified as Dorothy Duff mixing up gingerbread using the company's products.[63]

Other companies showed career women whose work lives apparently were important factors in their happiness—sometimes, because of the importance of the work, others because of the benefits of the money that it brought them. A full-page ad, attesting to the benefits of Borg-Warner-produced overdrive auto transmissions, features not the science behind the development, but the user who benefits from it: Mrs. James T. Phillips of Evansville, Indiana, a geologist whose work requires her to frequently visit sites where oil is drilled. Says Phillips, shown in the seated at a microscope: "My work trips to the oil fields are so much easier with B-W overdrive." The ad copy goes on to say: "Mrs.

Phillips, one of America's few women in this profession, examines well cuttings and does other microscopic analysis for the Sun Oil Co. Trips to oil fields, and long week-end jaunts with her husband, pile 2,500 miles a month on the family station wagon."[64] She's clearly a busy, professional, happily married woman; if B-W can work well for her, what reader wouldn't find it a benefit? In another ad, Mrs. Clevie Eddins, who recently changed careers from being a teacher to being a salesperson—or a "silver counselor," as the ad says—is unabashed in her enthusiasm for the benefits of her profession. "I can buy my new car with one month's pay check," says the headline, as she obviously finds her new work both more lucrative and, one is led to believe, a bit classier than her role as a teacher. "Why, in the month of September alone, I had earned more than enough to pay for my new car!" she says in the ad copy. "It's such a pleasant, agreeable profession."[65] An IBM typewriter ad shows a stylish woman pulling on her gloves near her desk as the clock hits 5:08 p.m. "Perfect day!" notes the headline, leading us to believe that her satisfying day at the office will lead to something just as good after hours.[66] In another, Mrs. James Regnier of Salem, Massachusetts, is a bacteriologist—now the bride of a physician, the ad is careful to point out—who is among those who enjoy Kellogg's Corn Flakes each morning;[67] in still another, an unidentified "career girl" prefers to spend her money on Cannon sheets, noting, "Executive stuff is fine at the office, but the home life is strictly feminine—note these sunrise peach sheets!"[68]

Cigarette makers, too, showed women in their work roles in their advertisements, which were designed to prompt consumers to choose a particular brand when they purchased cigarettes. A series of advertisements for Camel cigarettes, for example, consistently showed women in roles as workers. The series featured both men and

omen testifying about the benefits of smoking Camels as opposed to another brand of garettes, and they are identified by what the ad makers believe are the significant roles at they play. In one, women are identified as a reporter, a teacher, a housewife, and a cialite. In another, they are a telephone operator and a cosmetics demonstrator. A third atures a woman opera star, a teacher, and a housewife; a fourth features pop singer lartha Tilton. In each, the men and women note that Camels don't irritate their throats e throat the way other cigarettes might, an important characteristic giving the roles that ey play in the work world or the home.[69]

The high-profile, high-powered women of the entertainment industry also appear the ads, particularly those touting health and beauty products. Readers can see that Osa ohnson, "world famous jungle explorer and director of 'Jungle Voodoo,'" prefers to rink Blatz beer. "I lived in Milwaukee and I ought to know," she says, confidently, Blatz is Milwaukee's finest beer!" In the ad she's depicted carrying a rifle through the ungle, and seated at a table with two men, each of them enjoying a Blatz.[70] In other ads, eaders find that actor Ethel Merman drinks Carling's Red Cap Ale; actress Mona Freeman enjoys Royal Crown Cola; promising New York model Elaine Stewart stays eautiful with the help of Rayve home permanents; and singing star Julie Wilson and noted columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wear Elgin watches.[71]

The impression one gets, when looking at circa 1950 advertisements that portray women in work roles, is that work clearly is a beneficial addition to women's lives. They are busy, of course, moving from work to home, from oil field to dinner table in the Borg-Warner-powered family wagon, but they have happy relationships, enjoy life and have their own money to spend. They are considered independent decision makers with

ependent tastes, who can decide which type of cigarette to smoke, which type of sheet purchase, what kind cereal to eat in the morning.

In 1955, the woman-as-professional-expert shows up frequently in vertisements, particularly those for household or cooking products. Readers meet eam home economist Sally Ross, who confidently pitches the powdered substitute for eam as a product of benefit to most any household. She'll send readers recipes, if they rite, or they can just contact her for information if they want to know more.[72] Frances Barton, noted as being an expert in the Consumer Service Department of General Foods Corp., tells readers that Minute Man Instant Frosting Mix is better than homemade.[73] Libby's home economist touts the many uses and benefits of pineapple;[74] Emily Post, advocating for the Nescafe Coffee Maker, reminds readers that properly served coffee must be piping hot.[75] Ads for Durkee's Coconut feature Virginia Coates, also an expert in food preparation and cooking, as their authority, and she offers a cake recipe to readers who want to test the product for which she advocates.[76]

Only one series shows a working woman deemed an expert in her field in something other than a flattering fashion: Flor-ever floors. The woman, obviously assigned to clean the busy building in which the floors have been installed, is depicted on the job after the office has closed; she's unkempt, haggard, aging before her time, and is seated in a executive's chair, smoking a cigarette with her feet propped up on the desk. "Take it from me...Flor-ever cleans faster & easier," the ad copy says.[77] As unbecoming as the picture is, she's still clearly in charge of the situation: the expert on clean floors, based on her years of experience mopping up after the boss. Women also are shown as experts in the health care field, such as the nurses who recommend particular brands of

xatives, cold remedies, or even health care plans. They're learned experts about mmon beauty problems, such as "noted beauty editor" Marcella Holmes, who lvocates Clearasil as a solution to acne.[78] And those shown in sales positions often are aying the roles of experts, too; in one, for example, a department store worker with a ape measure around her neck explains to a concerned woman how a properly sized girdle should fit.[79]

Western Electric and Bell Telephone continue their advertisements that show women as key contributors to the companies. In one ad, Bell depicts four users of telephones—three women, one male—and two women as workers, assembling the equipment.[80] Another shows a woman walking between two men, all of them striding toward the camera as they leave a building. The headline calls them "Telephone Pioneers," apparently a designation in the company that accrues to those with long service and good performance. The ad continues, "Experience and fellowship of long-term telephone men and women are important factors in good telephone service ... The fast, courteous low-cost telephone service you enjoy today is due in no small measure to the men and women who wear that proud emblems of the Telephone Pioneers."[81] In another ad, Bell Telephone refers to the fact that "many a time each day, telephone men and women go out of their way to help someone in trouble."[82]

Also featuring women in a consumer confidence-building campaign is Campbell's Soup. In one ad, a woman carefully peels potatoes; the ad copy notes that she is valued for her keen eye and for being conscientious, as a man identified as a "French chef" is noted as "finding fault with things that most people find quite satisfactory." Another woman depicted in the campaign, also shown peeling potatoes, is identified as

Mrs. Catharine Kersher, a nineteen-year employee of the company, who wears glasses and a white cap as she goes about her work. "The lady in the picture is trimming potatoes by hand...we have yet to find a machine that can spot and remove every last blemish as well as a keen-eyed, conscientious woman with a sharp knife is able to do," reads the copy in the ad. Neither of the women is engaged in glamorous work; both are valued for the meticulousness with which they approach their jobs, and considered evidence of the company's commitment to excellence.[83] As was the case in the Bell and Western ads five years earlier, the companies wish to show that consumers can have faith in them because they can have faith in their workers: Professional men and women who take their work to heart.

Secretaries and clerical staff are prominent in the ads, too, and often are shown in their relationships with their male bosses. Whether they are shown alone or with the bosses, however, they take their work seriously, appreciating the products that help them do it more efficiently. A series from IBM typewriters pokes gentle fun at the fact that the secretary knows better than the boss that that IBM products are tops, and is delighted that she now can be more efficient since her boss approved the purchase of the new equipment; "My perfect secretary is right again," admits Mr. A, shown with his happy secretary.[84] A stenographer notes the benefits of using Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, which saves her office "a lot of time and mistakes."[85] The Pan American Coffee Bureau features in one ad a three-quarter page photo of a secretary, confident and clearly at the top of her game, a pencil between the fingers of her left hand, a cup of coffee in her right. "Busy Girl Earns a 'Coffee Break,'" says the headline, followed by the copy: "Fingers beat staccato on the keys. The phone interrupts. Then back to the

typewriter. Check for spelling..." It goes on to indicate how smoothly and efficiently she juggles her tasks, ensuring that the boss has signed off of them before her well-deserved break.[86]

Others show secretaries happily juggling work and social life; Gleem toothpaste, for example, shows a woman lunching at her desk juxtaposed with one of her enjoying a social situation with a man after hours, one of four in a series featuring attractive young working women.[87]

Women also show up as workers with a degree of scientific or technical skill. RCA picture tubes shows women in two of four photos of workers testing tubes in a lab setting.[88] Raytheon, also a manufacturer of home electronics, shows a woman as a computer operator in a Raytheon ad. "5,000 mathematical operations in ONE second by Raydac, the digital computer developed for the office of Naval Research by Raytheon," boasts the ad copy, which also shows a woman in the background as the object to be viewed on a television screen.[89]

Professional entertainers again pitch a variety of products, but typically in a manner respectful of their achievements or consistent with their public personas. Some are for health and beauty products; Debbie Reynolds, Ann Blythe, Jane Wyman and Lana Turner are among the Lustre-Crème shampoo users, for example;[90] Blythe also wears sweaters made of easy-care, figure-flattering Acrilon, as does Anne Francis, among others.[91] Gracie Allen advocates for Goodrich Tires; she's shown bantering with husband and colleague George Burns. Betty Furness does needlepoint by the light of a Westinghouse bulb; a neatly dressed Harriett Nelson stands before a wide-open Hotpoint refrigerator.[92] Lucy Arnaz joins her showbiz husband Desi to recommend Bigelow

carpets, just as she might if the two were shopping together for their home.[93] When Grace Kelly pitches Lux soap, the ad copy notes that she studied hard to reach the pinnacle of her profession.[94] In each case, the women are esteemed for their professional work, but are actually standing in as consumers in the advertisements; their role as experts is due not to their expertise about the product, but their noteworthiness as performers.

In general, the 1955 ads featuring working women seem less likely to depict women in such nontraditional scientific roles as the bacteriologist and geologist notable in the 1950 ads, and more likely to depict them in their important roles behind the scenes: as secretaries and potato peelers, for example. They are more likely, in 1955, to show women as experts on the field in which they operate, even when they are not actually depicted as professional experts. Whatever their role, working women still are for the most part sharp, independent, and good at whatever it is they are doing.

The 1959 issues of the magazine show a further shift in the way in which working women are depicted in advertisements, and indeed a shift in the way in which businesses pitch their products in general. Throughout the decade, women have been much more likely to be shown in their roles as consumers as in any other role, but that becomes even more the case as the decade closes. When women are depicted in their working roles, they seem to be much more predictable than the work roles in which the appeared earlier in the decade.

Among the most visible of the experts is not a professionally trained nurse or home economist, but Mrs. America, named in some of the ads as "an attractive mother of four, Mrs. Clark J. Priebe of Des Moines, Iowa," and in other depicted only by her photo, unnamed but carefully titled nation's as the nation's number one homemaker. She pitches

particular brands of acoustical ceiling panels, Hammond organs, and a variety of other products, all showing her keen interest in home and leisure.[95] Indeed, housekeeping continues to be an area in which women are deemed professional experts. Union Oil Co., in an ad touting the cleanliness of its service stations, features "the Sparkle Corps:" Ten women who, along with a corps of men, regularly visit the stations to ensure that the facilities, particularly the rest rooms, are spotless and safe. Says the ad: "We began this new service to reinforce the Union Oil dealers' day-to-day housekeeping because we know a safe station and a clean rest room is as important to you as the finest gasoline and service." Pictured in back of the women is a man, arms folded, who either is the station owner or the boss of the Sparkle Corps.[96]

In other ads, female secretaries still seek to excel in their jobs, and in the bargain to please their male bosses; one for Royal typewriters, for example, shows a male executive taking a note from the hands of his woman secretary, with the ad copy noting that Royal is "the best friend a secretary every had...for a more satisfied boss and a pleasanter job, start hinting for a Royal Electric right now."[97] Women occasionally show up in the boss's role, such as in the Murine ad that features Candy Jones, president of Conover Career Girl Course Inc.,[98] or in a setting in which they appear to be colleagues of the men, as in one for Lucky Strike cigarettes.[99]

If there's a trend among ads that show working women it's to show them as managers of their own money. Union Oil, for example, shows in a full-page ad San Francisco designer and Union Oil shareholder Harriet Hunter in her work setting, sketching as she looks straight at the reader. In the ad copy, she's raising questions about how the company spent the money she has invested in it; the copy assures her, and all its

investors, of its security.[100] An ad for the Phoenix Mutual Retirement Income plan features a photo of an attractive woman wearing pearls and bracelets, sitting behind a desk in an office setting. Says the copy, "I used to spend my pay check every week. Putting money aside for the future didn't make any sense to me. I'll get married, I thought. (I still hope I will!) But I've had a good job a few years now. And, I discovered, letting it all slip through my fingers wasn't too smart. Actually, I have fewer obligations than most of the men I know, but they're managing to invest a little for their future, I've noticed...My friend Laura told me she was giving up here job to get married. Tom was starting his own business; so I thought surely she'd go on working for awhile. But she told me she'd put away money that would come in handy right now. What she had was called a Phoenix Mutual Plan for Women. It's a plan specially geared to the lives of women—and they do change unpredictably." After the story is told, the ad notes, "this story is typical of what women everywhere are discovering"—meaning, the need to provide for the future by investing in Phoenix Mutual.[101]

What of the ads that explicitly portrayed the value added of women workers to their companies? Western Electric still shows women as workers, but ads for Bell Telephone now are more likely to feature a man calling home to his wife than to feature a woman on the job for the company.[102] The Campbell's Soup ads shown them in the background of a supper gathering held by the company for its tomato growers in Union, Illinois.[103] In general, companies are less likely to portray the skills and accomplishments of their workers, and more likely to show men and women alike as potential purchasers or beneficiaries of their products.

There's little to note in other areas. Teachers show up in ads for seating manufactures and mouthwash; the one shown in the Pennzoil ads is depicted in a bafflingly negative manner, in which the teacher threatens the gas station attendant, "I know what I want...and I'll rap your knuckles if I don't get it! If you think I'm acting strict—you're right!" She notes that before she started using Pennzoil, her car "used to flunk every road test in the book;" since she has switched, she has "learned a thing or two about engines." The teacher goes on to give both the attendant and the Pennzoil an "A," but it's unclear whether the reader should be impressed by her knowledge of cars or offended by her attitude toward the attendant.[104] A female photographer is among the workers who use Bayer aspirin, and five women are pictured among the sixteen that Calvert Reserve uses to offer "A Toast to Everyone on the Job on Labor Day." The women are a ballerina, two nurses, a clown and a housekeeper who is ironing; it's unclear whether the latter is earning pay for her work or is ironing in her role as a homemaker.[105]

Certainly some ads still show women in the entertainment business as advocates of certain products. Actor Jacqueline Huet, reclined seductively on a chaise lounge in Paris, says, "I often feel tired, but I must never show it. I find Pond's Cold Cream acts almost like a 'tranquilizer'—keeps my skin soft and smooth all day long."[106] Others are shown drinking particular brands of vodka, or using particular hair products, all consistent with the ways in which they have been depicted earlier in the decade.

In general, then, when it came to portraying women in the work force, the advertisements and the editorial content of the magazine moved in opposite directions as the decade progressed. Whereas news and feature coverage of them in their work role seemed more and more to recognize their value and status, advertisers seemed to grow

less interested in that, and more interested in providing venues in which they could spend their money.

Were those assumptions about where women might spend their money based on the lives of the women who were the exceptions, or on those who lived out the expectations? In other words, did the advertisements construct their audiences' lives, or did they base their campaigns on cultural constructions already in place? There's a gap between the testimony of the women interviewed for this study and the assumptions that the culture, and the media that operated within it, made about their lives. To fill that gap, it's essential to examine women's descriptions of their own lives, the media depiction of them, and the culture in which it all came together through a variety of theoretical frameworks. As the gap is assessed, the invisible women of the decade can emerge and their stories can be told.

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[1] "She Never Used to Look Beneath the Surface," *Life* 26 January 1959, 112-113.

[2] *Life*,28 November 1955, 127.

[3] "Her World Used to Stop at the Station," *Life*, 2 March 1959, 110-111.

[4] "What Have You Discovered Lately?" *Life*, 27 April 1959, 149. Other ads featured a recently graduated, recently married young woman who read the magazine in order to "*stay* up to date in a world that begs for deeper understanding;" for an example, see 6 April 1959, 154-155.

[5] In addition to the circulation figures, *Life* reported in a 1950 house ad that it reached more than two-thirds of all Americans in middle and upper-income groups, according to data from a study conducted by Alfred Politz Research, Inc. By estimating the number of potential readers of each issue, the study reported that some 23.9 million Americans read each issue. The ad ran in the Oct. 23, 1950 edition of the magazine, on p. 119.

[6] Editor's note, *Life*, 27 July 1959, 2.

[7] Editor's note, *Life*, 2 March 1959, 2.

[8] "Letters to the Editor," *Life*, 7 March 1955, 20.

[9] "Frenchman's plaint," *Life* 29, 10 July 1950, 8.

[10] John Fiske, "British Cultural Studies and Television," in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, ed. Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992): 288. Fiske's notions often are tied to television, video, or film because of their emphasis on the visual "hailing" of the viewer. However, the ideas can be applied to print media such as *Life* that also visually hail their viewers/readers by use of strong photographs, and in fact can be applied to the written word as well, since the headlines and leads of the story are designed for the same purpose: to draw the reader in by framing the issue in way that shapes his or her interpretation of the story.

[11] Gaye Tuchman, "Women's Depiction by the Mass Media," *Signs* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 531.

[12] *Life*, 2 January 1950, 28.

[13] *Life*, 9 January 1950, 17-21.

[14] *Life*, 20 March 1950, 19.

[15] "*Life* Makes the Rounds with a Small Town Society Editor," *Life*, 20 March 1950, 142-147.

[16] *Life* 2 October 1950, 51-60.

[17] *Life*, 18 September 1950, 48.

[18] *Life*, 31 July 1950, 72-73.

[19] *Life*, 16 October 1950, 50-53. This is in stark contrast to the June 1960 issue, which on pages 101-104 featured Harold Keables, a 60-year-old male teacher so devoted to his work that he and his wife moved into a home just half a block from the school so that he could get there more quickly in the morning. His story is one of immense reward and satisfaction; in one photo, he is shown bounding up the steps of the school, clearly invigorated and delighted at the prospect of getting to his classroom.

[20] *Life*, 21 August 1950, 63-67.

[21] "Faye's Décolleté Makes TV Melee," *Life*, 10 April 1950, 87.

[22] *Life*, 3 April 1950, 45. The depiction is part of a package in which the magazine pays tribute to "hale, hearty old folks" who continue to contribute to society in a variety of ways.

[23] *Life*, 31 January 1955, 40, 55. The Luce story and photos are small and appear on p. 40. The coverage of the TV hostess runs for three pages, beginning on p. 55, and includes an almost full-page photo.

[24] "Weather Work for Women," *Life*, 28 March 1955, 8-9.

[25] "A Many-Pronged Attack on Heart Disease," *Life*, 10 October 1955, 155.

[26] "Wimbledon Wag," *Life*, 4 July 1955, 4-5.

[27] "Bourke-White's 25 Years," *Life*, 16 May 1955, 16-18.

[28] "Comfort for the Boss," *Life*, 24 October 1955, 99-100. Interestingly, the story notes that the woman likes the size and shape of her desk, but "wants a mirror hidden somewhere for a quick facial repair," and thinks that a woman is more effective in a less formal and tidy office. In the end, she prefers her old office to the new, modern design, deeming it more comfortable and a better fit for the work she's doing. Still, the depiction does not devalue the work that she is doing, nor does it hold her up as an oddity, workwise, in the professional world.

[29] "Airlines of U.S. Stock Up on Jet Age," *Life*, 24 October 1955, 36, 37.

[30] Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *The Journal of American History*, 79, no. 4 (1993): 1455-1482.

[31] "You Look JUST the Same," *Life*, 27 June 1955, 135-138.

[32] "The 80-hour Week," *Life* , 15 August 1955, 92-102.

[33] "Letters to the Editor," *Life*, 5 September 1955, 8.

[34] "Experts to the Rescue of Busy Housewife," *Life*, 31 October 1955, 93-96.

[35] Nancy Walker, *Women's Magazines 1940-196, Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 1998): 144-145.Walker discusses the notion specifically in introducing two essays on the professionalization of housework. *Women's Magazines 1940-196, Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 1998): 144-145.

[36] May, *Homeward Bound*, 14.

[37] *Life* 38, no. 24, June 13, 1955, in a package of three editorials, 51.

[38] "Live Up to the Best in You," *Life*, 22 June 1959, 42.

[39] "Leisure Could Mean a Better Civilization," *Life*, 28 December 1959, 63.

[40] Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 9. Matusow notes that the nation's liberal intellectuals were at the forefront in raising concerns. However, he noted (p. 9), conservative New Hampshire Republican Senator Styles Bridges, "for once catching the national mood, declared, 'The time has come clearly to be less concerned with the depth of pile on the new broadloom rug or the height of the tail fin on the new car and to be more prepared to shed blood, sweat, and tears.' " He remarked also that Russia's success with its Sputnik mission contributed to America's mood for change.

[41] "Dorothy the Librarian," *Life*, 16 February 1959, 47.

[42] "The Queens of Fiction," *Life*, 6 April 1959, 152.

[43] "Editor's Note," *Life*, 22 June 1959, 2.

[44] "Amid Gloom, Faces of the Jobless Haunt U.S.," *Life*, 13 April 1959, 31.

[45] "Dear boss: Take a letter," *Life* 46, no. 10, March 9, 1959, 129-130. The magazine recognized the importance of secretarial professions, and the skill required, in a photo feature covering the eleventh annual "executives night" hosted by the Denver chapter of the National Secretaries Association—but it was an executive himself who undid the professional treatment. The 215 members of the group host an annual dinner for their bosses; on this night, five of those bosses, all of them male, were called to typewriters at the front and asked to "take a letter" as if they were secretaries. They are pictured picking their ways through the keys with their secretaries looming over them, watching them work. Samples of their typing are included, typos and all; the copy says, "hunting and pecking, erasing and striking over, the executives painfully banged out the letters." Then, *Life* reports one executive's response: "This isn't so bad," said Robert Downing. "Why don't we sit on their laps?"

[46] "All the Miss Americas, Then and Now," *Life*,28 September 1959, 90.

[47] Ibid., 92-93.

[48] "The Four Sisters Said They Would and ...They All Made Good," *Life*, 11 May 1959, 93-96.

[49] "Student and Teacher of Human Ways," *Life*, 14 September 1959: 143.

[50] "Kooky Girl's Success," *Life*, 5 January 1959, 43.

[51] "What Most Women Want, Martha Hyer Has: Nothing But the Best," *Life*, 4 May 1959,121, 125.

[52] "A Case of Beauty in Municipal Court," *Life*, 13 April 1959, 45.

[53] "Letters to the Editor," *Life*, 26 October 1959, 17.

[54] *Life*, 8 August 1960, 44-60.

[55] Kathryn Keller, *Mothers and Work in Popular American Magazines* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 151-152.

[56] Bell Telephone advertisement, *Life*, 6 November 1950, 3.

[57] Bell Telephone advertisement, *Life*, 11 September 1950, 3.

[58] Bell Telephone advertisement, *Life*, 19 June 1950, 5.

[59] *Life*, 15 May 1950, 5.One example is the ad in this edition, that shows three women at a switchboard. "Since the telephone was 'a toy,' " notes the ad copy "...through the years, we've made *good* equipment that serves long and faithfully with a minimum of upkeep—the kind that helps make dependable, low cost telephone service." One can easily surmise that the women, as well as the equipment, serve long and faithfully on the job.

[60] *Life*, 6 February 1950, 112.

[61] Representative ads can be found in *Life*, 10 April 1950, 44-45, and 21 August 1950, 54-55.

[62] *Life*, 13 November 1950, 103.

[63] Ibid., 145.

[64] *Life* , 23 January 1950, 50.

[65] *Life*, 9 January 1950, 96.

[66] *Life*, 16 October 1950, 8.

[67] *Life*, 28 August 1950, 55.

[68] *Life*, 13 November 1950, 16.

[69] Ads can be found on the back covers of *Life*, 22 May 1950; 6 November 1950; 2 January 1950; and 8 May 1950.

[70] *Life*, 13 November 1950, 161.

[71] See ads in *Life*, 20 November 1950, 114; 20 March 1950, 10, 70; 10 April 1950, 64.

[72] See representative ads in *Life*, 12 September 1955, 17; 18 April 1955, 96; and 20 June 1955, 62.

[73] *Life*, 25 April 1955, 42-43.

[74] *Life*, 5 December 1955, 96.

[75] *Life*, 21 November 1955, 29.

[76] *Life*, 4 April 1955, 14.

[77] Ibid., 101. See also *Life*, 24 October 1955, 137.

[78] *Life*, 7 November 1955, 130.

[79] *Life*, 7 February 1955, 117.

[80] See ads in *Life*, 14 February 1955, among others.

[81] *Life*, 26 September 1955, 13.

[82] *Life*, 6 June 1955, 3.

[83] See *Life*, 19 December 1955, 50-51, and 7 February 1955, 39.

[84] *Life*, 25 April 1955, 68-69. Other representative ads are in *Life*, 26 September 1955: 111, and 6 June 1955, 5.

[85] *Life*, 31 January 1955, 79.

[86] *Life*, 14 February 1955, 108.

[87] *Life*, 7 November 1955, 98. See also *Life*, 5 December 1955, 107; 18 April 1955, 90; and 21 March 1955, 92.

[88] *Life*, 18 April 1955, 148.

[89] *Life*, 21 March 1955, 110-111.

[90] *Life*, 7 November 1955, 112; 29 August 1955, 90; and 7 March 1955, 124.

[91] *Life*, 12 September 1955, 140, and 2 August 1955, 70.

[92] All three ads are in *Life*,20 June 1955, 1, 9, and 89. The Westinghouse ad featuring Furness appears in other editions as well; see 11 April 1955, 26, as an example.

[93] *Life*, 18 April 1955, 76-77.

[94] *Life*, 17 January 1955, 69.

[95] See ads in *Life*, 5 October 1959, 171, and 6 July 1959, 11, 14-15.

[96] *Life*, 13 April 1955, 3. For a different approach, see the Beauty Rest mattress ads that feature a woman, obviously a hotel maid by her uniform, who has kicked off her shoes and is lying on the bed she has just made up, a vacuum forgotten beside her; *Life*, 9 March 1959, 41.

[97] *Life*, 9 March 1959, 72. See also Royal's ad in 27 April 1959, 72.

[98] *Life*, 9 March 1959, 92.

[99] *Life*, 12 January 1959, back cover.

[100] *Life*, 11 May 1959, 46.

[101] *Life*, 15 June 1959, 13. In the edition in which it ran, this was the only advertisement that depicted women in a role as a worker.

[102] As an example, see *Life*, 26 January 1959, 105, and 9 February 1959, 88.

[103] *Life*, 12 January 1959, 25.

[104] *Life*, 24 August 1959, 61.

[105] *Life*, 7 September 1959, 7.

[106] *Life*, 9 March 1959, 128. Pond's also uses Enid Boulting, a mother of three and dress designer, painter, and "noted hostess for her famous film-producing husband," the role in which she is depicted in the ad. Although both of the Pond's ads note the professional achievements of the women, it is for their other roles—as hostesses, spouses, and mothers—for which they seem most appreciated. See *Life*, 6 April 1959, 106.

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSING THE GAP

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, politics took a powerful hold on young Margaret Fishman, the daughter of Croatian immigrants who had settled in Ohio, then moved to Detroit following the promise of work for her father. There, where the auto industry and related machine shop work was embroiled in post-war unionization issues tied tightly to fears of Communism, she was a card-carrying Young Progressive who actively supported Henry Wallace's presidential campaign against Harry Truman and who infuriated her union activist father with her friendships with Progressives who were black or, in the case of her soon-to-be husband Al, Jewish. The two married despite his objections, and when Al's own political activism left him blacklisted and without steady work, her salary as a secretary in a law firm held the family together.

The Cold War became intensely personal, and increasingly frightening, for her in 1953, when her brother, Milo Radulovich, suddenly became a national symbol of the conflict over McCarthyism.

> [H]e was called before some kind of board and asked to turn in his insignia, his status—he was a first lieutenant in the Air Force—because of a close continuing relationship with—well, it was me and my father. "I don't know what they called us. They did not call us Communists but the inference was there; your "close continuing relationship" would make you a security risk, and they wanted him to give up his commission. He said, "Forget it." He was married and had a little girl by that time...I worked for the lawyers from '51 on, and they became almost like an extended family to us in that tough time. They stood up for us. One time, one of the partners called me in and he said, "Hey Marge, get those bastards off your back. The press...they won't hound you and they'll stop calling you a Red. Just tell them that you're not a Red." I said, "No way. They can't ask me that. Mr. K, if my refusal to cooperate with them threatens my job, I'll leave." My bosses told me, "Your job does not depend on it. We just think that you'd get

them off your back." I said, "No, I can't do that. It goes against my grain to bend against these fools who don't know as much as I do if they think I'm a Communist."

When (the case) hit the press, it was all over the country. This had happened to other people in the army or the air force, but they slunk away. My brother refused, and they court-martialed him. That's when [reporter Edward R.] Murrow got involved, with a half-hour story. It was settled by '54, when Eisenhower was president. My mother, she never liked Republicans, but she attributed Milo's victory [to the fact that] Eisenhower gave a speech the night before to B'nai Brith, saying, 'We've become a nation of faceless accusers.'"

It was a frightful time. Senator Hubert Humphrey—the great liberal—and another man had a bill in Congress to create camps should we need to arrest communists and we'll have someplace to put them. I said, "My God they're talking about concentration camps." If they could kill the Rosenbergs, they could do anything they want with me.[1]

As Sheila Brennan has noted, the relative ease with which the nation put to death mother-of-two Ethel Rosenberg—along with her husband Julius—for treason was at least in part due to the fact that Ethel so little resembled the constructed norm of an American woman at that time. Margaret Fishman—mother of two, a devoted wife, an appreciated and supported employee—was, like Anita Schanning, whose interview was noted earlier, the sole source of income in her home for a number of years, and also was a notable Detroit peace activist who was key in drawing attention to the fact that radioactive fallout had contaminated the nation's milk supply. She didn't fit the norm, either. Days, she worked in the law office; nights, after her children were in bed, she typed at home. Sometimes meetings for the causes in which she was active kept her away from the family. But she felt strongly that the work she was doing was too important to her for her to set it aside.

"I used to feel guilty—I'd share this with Ron at the office—that I spent so much time away from the kids," she said. "They were first graders and kindergarten. They were

very good students and they had a babysitter after school until I got home. I'd say, 'I wonder if I'm hurting them because I'm away so much.' He said, 'No, you'd be hurting them if you were there so much.' I really was protective of my kids. I still am."[2]

Women's roles in 1950s American society weren't constructed for Marge Fishman. Or for Kay Werner, a Lansing city police officer who worked her way through college, determined to better her lot in life as she helped others do the same; "I didn't want to live a pay-check-to-paycheck existence like my parents had done," she said. "I wanted to do better."[3] They weren't constructed for Bea Sachs, either, who got her first taste of politics during the '50s and soon became immersed in it; "It was just delicious," she remembered. "It was just so good."[4] Nor were they constructed for Jane Kay Nugent, whose work in human resources for Detroit Edison in the 1950s led her to become a vice president of that powerful organization; her mother, she recalled, summed it up: "With my mother, it was, 'You're your own woman, honey. If that's what you want, be my guest.' "[5] Indeed, they were not constructed for any of the ten women in three different areas of Michigan—the mining towns of the far western Upper Peninsula, the growing state capital of Lansing, and the booming industrial city of Detroit—who were interviewed for this study.

These women may have been outside the cultural norm, but were they really unusual? or simply invisible? The interviews make clear the fact that many women, for many reasons, lived their lives outside their culturally defined roles. They also make clear that, while some did so by choice and others by necessity, their diverse roles outside of the home often drew support and encouragement. Within their spheres, their roles were accepted because they were right for them and their families at the time. In either case, as

far as the culture was concerned, they became largely invisible. It was okay, it seemed, that they earned a paycheck or worked for change, as long as they were considered exceptions and could then somehow be dismissed as not really the way women were. When they came under the media and political spotlight in the 1960s—dubbed "women's libbers," peace activists, and given other titles by the media—they suddenly were visible to the mainstream. Yet they had been there all along,

While May's theory of domestic containment helps explain why many women were contained in the home in the 1950s—in hopes of securing their safety and sexuality, and thus helping preserve the family and the nation it symbolized—it can't entirely explain why women who were not contained in the home were invisible in the culture. To do that, and to interpret the findings of the editorial and advertising content in *Life* magazine at that time and what that indicated about cultural norms and needs, May's work needs to be combined with aspects of communication and feminist theory. None of the three individually can interpret the findings, but pulled together, they can foster a better understanding of women's lives in the 1950s.

The Feminist Construction Zone

Inherent to any feminist framework is a discussion of power. Also inherent is the recognition that women's experiences matter. Both are crucial aspects of this analysis. It is not, however, easy to apply those aspects of feminist theory in postmodern settings, particularly in light of a cultural backlash that asserts even now that a women's experience must be dismissed if it is deemed atypical. In other words, women who go

against the norm must somehow be marginalized. Witness syndicated columnist Molly Ivins' column commemorating women's history month, published in March of 1999:

> How have things changed...? Well, I used to go on college campuses twenty-five years ago and announce that I was a feminist, and people thought it meant I believed in free love and was available for a quick hop in the sack with anyone who asked. Now, I go on college campuses and say I'm a feminist, and half of them think it means I'm a lesbian. What I'd like to know is, how'd we get from there to here without ever passing "Go?"[6]

She goes on to make the point that feminism is about equal pay for equal work—if twenty-five years of feminism have done anything, she says, they should have convinced the nation of this. And yet, she notes, women still fight the same battles, with no guarantee of progress. Today's third-wave feminists have drawn attention to the benefits of maintaining ties between the newer postmodern feminist frameworks, which cite individualism as a benefit and the economy as a major source of women's oppression, and the second-wave roots of feminism from which they grew, which noted solidarity as a benefit and patriarchy as the key to oppression. They see little progress on any front, and regression on many. Despite decades of work, "[T]here's a point where you realize that while you may indeed feel capable of doing anything, you can be stopped—because of sexism," said Barbara Findlen, editor of the third-wave anthology *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation.*[7]

One major shift in feminist theory has been the sometimes painful realization that the values and structures of patriarchy guide theories that until recently might have been considered based simply on truth. While the shift to postmodernism obviously has been at

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the forefront in calling into question theoretical approaches that search for or validate truths that may not even exist, feminist theorists have placed all these approaches within the hegemony established by patriarchy and have consistently brought the power structure to the forefront.

Victoria Robinson, for example, observed that a major impact of postmodernism on feminist theory has been the realization that there are power relations inherent even in knowledge frameworks: who has access to knowledge, how meanings are encoded, how knowledge is evaluated.[8] Jackie Stacey is among those who believe that feminism has at its roots varied explanations of women's oppression, analyzing why women were "systematically excluded from power and from public life" and "their contributions to culture...undervalued and trivialized."[9] Current feminist thought, she continued, opens the door to examining aspects of women's lives through the experiences of the eye of the beholder—queer theory, for example—and indeed, while some third-wave feminists acknowledge that feminism offers an important framework for understanding the gendered basis of the culture and offers support in fighting it, others see it as too conforming, too confining to accommodate the diverse ways women live their lives.[10]

All this has led to the third important aspect of feminist theory that is crucial to this study: the acknowledgement that, in all cultures, women's roles are constructed, and females placed in them, by way of keeping the power in the hands of people who already hold it. The construction of those roles provides an infrastructure around which the society is built, and which holds up the mores and expectations of those who live within it. Gender as a construction can be assessed as framed historically; as related to the distribution of power, wealth, and other assets; and as it plays out in the marginalization

of women who don't quite fit. In all cases, the construction of women's roles provides an infrastructure around which the society is built—the symbolic women, as described earlier—and which holds up the mores and expectations of those who live within it.

Both anthropologist Margaret Mead and feminist author Simone de Beauvoir commented in their historical assessments of gender construction that, in all societies and circumstances, whatever men do is assigned a greater value than whatever women do. Mead, in her 1935 study of three primitive societies in New Guinea, discovered that although certain tasks, responsibilities, and privileges consistently were distributed by gender, the actual distribution of those tasks, responsibilities, and privileges differed significantly from one social structure to the next. In one culture, for example, both sexes were soldiers in military confrontations; in another, only the men were fighters. In one, women were farmers and men were hunters; in another, the men farmed. There were no universal roles assigned to males and to females. Each culture defined women and men, and the roles they would play, in a different manner. That was true, she noted, not only in these three tribes, but also in every human society; sex-difference was "one theme in the plot of social life," and by comparing how those themes were interpreted differently in different cultures, one could "gain a greater insight into what elements are social constructs, originally irrelevant to the biological facts of sex-gender."[11]

In placing the three primitive societies in a broader context, Mead argued that the patterns of socially defined roles for men and women were based on cultural assumptions that certain temperaments were masculine and that others were feminine—but again, she noted differences among societies. In one, men gossiped incessantly (and had more free time to do so); in others, gossip was dismissed as women's chatter. In one, it was

assumed that men enjoyed playing with babies and that women didn't; in another, that domestic work was sacred and thus was the exclusive purview of men. She concluded that the assignment of societal roles based solely on sex made about as much sense as the assigning of those roles on the basis of eye color.

In *The Second Sex,* written in 1949 and translated and published in English in 1952, de Beauvoir, in a really lovely and telling turn of phrase, noted, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman"[12]—a concept so universally true from so many perspectives that it could indeed be deemed as the basis for constructed gender roles. Women are constructed as being the other. They are the opposite of men; the anti-men. They are defined by what men are; men are considered the norm, and women are whatever men are not.

"Are there women, really?" de Beauvoir wondered, and then raised the question, what is a woman? The fact that the question is asked is telling, she said, because it's unlikely a man would raise such a question about the male gender; "A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex," she said. "It goes without saying that he is a man."[13] The man is the absolute human type, she says; the woman is defined as relative to him. He is the subject, the "One;" she, the other. And the other, in relation to the One, always plays second fiddle.

In this sense, woman's role in a society is defined by the roles that men do not want. This construction then is born out throughout the culture, where it is upheld by religions, by laws, by assumptions that are taken as fact. The construction becomes so integral to the culture that it is built into the political, social, and economic infrastructure, and thus become the basis for power—or for women, the lack thereof.

Political historian Sheila Tobias considers that assumption a basic tenet of feminism. As a socially constructed role, she argued, gender is the result of political arrangements and can be analyzed socially and politically. Said Tobias, "We have to think about roles the way social scientists do—not as God or nature determined, but as how and with what rationale a particular culture distributes certain tasks, certain privileges, and certain responsibilities." When examined in that fashion, it becomes clear that what was actually a myth of woman's natural role in American society was, as anthropologists say, "neither accidental nor purposeless. [Its] function is to establish social control." Such controls keep women in the places that men do not want to be, and keep the power and resources in the hands of those who already have it.[14]

As does Tobias, feminist author Judith Lorber sees the gendered social arrangements as being justified by religion and cultural productions, and then held up by law. "The most powerful means of sustaining the moral hegemony of the dominant gender ideology," she said "is that the process is made invisible; any possible alternatives are virtually unthinkable."[15] The construction, then, becomes the infrastructure. It can't be seen, but it's the basis of the way society operates.

Other scholars have come at the argument from different places, but with similar conclusions. Mary Hawkesworth comes from a postmodern place, setting aside what she called the natural attitude toward gender in favor of a constructed attitude, and in fact a constructed reality. Identification of gender, she said, is a way of sorting out "culturally specific characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity from biological features....When culture takes up the task of molding human nature, then, its aim is to enhance its own construction of what is naturally given, to mark sex differentiations

through language, character, and roles."[16] Since the goal of a culture is to survive, those cultures form power structures that usually are based on gender relationships and most specifically, who does the childbearing. In her 1942 autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Zora Neale Hurston wrote of her own identity as a woman as literally a statue that she herself chose to build—independent of that which may be built for her by society. She set out not just to build her identity, but to be it, and believes all women can do the same.

That's important, because the third aspect of gender constructed noted above—that of marginalized women, or not "total" or "true" women in our society, that of those who don't "fit"—is tied tightly to the political arrangements that Tobias said define gender in society. If female identity is socially constructed to maintain a male power structure, other identities can similarly be constructed. In American culture, women can be marginalized by race and, often, by activity—in other words, by their propensity to play roles constructed for men.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese noted a common denominator among autobiographies of black women that identifies them as a literary subgenre. It comes, she said, not from general categories of race or sex, "but from the historical experience of being black and female in a specific society at a specific moment and over succeeding generations."[17] The norm constructed for women in this society is white; black women immediately fall out of normalcy and become, as de Beauvoir would say, the other. Fox-Genovese wondered where to "lump," as she said, these black women, for whom a constructed reality is a bad fit. If their identity is hostage to the history of all black women, how can they ever be considered the norm? If their collective experience outweighs their individual

differences as women—and she would argue that that is indeed the case—how is their identity constructed, or does anybody care? Is the black woman first a self or first a woman, and in relation to whom? In other words, who builds her statue?

As noted earlier, Susan Cahn argued that social and political structures throughout the twentieth century conspired to keep women in their proper place—which meant, most emphatically, off the athletic playing field. As is true with others cited here, this conspiracy was related to power and where it is placed in society. Women who participated in sport might be aggressive and strong; they might want some of the power that the aggressive, strong men already had. Women interested in athletics then could be dismissed—they were without a constructed, accepted identity—because they did not want to remain feminine and retain valued feminine qualities. There was simply no place for them within the infrastructure, and so they were marginalized.

Obviously, *Life*'s trivialized, dismissive treatment of women athletes—its penchant for showing the undergarments of women tennis players, for example, compared to its portrayal of the strength and aggressiveness of men players—is indicative of this accepted dismissive attitude. But factors of marginalization also can explain *Life*'s treatment of women weathercasters, politicians, stockholders—indeed, its treatment in editorial content of any women deemed treading on traditionally male turf. Consider its coverage of a stockholders' meeting in 1950, which focused on the perspective that, thanks to the presence of some vocal female stockholders, the meeting turned petty and argumentative. "Women of Steel Give Top Brass a Hard Time/They turn a stockholders' meeting into a gripe session on pensions, public relations, and fat salaries," reads the headline. The report opens: "No doubt about it; American business was beginning to take

on some of the more frightening characteristics of a matriarchy. What happened at a U.S. Steel stockholders' meeting in Hoboken, N.J. on February 27 proves it." Women, who made up more than half of the 350 stockholders in attendance, "turned it into a gripe session." Most vocal was Wilma Soss, tabbed a "professional gadfly," who owned fifteen shares of U.S. Steel, was the head of the Federation of Women Stockholders of America, and wanted a woman on every corporate board of directors. It's particularly telling that the two men who asked similar "nasty questions" about huge pensions for executives were deemed as being "in cahoots" with Sass. By agreeing with women, they too were marginalized.[18]

The concepts of constructed roles, of power and hegemony, and of the marginalization of women who shake off their culturally appropriate roles also can be applied to the ways that employed women are portrayed in *Life*'s news columns and advertisements. It is not simply a hierarchical argument that would assert, for example, that more women in management positions would result in a different look in *Life*; Gaye Tuchman, for one, disagrees with arguments that women's presentation in the media is due to the fact that so few of them hold decision-making positions. Whether they are men or women, she said, journalists are above all journalists; women tend to make the same decisions as men. At *Life*, while the majority of managers, staff writers, and staff photographers during the years studied were men, women held a wide variety of reporting, research, and other staff positions, and made up almost the entire copydesk staff, meaning that they gave the stories the final, most thorough reads before printing. Such work typically allows ample opportunities to raise concerns about the content and

style of stories, although not necessarily allowing direct impact on the editorial policies of the publication.[19]

More succinctly, feminist theory can lead to a plausible explanation as to why, as Sherry B. Ortner has noted, what women actually do within the cultures—what they accomplish, who they influence, how they contribute—often is directly at odds with their constructed roles in society.[20] The constructed gender defines women in the plurality, but women—as does Zora Neale Hurston, and as did Donna Maki, Mary Kovacevich, Lucile Belen, and other women interviewed for this study—often build their own statues within it. That those statues are invisible is a reflection of the fact that they are marginalized—placed outside the power structure—for not playing their culturally constructed roles. However, that can't explain all aspects of the way that working women were portrayed. It doesn't explain, for example, why ads early in the decade showed women in more nontraditional work roles than those later in the decade, or why the ads and the editorial copy followed opposite trends. The addition of media and cultural contexts helps fill in the gaps.

Mediating the Cold War Ritual

In August 1984, *Ms* magazine published an essay written by Sey Chassler, a women's magazine editor who began in the late 1950s and early 1960s to struggle with the notion of whether he truly could see the life being lived by his busy, professional, mother-to-his-children, partner-to-him wife. In his self-examination, he is startled by his conclusion: He hasn't a clue what her life is like. "How invisible my wife's life was to me," he wrote. "How invisible to men women are."

He set about determining why. "The world belongs to men," he decided, finally. "It is completely dominated by us—and by our images." He went on,

> What men see when they look out and about are creatures very like themselves—in charge of everything. What women see when they look out and about is that the creatures in charge of everything are *unlike* themselves.
>
> If you are a man, think of a world, your world, in which for everything you own or do or think you are accountable to women. Women are presidents, bankers, governors, door holders, traffic cops, airline pilots, bosses, supervisors, landlords. Shakespeare. The whole structure is completely dominated by women. Your doctor, your lawyer, your priest, minister, rabbi are women. The figure on the cross is a woman. God is a woman. Every authoritative voice and every authoritative image is the image and voice of women: Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, Matthew, Luke, Paul, the guy who does the voice-over on the commercial and Ben Franklin—all are women. So are Goliath and David. So are the Supreme Court, the tax collector, the head of the CIA, the mechanic who fixes your transmission, the editor of your daily newspaper, the doctor who handed you to your mother...[21]

In his essay, Chassler neatly brought together aspects of power and gender construction. He also introduced an aspect of the role that media play in his discussion of where men and women see themselves, or where they see others of their gender. "Male images," he said at another point in the essay. "They're built into us. Images of dominance."[22] He might also have noted images of propriety; images of expectations. When men and women look at the world they get the message of who is in charge, who can do what, what's appropriate and what is not by what they see as acceptable behavior around them.

As those images are mediated by the media, the media become a part of the construction. So, too, do the viewers or readers of the media themselves; they bring with them preconceived notions of what the world is like, based on their own personal experiences within it. The pages of a magazine like *Life*, then, are a kind of construction

zone for the building of the culture. As communication researchers Kenneth Allan and Scott Coltrane noted, repeated exposure to stereotypical images that consistently frame gender in a certain way "shapes cognitive structures, or gender schemes, and subsequently influences peoples' perception of themselves and of others."[23] The media frame the cultural ideals; the readers, in their interpretations, construct the meaning.

All of this leads headlong into Carey's ritual theory of communication, in which both the media and those viewing it are engaged in conversation around which reality is built. Since the nation was founded, he says, the press—along with literacy and education—played an immeasurable role in holding together a nation that was sprawling westward almost faster than could be tracked. Whereas modernized transportation, such as the railroads, helped physically connect the population, communication helped keep the population culturally connected. Whether the discourse was creating unity or hegemony, he says, was debatable, but certain was the fact that communication as much as transportation—the word and the wheel, as he succinctly put it—was key in keeping the still-frontier oriented nation from dissolving into chaos. The media, a strong thread in the coast-to-coast stitching together of the nation, can be thought of as "not merely instruments of will and purpose but definite forms of life: organisms, so to say, that reproduce in miniature the contradictions in our thought, action, and social relations."[24]

Denis McQuail, in his analysis of Carey's theory, called it an "expressive model," emphasizing that both the sender and the receiver gain some sort of satisfaction from the message; they share in the emotions involved, celebrate its conclusions. That can make the symbols used ripe for exploitation, such as during a carefully planned political campaign in which a symbol or idea—say, the notion of family values so popularly

brought to the forefront by politicians throughout the 1990s—is used to mobilize a group.[25] Tuchman, too, bolsters the argument that communication is less a reflection of reality than the building of community—a community built around a discourse. "A community of discourse is comparable to a language: It integrates and controls; it provides common elements for strangers to use when they meet and creates strictures for what can be noticed or said," she wrote. "Viewing the media as a community of discourse may enable a new understanding of both women's presentation by the media and the impact of the media on society." If we observe women's depiction as a myth, then—the woman-as-symbol described earlier—we can know how myth and the community of discourse are integrated into the professional and organizational procedures governing the media.[26]

Thus, we would not necessarily expect a one-to-one correspondence between the number of women working and the numbers shown in *Life*—as Tuchman said, a direct correspondence among media organizations, their content, and the everyday world. More important than the sheer numbers is what they symbolize: what she called a "symbolic annihilation" by the media. If representation in the media legitimizes a social role, "underrepresentation and (by extension) trivialization and condemnation indicate symbolic annihilation." Such trivialization, she said, served the economic interests of media trying to deliver consumers to advertisers.[27]

Qualitatively, then, it's the way that the viewer is hailed to the story that starts the conversation. In hailing readers with a headline—"Dumb Blond in Hollywood," for example, on a story about actress Judy Holliday—the magazine effectively opens the conversation with a clear notion that the woman's value is in her looks, not her brains,

and invites the reader to join in. When that's accompanied with a photo of her holding a Colt revolver while she reads a how-to guide on using a Smith & Wesson, the reader further is hailed to a certain place in the discourse, and he or she applies individual experience to the reading of that. Over the course of the discussion, or perhaps through many weeks of the dialogue as played out in the magazine, and elsewhere in the culture, the reader constructs the reality and then, as Carey has said, takes up residence within it.[28]

That disconnect between individual experience and the mediated cultural norm is not evidence that the magazine is carrying out a carefully planned, meticulously timed campaign of communications specifically designed to put forth a certain view of the world. In trying to engage its readers, it more likely is hailing its readers in a manner that its editors believe is important to them, both as readers and participants in a culture that demands a certain view of the world. Communication scholar Ernest Bormann put it in terms of a rhetorical vision, saying that from 1950 to 1965, the Cold War rhetorical vision "provided the dominant frame for interpreting world events."[29] *Life*'s readers are assumed, as members of the culture, to buy into the view; the magazine wishes to appeal to its readers; so what is believed to be the status quo becomes very visible. To the extent that there may not be agreement between the status quo and individual readers' real-life experiences—imagine Kay Werner, whose work as a police officer required a firm knowledge of firearms, seeing the Holliday portrayal—the reading of the story becomes a kind of negotiation between the reader and the text, out of which the reader constructs a meaning as much as does the medium. In Werner's world, Holliday's depiction is the one that doesn't match up with reality, not the other way around.[30]

While the editorial content of *Life* may not have been a part of a planned communication campaign, its advertising certainly was. Still, the same frameworks of building of community and creation of discourse can be applied, as can notions of power, hegemony and gender construction. It is likely that the advertisements are as important to *Life*'s role as a chronicler of culture as are its editorial columns; media scholar and critic Marshall McLuhan, a contributor to many magazines as well as a teacher and writer on media matters, classified ads as "the richest and most faithful daily reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities," even as he fretted about the way those ads more or less hypnotized readers into believing the messages carried. "Far more thought and care go into the composition of any prominent ad in a newspaper or magazine than go into the writing of their features and editorials . . . it is obvious that any acceptable ad is a vigorous dramatization of communal experience," he noted. "[I]f ads were to depart from the center of this shared experience, they would collapse at once, by losing all hold on our feelings."[31]

The culture chronicled by *Life*'s advertisements certainly is populated by women in a wide variety of roles—most often, as noted above, as consumers. Again, it is less the numbers of depictions of women on the job than the qualitative aspects of the ways the ads hail the readers that must be analyzed. When they appear as consumers, women choose items for the home independently from the men in their lives; whether they are spending their own money, their husband's, or a combination of the two is irrelevant when one is purchasing a refrigerator or a washing machine, since women—the culturally defined experts in areas of domesticity—likely are in the best position to decide how many cycles of agitation are required on wash day. During the 1950s, women often are

pictured drinking liquor or beer and smoking cigarettes, and—with the notable exception of the previously mentioned ad that featured the disheveled cleaning woman smoking a cigarette as she propped her feet up on her boss's desk—women who smoked and drank seemed smart, sophisticated, and clearly individual consumers who were making lifestyle choices as they made spending choices.

More than that, said Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, women's frequent appearance in ads for alcohol and cigarettes showed them moving into public space otherwise reserved for men. This didn't work against the image of women in their home-making roles, she said; instead, it sought out an image that women themselves wished to have, independent of their roles in the home. "The freedom of women to smoke and drink was an inevitable development of the culture of consumerism," she said. "Cigarettes were inexpensive and instantly recognizable as emblems of maturity, rebellion and liberty; advertisers used images of glamour, wealth, and sophistication to promote public drinking and those of domesticity and companionate marriage to encourage household consumption."[32] To an extent, the ads showed women as the companies believed women wished they were.

Does this mean that the numbers of depictions of working women in advertising dropped, and the ways they were depicted became more traditional, precisely to appeal to women who were looking for justification for these roles as those roles continued to change? Perhaps. It is too simplistic, however, to assume that when women wished to be more economically independent, the ads featured them as such, and that when they wished to be more economically dependent, the ads followed. Such a framework requires the viewpoint that ads transmit messages without regard for the way that the reader or viewer may interpret them.[33] In fact, successful advertising agencies carefully study their

intended audiences as they create their campaigns, assessing both how the message will be sent and how it may be received. They too build community around a particular mindset, but in their case it is crucial that they know precisely to whom they wish to appeal, and what the desired action is after the ad is seen.

The cigarette campaigns noted earlier are good examples. When they depict women on the job, those women always are depicted as concerned about their work. They take what they do seriously—whether they are teachers, reporters, or opera stars—and it's important to them that when they smoke, they can do so without concern for their throats becoming sore or their voices rough. In this case, the fact that the women take what they do seriously is deemed a selling point for the cigarette, and the medical proof offered that Camels don't irritate the throat becomes an important part of the pitch. When the wool industry wants to woo working women as customers, it depicts them on the job—filing with great efficiently in one photo, standing near a television camera in another, and in a third, standing near a bus stop in what looks to be an executive pose: holding a newspaper while looking up expectantly for the next car. Of course she is in control, sharp, independent, and knows the value of a buck, too; that's why she chooses clothing made from wool.[34] The aforementioned Bell Telephone and Western Electric ads of course must show women as taking their work seriously; if they're to build consumer confidence, those consumers must believe that the workers are top-notch. In the ads that feature women as secretaries, it becomes less important that the boss is the boss than it is that the secretary knows her job better than anyone. A new typewriter? Ask the secretary which one works best. In the market for a dictionary? Ask the woman who uses one every day at her desk how efficient a Webster's is. Just as women consumers are deemed

experts on home appliances and portrayed in a positive light as they're making their choices, women workers are deemed experts on office equipment and support work. Appealing to their commitment to their crafts appeals to their desire to see their work as important, and recognizes that they are in positions to influence or make decisions about how money is spent.

Thus the advertisers, rather than showing a culture's resistance to changing, more likely are trying to anticipate change and to benefit from it financially. In that sense, they must attempt to make their ads an integral part of their readers' culture. Bogardus, in studying the making of consumer culture in America, noted that ads had to become naturalized into the culture—to become part of the spoken language, immersed in the discourse.[35] Advertisers had to be keenly aware of their intended readers, and to hail those readers effectively. Some ads clearly were meant to hail men; it's doubtful that the 1959 ad series from the Cigar Institute of America would have appealed to women, and its equally doubtful, at that time, that women were thought of as cigar smokers—although it was perfectly fine to pitch them as potential cigarette smokers. "A Cigar Brings Out the Caveman in You," reads the Cigar Institute headline. Depicted in the ad is a man in a business suit, standing over a woman, who is seated on the floor in a one-shouldered leopard-skin mini dress. She is looking up at him adoringly; he is looking straight at the camera with a satisfied look on his face, a club in one hand, cigar in the other. The copy starts out, "There's a man-size feeling of power in smoking a cigar..." There is certainly no doubt that cigar smoking is an activity for men only, and that it's one that can make men feel powerful. Most importantly, it is an activity that defines women as people who are not men, who do not do what men do...who are, as feminist theory noted, the

opposite, the other, of the figure in power, with no chance of rising unless he says she can. When cigarette ads often showed men and women at work or at leisure, enjoying a cigarette together, they were breaking down the gender wall in an effort to market their product. The Cigar Institute of America sees men as the users and purchasers of cigars, and sees a benefit to keeping that wall right where it is.[36]

As a contrast, weigh the previously mentioned ad that appeared that same year featuring Harriet Hunter, the San Francisco designer and Union Oil shareholder who's shown on the job, in her studio, and has some questions about how Union Oil spent her investment money. In this ad, she is in the driver's seat, both in her work and in her role as an investor. And she's treated respectfully in both. The ad hails both men and women with a depiction of this very together person who puts her money in the responsible hands of Union Oil. Both men and women can be impressed not only by Harriet Hunter, but by the way she is treated by the company. There's no need for a power construction to sell the product; no need for a wall between the genders; no need to define male and female space for the advertisement to work.

Obviously, the depiction of women at work in the advertisements was neither accidental nor incidental. It was affected by the aspects of feminist theory noted above—aspects of power, of women's experience, and of constructed roles in society—and by the discourse-building, community-as-culture powers of media. However, neither of those frameworks alone explains the presence of the bacteriologist or the geologist. To assess that and other characteristics of *Life*'s coverage in the 1950s requires the addition of cultural theory.

Keeping the Culture Intact

The Cold War, May states, brought to the surface an aspect of American culture that likely had gone unrecognized for some time: the fact that family life, or the private sphere, existed not outside the public political sphere but in fact was an integral part of it. While some historians viewed the Cold War years as a time when the world's superpowers played dangerous games with nuclear weapons, with immeasurable power and the potential demise of the world's populations hanging in the balance, others chronicled an affluent, productive society in which happy families thrived in the suburbs. It was, she noted, a disconcerting juxtaposition of viewpoints, and not until the two were viewed as connected—as she says, with the latter existing as an integral part of the former, not outside of it—could the duality be explained. The politics of the war led to a certain American ideology, born out in speeches and campaigns that led to specific policies formulated through the Washington power structure. Those policies had an impact on family life; all of those things, added to the really unusual nature of that decade in American history, had an impact on gender roles.

The culture of consumerism and women's roles within it was critical. It included a mass focus on consumption, zeroing in on the family's consumption habits. May argued that the organized, bureaucratized work environments of the time actually made the home seem a haven of individualism and freedom, as well as a place for security. Critical, too, to the consumer culture were mass production, the glorification of family at the expense of the public realm, and the nation's infatuation with science and professional expertise: rational, hierarchical principles driving social and economic policy, and thus defining political and familial values. The high-consumption economy and the policies that

supported it made up a kind of political economy around which the entire culture was defined. Economist Steve Fraser and historian Gary Gerstle noted that Americans fully integrated into that political economy—unionized workers, for instance, and white-collar employees with secure jobs—would see that leisure was better than work, individual expressiveness more important that social solidarity, and family life a step above civic life. In addition, they'd have the financial means to participate in that economy, which was built on the base of the post-New Deal economy. In the 1950s, though, the economy fell short of that ideal; blacks, certainly, weren't fully integrated into the economy, nor were working women and others who lived along the margin of the constructed norm.[37]

Domestic containment of women in proscribed roles then, as noted earlier, was a security measure on both the macro and the micro scale. "As Americans emerged from years of depression and war, they yearned for an abundant life freed from hardship," May said. "Yet they also worried about the very developments that promised to free them from the constraints of the past: consumerism, women's emancipation, and technological advances. Contained within the home, these liberating but also potentially dangerous trends might be tamed, where they could contribute to happiness. In private life as well as in foreign policy, containment seemed to offer the key to security. With security as the common thread, the Cold War ideology and the domestic revival reinforced each other."[38]

Fiske, in applying a cultural approach to media studies, believes too that a mutual reinforcement is taking place in the preservation of a culture; that societal structure is held in place by meanings that the culture produces. Those meanings do not comprise an overarching ideology, but as constructions of social identity that allow people to make

sense of themselves and their place in that society, they contribute to that ideology. Culture itself, Fiske said, really is based on the meanings people assign to their experiences within it, rather than on the products of the social experience; thus, a cultural approach is based in the ways those meanings are generated and circulated.[39]

During the Cold War, many of those meanings were constructed around women, and were circulated by the media. Women's identification with the moral fortitude of the nation could mean that their sexuality, if unharnessed, could lead to the nation's demise; it was no accident that women's sexuality was so often, in popular culture, tied to the atomic bomb or to foreign spies who charmed men into spilling secrets. Sexuality in a woman wasn't a bad thing, as long as it was used to keep the husband happy and the home intact. Her other roles in the home were equally important in Cold War culture—so much so that they were injected with national purpose. The more perfect the home, the more perfect the nation. In that sense, women—the keepers of the home—had an enormous amount of power. Even the two women who held public-sphere power as the heads of the Federal Civil Defense Commission, Jean Wood Fuller and Katherine Howard, advocated that women could find all the power they needed as long as they stayed in the home.[40]

It was, however, power that was exactly the opposite of the power held by men, who made decisions, earned money, advanced in rank, and were acknowledged frequently and publicly for their many achievements. Fraser and Gerstle would count that as evidence of an imperfect fit in the meshing of the public and private life. Individual expressiveness was stifled for men in rigid workplaces; for women, in patriarchal constructions of their appropriate roles.[41] The culture, however, appeared unwilling to

recognize the disruptions, or when it did, it deemed them evidence at best of abnormality; at worst, of the Communist threat or the Red Menace.

Certainly, this can explain some aspects of the coverage that *Life* gave to women in the work world. The constructed role of "breadwinner" in a male-dominated workforce typically has relegated women who entered the workforce to lesser-paying, less-visible places. That the nation made such a notable exception to that during the Rosie-the-Riveter years of World War II was evidence that it then became natural that women would step into the needed work roles while hundreds of thousands of men left to fight the war. Suddenly, real women were working, a role that was visible and valued. As Tobias notes in her chapter on "Women at Work," they were featured in newsreels and magazines and accommodated in factories with new washrooms that allowed them to retain their femininity while playing this masculine role.[42] While the women said outright that they valued good pay and job security, they were accepted only because they did so in support of the roles that men played as soldiers of war. As the nation returned to normalcy after the war, many women were relegated to a different kind of support role: as secretary or nurse, supporting the men who were executives and doctors. Those who weren't became invisible or, at least, unimportant.

Consider *Life* reporter Eleanor Graves' treatment of a 1959 story that placed a group of fashion writers—all of them women—at the center of a controversy that, if treated differently, would have raised questions of racism, political controversy, and the potential of a Cold War incident. The event was a proposed United States fashion exhibit at the upcoming American Exhibition in Moscow. The show would include forty-seven models, three of them black, and all manner of scenes "showing 'what Americans are

really like,' including an integrated barbecue, an integrated rock 'n roll party and a civil wedding in which a Negro couple was attended by a white couple." The plans raised eyebrows and hackles of folks who complained that it misrepresented the extent of integration in the nation. The fashion writers, however, seemed most concerned that the show may not go on; their major worry was that their lives, and the fashionable presentation of America that might have been presented, might now be jarred off course. While giving cursory attention to the cultural significance of the controversy, the reporter lamented: "And all the girls could sympathize with one harassed editor who complained as she started back home, 'things have been such a mess all week I haven't even been able to get my hair done.' " As the readers chuckle, they get a clear message: this isn't important. Entertaining, yes; interesting, sure; unusual, certainly; but not important.[43]

That's consistent with the cultural framework that May and others use to show the integration between the public sphere and the private sphere, and the relative importance attached to the roles played within those spheres. What men do is important because it is done by men; what women do is important because it is related to the holding together of the culture in the face of Communism and the atomic bomb. Women's roles—their very lives, in fact—are tied to United States security, and as such their private spheres must be deemed an aspect of the public interest.

Conclusion: The Culture of Invisible Women

In one sense, then, the narratives constructed by the depictions of working women in *Life* are evidence that the survival of the consumer-oriented, America-centric Cold War culture was dependent on the structuring of women in a symbolic sense that justified

their homebound, consumer-oriented roles—and thus justified the American capitalist way. As a collective, the nation's people gathered around the framework via the media; as a political culture, they built policy frameworks that held up the construction. This conclusion is drawn from aspects of three broad theoretical frameworks. From feminist theory, it pulls notions of the patriarchal power structure, constructed gender roles, and hegemony. From Carey's communication-as-culture media framework, it uses concepts of the ritual role of media and the integral, reciprocal role of media users. And it applies aspects of May's cultural framework that take into account the connection between the private sphere that housed the family and the public sphere that housed the politically generated consumer economy, all beneath the Cold War umbrella.

But one characteristic of American society is not taken into account: the fact that individual citizens make individual decisions. The collective may have agreed on the construction of women's lives—indeed, the construction of American lives *in toto*—and that construction may have been universally visible throughout the decade, but in truth there was incredible diversity among the American lives in this most unusual decade, perhaps more among women than men.

That recognition leads us to this fact: in the 1950s, a new culture was formed not on the margins of, or in place of, the existing culture, but right in the middle of it: a culture of working women. Unlike the private sphere that May successfully argued was integrated into the public sphere by the hegemony, this culture existed in spite of that overarching hierarchy. It had its own characteristics and symbols. It was a culture of women who paid the rent, typed the documents, rang up the sales; a culture of women who drove into oil fields to test the soil, who assembled telephones from their

components and then connected the calls through the switchboard; who taught children to read, nursed the ill back to health, and kept neighborhoods safe. Some moved from higher-paying industrial jobs they had held in the 1940s to lower-paying white-collar jobs—but they continued to work. Some were single or widowed, but many of them were married, and in fact by 1954, forty percent of the families with an annual income of $6,000 to $10,000 were families in which both husband and wife worked.[44] It was indeed a culture of invisible women, and within it lived women whose lives were big and complicated and exciting and exhausting, but whose presence was overshadowed by the woman-as-symbol, and whose history has been told as being exceptional as opposed to being the rule. They knew of themselves when others did not. They were building their own statues. They were forming their own realities and taking up residence within them.

Take Mary Kovacevich as an example. One could say her story is astonishing; how could a girl child of a poor immigrant family rise to such a position of power and independence and prestige? And yet all ten of her siblings graduated from high school, and all five of the girls went on to college. By the 1950s, she was scurrying up the ranks of the military ladder. Sure, she dated, but when her most serious relationship with a man didn't end in marriage, she simply moved on in the direction she had been going all along.

"My mother didn't have one day of schooling as a child—not one day," she said. "My mother couldn't speak English. If she could speak English, she could have been a lawyer. She had that natural intelligence. You couldn't fool her on anything. She had the smarts...Because of the fact that she didn't have day one of education...she encouraged us."[45] And off they went: To the military, to nursing school, out into the world.

Or take Margaret Fishman, whose father pressured her to go to college and whose resistance to the idea infuriated him. She had seen her family struggle financially and wanted to make a difference; she saw a world of opportunity in political activism and work, and believed that she and Al Fishman were meant to work together toward their goals.

"My father had a terrible argument with me. He said, 'You must go to college; you must have an education.' I said, 'I have enough education, Tata. I want to go to work.' I wanted to buy furniture for our house; I was always embarrassed that we didn't have any. We didn't have anything. Not even a couch. . . .

"Al I were going to get married in June of 1951; my father said, 'You're the first Slavic girl who ever married a Jew.' He thought Al was Italian; he had never met any Jews. Al, when he came home, he would stay overnight upstairs where my dad had built an extra room. When we told him we were going to get married he just blew his top. He said, 'I don't want him here again.' I said, 'Well then you don't want me either.' I packed a bag and left. I didn't know where I was going. I had a black friend, she lived alone with her mother, and I said to her, 'Can I stay with you for a few nights?' She said, 'Absolutely.' So I stayed with Hannah and her mother for a few days."[46]

Like Fishman, police officer Kay Werner wanted to make a difference. She also wanted to escape. Growing up in a family that was always on the move, one step ahead of the creditors, one behind the next opportunity, she wanted to take care of herself. More than that, she wanted work that mattered. With policewoman Clarissa Young's support, she knew she had found something that could meet both needs.

"One of the first things that Clarissa said to me was, 'You have to leave it at the office. You cannot take it home with you. You're going to burn out.' And she was right. You saw so many horrible, horrible things, conditions that kids would live in . . . you wanted to save the world, and after awhile you realized you could not save the world. You could only just save a person."

In the working women's culture, work was important. The paycheck mattered, but so did the way one earned it. Interestingly, there wasn't much conflict among the women interviewed between their roles in the family and their roles in work. Both were important. In many instances, though, family was defined differently. Lucile Belen and Mary Kovacevich, who didn't marry or have children, considered their parents and siblings their prime family units. Jane Nugent, who didn't marry until she was in her 60s and had retired, for most of her life had a nuclear family of two: herself and her mother, with whom she lived until her mother's death in the early 1980s. She measured her success in dollars and cents, in accomplishments and assets, and to a large extent in excitement and prestige. She weighed every opportunity accordingly.

"Oh, I wanted to be an accountant," she said, recalling her early years as a part-time employee at Detroit Edison. "There were a lot of opportunities for women in professional accounting firms because the guys were off to war. One of my sorority sisters, she was a CPA, she kind of took me under her wing. She started taking me to these women's accounting association meetings.

> It was the pits; I looked at these old girls, and I decided, "Hey, maybe this isn't for me." I just didn't think I wanted to be one of these people sitting on the stool with the green eyeshades. That, and the fact that now some of the guys were coming home; the jobs were going back to them.
>
> I wanted a different kind of job. Don't get me wrong; the paycheck was important. If they said sitting on a stool with a green eyeshade made more money,

> I might have gone for it...But I had looked to see where women at Detroit Edison made the most money. It was in what now would be called human resources, in the employment department...I went into the dean of the business school (at Wayne State)...and said, "I'd like to change my major to industrial management." I had checked the requirements; I knew I had the courses. He said, "You can't do that." I said, "Why not?" Finally, he said, "Well, no woman has ever majored in industrial management."

Once she was in, her career was launched. It lasted some forty years—and she never looked back.

"I have no regrets. None. Because I firmly believe that you do your best with what you've got," she said. "Someone asked me the question, 'What would you like to have put on your tombstone?' And I said—besides my name, of course—'She did the best with what she had.'

"You take the good with the bad. Would the tradeoffs have been worth it? I don't know. You do the best you can with the circumstance you have at the time. And then you say: 'Here you is, baby. And there ain't nothing more you can do with it.'"[47]

Could the invisible women really have had a culture all their own? Certainly, as a collective they had some of a culture's defining characteristics: Fiske's formation of a social identity that allowed the women to make sense of themselves and their place in the society (without doubt, they had no place in the one they saw trumpeted to the Soviets); certainly, the meaning that they assigned to their experiences within that culture, rather than the products of that social experience, were important in their definitions of themselves. Within this culture, working for pay was absolutely normal; even for Bea Sachs and Hortense Canady, whose work lives took a temporary backseat to community advocacy, work was something they were encouraged to do, sometimes by their parents,

other times by people who saw their potential and encouraged them to achieve it. Education was valued in their culture, but not essential; financial contribution to the economy was less important than financial contribution to the family, and the seeking of equality less critical than the recognition of opportunity. Said Kovacevich, "I may have held a rank of lieutenant, but I was not paid the same as my counterpart male. But to me, it never was (an issue). I had enough to manage on and I sent some money home. I had nothing as a child, so I think my attitude was much different. My attitude was, I never had anything until I got in the Navy and things are great now. I can help my parents. It's payback time."[48]

Recognition of working women as a separate, invisible culture in the 1950s fills the gaps left even by the combination of cultural, media, and feminist framed theories in explaining coverage of them in mass-circulation media, and thus their recognition in society. As a culture inside of what was deemed the norm, it was treated by the media as an oddity, an amusement, and at times, a threat. Like the beat culture, it had to be marginalized. Like the Red Menace, it had to be stifled. The coverage of Holliday as the "dumb blond" placed a talented, successful woman in the role of a bumbling airhead who couldn't possibly be a threat. Coverage of successful photographers or other workers deemed them something out of the norm—and that, too, was acceptable. It must be noted that one defining characteristic of all news coverage in a free culture is that something must be deemed to be exceptional—different, unusual, out of the norm—in order to be deemed newsworthy. The clichés are simply fact: the plane that lands safely isn't news. When a dog bites a man, it's not news; when a man bites a dog, now that's something.

This, too, explains the trend in the editorial columns later in the decade, when women in the workplace began to be covered almost more as an aside than as something particularly odd. It also can help explain the opposite trend among the advertisers, who early in the decade showed women working in oil fields in a rather matter-of-fact fashion, but later dismissed them in favor of featuring women as secretaries, nurses, and teachers. Advertisers looked to build a community around the potential for change, rather than the preservation of the world as it was. Their job was to anticipate, to build a new market where one didn't exist or to expand one where it did. That the women in its circa-1959 ads were more likely to be secretaries than executives indicates an effort to expand a recognized market; that women were also shown looking into the eyes of the readers asking about their stock investments indicates the cultivation of an anticipated market that might grow from the current one. If they were no-shows in the cigar ads, well, it would be interesting now to study whether or not this was a potential market that the Cigar Institute missed.

In the end, the culture of invisible women was what Tobias defined as a "metaforce:" an aspect of the culture that made change inevitable, no matter how hard the power structure fought against it.[49] Consider that the five major dimensions of modern culture identified by Giele as having the greatest impact on women's roles—technological advance and greater longevity; the development of a service economy; the changing structure of the family; educational improvement; and the reemergence of feminism—all were huge forces in the 1950s, and it becomes clear that this was a metaforce fueled by the very culture in which it was brewing, and indeed by the very culture that rendered it invisible.

Except, of course, to the women within it. "It was like an adrenaline shot all the time," said Sachs of the 1950s activities that launched her headlong into the rest of her life.[50] Said Nugent, "I was very active in women's organizations...Just a job alone has never been enough to take care of my time and needs; after a few years you've got the job down, and you need something more."[51] "I'm a fifties values person," said Evans, and then described something altogether different than the domestic ideal: "In my household, in my life, we held certain values: Everybody stands on somebody's shoulders and moves on. You help the race move on."[52]

Who are these women? Why don't we know their stories? It has been almost forty years since Betty Friedan wrote what was then the untold story of women who lived within the culture of domesticity and were painfully unhappy with it. Hundreds of thousands of women saw their own lives borne out in that groundbreaking work, and the nation seemed shocked to find that this Cold War culture—one that it had constructed itself, held up, and nurtured—was not universally appealing.

It was shocked only because the nation did not know that there was a second story to be told. It may be shocked, again, to find that there is a third. Until that story is told, we still don't know about women's lives in the 1950s. This study, at least, is a start.

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[1] Margaret Fishman, personal interview with author, 3 August 2001.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Werner, personal interview with author, 11 August 2001.

[4] Beatrice Sachs, personal interview with author, 9 August 2001.

[5] Jane Kay Nugent, personal interview with author, 15 August 2001.

[6] Molly Ivins, "Battle for Women's Rights Not Yet Over," *The Lansing State Journal*, 13 March 1999, 4A.

[7] Barbara Findlen, ed., *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1995), xv-xvi.

[8] Victoria Robinson, "Introducing Women's Studies," in *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*, eds. Victoria Robinson and Diane Richardson (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 2. Robinson also says that challenging the notion of objectivity in a patriarchal

environment—in other words, "challenging an androcentric/phallocentric notion of knowledge which can be defined as men's experiences and priorities being seen as central and representative of all"—continues to be a central tenet of feminist theory. Only the placement of women in the center of the analysis, she says, will recognize their experiences as valuable.

[9] Jackie Stacey, "Feminist theory: Capital F, Capital T," in *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*, eds. Victoria Robinson and Diane Richardson (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 54.

[10] For an assessment of the former, see Barbara Findlen's introduction to *Listen Up*, cited above. For the latter viewpoint, see Rebecca Walker, *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), or Deborah L .Siegel, "Reading Between the Waves: Feminist Historiography in a 'Postfeminist' Moment," in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, eds. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 55-82.

[11] Margaret Meade, "From Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies," in *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, eds. Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski (Mountain View, California: Mayfield, 2000), 130.

[12] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 267.

[13] Ibid, xv.

[14] Sheila Tobias, *Faces of Feminism: An Activist's Reflections on the Women's Movement* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 1, 64.

[15] Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New York: Yale University Press, 1994): 26.

[16] Mary Hawkesworth, "Confounding Gender," *Signs* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 650, 659.

[17] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "My Statue, My Self: Autobiographical Writings of Afro-American Women," in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (New York: Meridian Book, 1990), 179

[18] "Women of Steel Give Top Brass a Hard Time," *Life*, 13 March 1950, 46-47.

[19] At the start of 1950, a count of the names listed in the masthead indicates that no women are among the twelve members of the board of directors or staff writers. There is one woman among thirty-eight photographers, and there are two among twenty-two assistant editors. All three members of the research staff are women, although the director of that staff is a man. Of the forty-seven reporters, thirty-seven are women. The copy chief is a woman; so are all four copyreaders, the chief of the picture bureau, all twelve picture bureau staffers, and two of the ten members of the layout staff. Among the news service staff, two of thirty-two in the domestic bureau are women, as are two of twenty-seven on the foreign desk. As 1955 opens, men still are listed as editor-in-chief and president. Of thirteen assistant editors or managers, one can be assumed to be female, although the name listed—Marian MacPhail, chief of research—could be male as well. There were no women among the eight staff writers, two among the thirty-three photographers; both film editors were women, as were two of twelve associate editors, nine of twenty-seven assistant editors, and thirty-three of forty-nine reporters. All seven copyreaders were women; one in twelve on the layout desk; all six members of the picture bureau; neither of those in the photo lab; all three in the picture library. Two of the four U.S. and Canadian News Service staffers were women, as were five of thirty-eight in the U.S. and Canadian bureaus; five of thirty-two in the foreign bureaus. The advertising director was a man. By 1959, with Henry Luce and Rob Larson still at the helm, Edward K. Thompson was serving as managing editor, and all three assistant managing editors were men. Of the other five managers, one, MacPhail, was female. All seven senior editors were men, as were all eight staff writers. The photographic staff listed thirty-six men, one woman. Both assistant picture editors were men; all three film editors were women. Of the thirteen associate editors, three were women; of twenty-nine assistant editors, ten were women. Women were forty-three of the sixty-three reporters, all seven copy readers, two of twelve members of the layout desk, and made up the entire picture bureau. Two men staffed the photo lab; three women, the picture library. On the U.S. and Canadian News Service, five of forty-six staffers were women; on the foreign news service, five of thirty-four. The publisher, general manager, and advertising director all were men.

[20] Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as is Nature to Culture?" in *Feminist Theory, a Reader*, eds. Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski, (Mountain View, California: Mayfield, 2000) 240.

[21] Sey Chassler, *Ms.*, August 1984, 51, 100. Chassler also gets at the notion of men being the one, woman the other, on p. 52. As he decides one night to do the dishes, he notes: "At the sink, I began to think about male arrogance. Why did I have the choice of doing or not doing the dishes while my wife did not?

By the same token, why had she had to wait until our children were in school to exercise her 'free' choice of working at her career? Our jobs were equally pressured and difficult (hers more harrowing than mine) and yet, if I chose to sit and read after dinner, I could. She could not, unless I decided she could by *offering* to do the dishes. My definition of freedom was based on a white male conception: the notion that because I am free, because I can make choices, anyone can make choices. I was defining 'anyone' in my terms, in masculine terms. I am anyone, unqualified. She is anyone, gender female." It's easy to see how aspects of power, constructed gender roles, and "othering" are intertwined.

[22] Ibid., 99.

[23] Kenneth Allan and Scott Coltrane, "Gender Display in Television Commercials: A Comparative Study of Television Commercials in the 1950s and 1980s, *Sex Roles* 35, nos. 3-5 (1996): 187.

[24] Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 5, 9.

[25] Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1994), 51. McQuail further says that the messages sent and received are "usually latent and ambiguous, depending on associations and symbols which are not chosen by the participants but made available in the culture." Sometimes, he says, it's difficult to separate the medium from the message.

[26] Gaye Tuchman, "Women's Depiction by the Mass Media," *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 540.

[27] Ibid., 533.

[28] "Dumb Blond in Hollywood: Judy Holliday in *Adam's Rib,* " *Life*, 13 February 1950, 77. The article drew a letter pointing out the oddity a few weeks later from Justin Meyer of Cincinnati, Ohio. *Life*'s response: "As *Life* says, she's a dumb blonde." (*Life*, 6 March 1950, 12.

[29] Ernest G. Borman, "An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic Convergence Theory: The Cold War Paradigm Case," *Communication Monographs* 63, no. 1 (1996): 12. Borman explains that any rhetorical vision, including that of the Cold War, moves through three streams of communication: consciousness creating, which involves the sharing of fantasies to generate new symbolic ground for a community of people; consciousness raising, which he defines as proselytizing to recruit others into the vision; and consciousness sustaining, which, of course, maintains the rhetorical vision. The third phase would characterize the decade of the 1950s, with the decade's emphasis on the looming forces of Communism and conspiracy.

[30] Fiske, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, 291-293. Fiske discusses the concept in terms of Stuart Hall's work on encoding and decoding television images, detailed later in this chapter in the section on cultural frameworks. Such negotiations between the reader and the text are indeed influenced by gender, he says, since—as was articulated by Chassler, de Beauvoir, and others—"Maleness is a fact of nature, but masculinity is a cultural constraint that gives meaning to maleness by opposing it to femininity."

[31] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 228.

[32] Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, "Smoke and Mirrors: Gender Representation in North American Tobacco and Alcohol Advertisements Before 1950," *Social History* 31, no. 62 (1998): 183, 184.

[33] Carolyn Kitch classified research on women's images in the media in four categories: the stereotypes approach, which assumes that women are part of a larger American story that has more to do with national values than with actual descriptions of women; the search for alternative images, which proposes that women are intentionally constructed by societal leaders to perpetuate the order system of the nation; an approach that assumes a patterned form of patriarchy that reinforces sexist ideology; and finally, and most currently, frameworks that assume that the texts contain multiple meanings depending on who is reading them and on historically specific discourses that increase the likelihood of multiple readings. While it's clear that aspects of the first three types of research all are being discussed in this analysis, the fourth is most applicable here; others, for example, would have concluded that "by offering contradictory images of women's place in the work world, the American advertising industry functioned as a propaganda tool of a government committed to maintain women's economic dependence." While societal forces indeed play a part in the way women's work lives are depicted in advertisements, it could hardly be in the advertisers' best interests to make women believe they were economically dependent on men.

[34] *Life*, 26 September 1955, 74-75. The headline reads: "There's a new yardstick for the best girls on the job." The copy block poses the question: "How does she do it on her weekly paycheck?" While we don't know if the women are executives or clerical workers, they all carry themselves as top professionals. One could surmise that success follows the well-dressed, and that any working woman, on any salary, can dress well with wool.

[35] Bogardus, "The Reorientation of Paradise," 509.

[36] For representative ads in the series, see *Life*, 2 March 1959, 112; and 30 March 1959, 33.

[37] Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, introduction to *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), xvi-xvii.

[38] May, *Homeward Bound*, 208.

[39] Fiske, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, 284-285.

[40] Kristina Zarlengo, "Civilian Threat, the Suburban Citadel, and Atomic Age American Women," *Signs* 24, no. 4 (1999): 945. Zarlengo notes that the depiction of the powerful housewife also helped offset "two other atomic age ideals of women: the peaceful, antiwar mother and the bombshell." One's power was maternal; the other's, raw and disruptive. Yet both were defined in reference to atomic power.

[41] Fraser and Gerstle, xvii.

[42] Tobias, *Faces of Feminism*, 42-57.

[43] Eleanor Graves, "Propaganda 'Goof' over U.S. Fashions," *Life*, 27 July 1959, 71-75.

[44] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 183.

[45] Kovacevich, personal interview.

[46] Fishman, personal interview.

[47] Nugent, personal interview.

[48] Kovacevich, personal interview.

[49] Tobias, *Faces of Feminism*, 42.

[50] Beatrice Sacks, personal interview.

[51] Nugent, personal interview.

[52] Evans, personal interview.

CHAPTER 5

VOICES HEARD

The ten women whose stories are told here come from diverse backgrounds and mindsets. They were interviewed because they played a variety of roles during the 1950s: Employee, advocate, caretaker, parent, spouse, and sometimes more. Three are from a sparsely populated area in Michigan's western Upper Peninsula, which in the 1950s included mining- and timber-related industries as among the major employers. Three are from Lansing, Michigan's capital, which included a mix of politically related and industrial related employment opportunities; four, from Detroit, which was then and is now the state's largest city and which was rapidly growing around the booming auto industry.

As is obvious in the text of the interviews, family background was extremely important for most of the women, and they discussed it in detail during the interviews; they believe that the stories of their parents had an impact on what they accomplished and who they became. Two were the children of Croatian immigrants, and it's particularly interesting to compare their experiences and attitudes toward Communism.

In all, their stories—told here in their words—add much to our knowledge of women's lives in the 1950s, and are reminders that history that has focused thus far on either women who were happily homebound, or women who were unhappily homebound, remains incomplete. Collectively, these women's stories illustrate the likelihood of the invisible culture of working women described previously. One can see that their work provided them in varying degrees with a social identity that helped them

define their places in society, and that the meanings that they assigned to the work that they did helped them define themselves.

Jane Kay Nugent, Vice President (Retired)

Detroit Edison Company, Detroit, Michigan

> Jane Kay Nugent's father was a lawyer; her mother was a former legal secretary who returned to work when Jane was twelve, after her father passed away. An only child, she was born in Detroit in 1925, educated in Catholic schools, graduated from St. Ambrose in Grosse Pointe Park and earned college degrees at University of Detroit, Wayne State University and the University of Michigan as she worked her way up the ranks of Detroit Edison, a public utility company that served the booming industrial city. She started with the company in 1943, sorting checks in the accounting department, and retired as vice president of administration in 1990. She was the kind of career-oriented woman that *Life's* advertisers used to raise eyebrows early in the 1950s, and exemplifies the growing market of professional women targeted by those advertisers late in the decade.

Mother had worked as a legal secretary before she was married; when my father died, her former firm asked her to come back. She did; she was secretary to the head of the firm and then became what today would be called a paralegal. So during my teenage years I had a working mother who was a role model and a single parent. I saw that, hey, a woman can do well on the job.

In high school I took both college prep and business courses. So I decided I wanted to pursue business in college. I went to the Catholic schools; the nuns, the one I took shorthand from was convinced that I would be a great secretary. I wasn't a bad kid, you know, but I was the only one that they didn't have over in the corner talking about going into the convent. I was the only one in my class who didn't talk about getting married, having kids, settling down.

My mother and I had a little clash over where I would go to college. She wanted me to go to Marygrove, the Catholic school. I wanted to go to University of Detroit. She said, "If you go to UD, you're on your own." So I got a summer job at Detroit Edison. It was 1943.

That summer I'm on this clerical job in the auditing department, where I'm sorting eight hundred paychecks. There were four of us doing it and I said, "This is not my life" I was going to quit, but they were so desperate for help then—this was the mid-40s, you know—that they said, "Do you want to work part time?" I thought: "This is a good deal; I'll make money and I'll show Mom."

Oh, I wanted to be an accountant. There were a lot of opportunities for women in professional accounting firms because the guys were off to war. One of my sorority sisters, she was a CPA, she kind of took me under her wing. She started taking me to these women's accounting association meetings. It was the pits; I looked at these old girls, and I decided, 'Hey, maybe this isn't for me.' I just didn't think I wanted to be one of these people sitting on the stool with the green eyeshades. That, and the fact that now some of the guys were coming home the jobs were going back to them.

I wanted a different kind of job. Don't get me wrong; the paycheck was important. If they said sitting on a stool with a green eyeshade made more money .... I might have gone for it. But I went into the dean of the business school and said I want to change my major. Also, I had looked to see where women at Detroit Edison made the most money. It was in what now would be called human resources, in the employment department. They had a women's division that hired women—interviewed them,

followed up on them, separate from the men. The only jobs for women were there and in the services department...in the accounting department they were high-level clerks, not in professional jobs.

So I went in and said, "I'd like to change...to industrial management." I had checked the requirements; I knew I had the courses. He said, "You can't do that." I said, "Why not?" Finally, he said, "Well, no woman has ever majored in industrial management." Now, this was 1947. I said, "I'd like to if you'll let me. Who can I talk to?" Well, he let me.

I transferred to employment in Detroit Edison. This was a cool job; was I ever lucky. But were they ever lucky! I had had a lot of experience in the auditing department. And as it turned out, I had flunked the typing test; it didn't matter if I couldn't take shorthand.

For men and women, the employment was separate. The men were divided between the trades and operating areas and the college and professional areas; we handled the college women, few as there were. Detroit Edison did not hire married women. They hadn't for years until the war; then they had to. But when the guys came back, the women left. And when you got married, you had to leave; they hired you single but when you were married you were out of there. By the mid 1950s, if you got married, they allowed you to stay on until the third or fourth month of pregnancy. The policy went way back to the Depression; no two incomes in one family. So that went on for years afterward.

In this area we did employee counseling. Wayne State had a personnel psychology major; I said, "Can I have a leave to get my master's degree?" They said,

"How about part time?" Most of my classes were late afternoon. Here, there were very few women. And it was in the business school. I was living at home with mom; she retired at age fifty, said she had been working long enough. I thought, later on when I'm sixty and still working, I thought, "Boy, Mom, you had the right idea."

I got that degree. I got promotions, in small increments. This was one prime job at Detroit Edison; we women in this area were looked upon as queens. The pay was good; it was comparable to the male interviewers on the next side. We also helped the male executives—and they were all men—hire their secretaries. They were beholden to us for that.

I could tell they were very pleased with my work. The head of the department, one day I had occasion to talk to him. I said, "I'd like to move on; I don't know if there's any opportunity." He said, "We think highly of you, but we couldn't put you higher than Ken." After all, you know, Ken's a man.

During this time in the 1950s I was very active in women's organizations. There was a personnel women's group in Detroit; I was president of the local and even became president of the international association of personnel women. Just a job alone has never been enough to take care of my time and needs; after a few years you've got the job down, and you need something more.

I was active in my sorority, Phi Gamma Nu, and eventually became president of the national. During this time I'm very busy with women's associations, the women's economic club...and I saw that University of Michigan had an MBA program. The night school was in Detroit at that time. I got into that. Now, there's just the beginning of more opportunities for women than I'm seeing here. I got my degree from U-M in 1963, and

meanwhile, this biddy that I worked for, at the company's request, retired early. They decided I could have the job; it was called personnel coordinator for women. We are still, in the early 1960s, very separated.

I was in a business writing class at the UM. Best class I ever took. Have you ever heard of Mary Bromage? I went in there thinking, "What a snap course this will be," and then there was Mary Bromage...it was fantastic. Subsequently I got her in at the company to put on a course for the people who were reporting to me. My final report I wrote on a case for hiring married women. It was a damn good report; if we didn't hire women, we were soon going to be in a tough spot because good help was hard to get then. Well, I sent it up and it came back with a note on it that said, "You're right; but we're not going to do it." It was too ingrained. Finally, when the civil rights act was in the brewing, they said, "Yep, we're going to have to do it."

When the civil rights act came along—and trust me, without that we'd still have a men's division and a women's division; all that stuff about "I got it because I'm good," honey, forget it—then the first step was to combine the men's division and the women's division, at the non-professional level. Then combine it at the professional level. So I got to be head of the employment of the non-college graduate division and oh, what a stir that caused. The man who had been the head of that, they pushed off to another job somewhere. So I saw this as a sign that they thought I was halfway promising. There were only a half dozen college women grads in the company; I didn't have any competition. The stir was, "A woman was going to head a division that hires linemen? In the power plants?" There were men now who reported to me. Those poor guys had to report to a woman? Some of them were older than I was? All of them, I think.

They picked one of the fellows and me to go all around the company explaining the civil rights act to all of the supervisors in all of the company. The meetings, I wish I had recorded some of that stuff. "You mean, we'll have to let the women join our clubs?" They had something called a business club and it was men's only; they'd have a dinner and a speaker, nothing earth-shattering, and they could bring their wives, but the women employees could not attend. Then they had a sail club; that would be the end of the world, if women were in. One man said to me, "My wife won't let me go if there are women there." Whether I was ahead of my time, well, it was very difficult to be discreet. But you had to be. My boss at the time was the vice president of corporate relations and he went to the board of the boat club. I said, "If you don't come out with women being able to join I'm out of here." Well, they had no choice; eventually we had two or three women commodores. I don't know of any women who left their husbands because of that. It went very well. The transition was smooth.

The men weren't all that eager to become chummy with me. My friends at the company were largely secretaries of the top people. This was very valuable. They saw me coming; they saw what I was trying to do for women and were not reluctant to help in any way they could.

So I went from being head of the employment division to being the director, and in the 1970s became manager; then I became vice president of what today would be human resources. For all intents and purposes, I was the first woman vice president they ever had. Back in the 1930s, Sarah Sheridan, she was a marketing and salesperson and she became a VP but the company was much different then.

I too thought, "This is nice. I'll probably stay here until retire." But lo and behold, one of our chairmen said, "You know, that's seen as a traditional role for women," although it included union relations and some tough stuff. So I became vice president of administration: overseeing purchasing, stores and transportation, computer operation, real estate, security; that's what I retired as in 1990. And then I got married.

I have a feeling had I not been single, this would not have happened. It would be like you're not devoting yourself to the job.

These secretaries, many of them, were more competent than the boss. They literally ran the operation. In personnel if you had gray or white wavy hair and you were tall, that was a requirement for the job, I think.

Again, in the 1950s if you look at the times...everyone wanted to have this nice idyllic family life, just like the television show; Donna Reed, you know. I was talking to a friend of mine, my vintage, the other day, and we both said we never had that desire. I never saw that as a wonderful thing. Maybe because my dad died at an early age, it was no big deal to me to have a husband and kids. It wasn't something I was after. I went with a guy for about four years and as it turned out, that's what he wanted. He realized I wasn't it.

With my mother, it was, "You're your own woman, honey. If that's what you want, be my guest." And of course I was with all these unmarried women at Detroit Edison. If you wanted to keep your job, better not think about that.

I knew a lot of women who got married, and I don't think any one of them ever married their level. As it turned out, none of them have been notable successes. So it never really came up. I'd see some of them with up to eight kids and I'd say, "Boy was I

smart." But I was always busy. Even now, I can think, "You know, you can have a few minutes when you're not busy. It's not a sin. You're not going to hell."

Just having that job wasn't enough. I taught night school at University of Detroit. I did these management seminars for women; used vacation time, which was very generous at the company. I hit it at the right time; there were horror stories that these women in the session would tell. There were a few where they'd say, "My boss never tells me how I'm doing." I said, "You tell them you went to this seminar, and that everyone should be rated every year, and that you're in there asking them to do this."

The Cold War, for us, was not that much of a factor. The kind of counseling we had then was very naïve. We'd get requests like, "Would you talk to so and so about body odor? And don't tell her we told you to." It was very simplistic, very basic; we hardly ever had any scandalous stuff. I remember once when a man was going with his secretary and that was the biggest scandal. Of course she got fired; but he kept his job.

It was coming off the war. That was trauma. Were we concerned with the atomic bomb; I think we all thought, "The big war is over; that was it; it was the end and all and we came through that relatively unscathed. Now we can be home free and have this nice existence"...not realizing the challenges that were coming.

At Detroit Edison, the electric utility was as conservative and protected as a bank. We were going to write a book about all the things the men would say to us and what our answers were. Like when they asked why wasn't a nice girl like you married? And the one time I answered, "I guess I'm just fussier than your wife must have been." Or, "What makes you think I'm a nice girl?" At that time every nice girl was married. If you

weren't, it wasn't because it was your choice; it's nobody wanted you. It's a given that you wanted to get married.

Bob and I went together for twenty-nine years before we were married. It was a given; he was very interested in his career. I was very interested in my career. His father died six years before, my mother died eight years before; neither of them were a financial obligation for us. They got along real well; they probably were saying, "Well, they'll be getting married any time now."

I was in my childbearing years at the time we were dating; I didn't want to give up that struggle [for my job.] He didn't care. Then everyone said, well, when the last mother dies they'll go from the cemetery to the wedding chapel. But it was eight years later. We were still going along perfectly well. When I retired I said, you know, I'd kind of like to move. I was looking around for a house; I wanted something bigger than I had because I was going to be there all day long. I wanted this street [Country Club Drive]. I fell in love with the house the minute I walked in; I'm saying this and that to the realtor she said, "Well you and your husband..." I said, "He's not my husband." But somehow we both made the deal. Then one day we said when we were driving out to dinner, he said, "I suppose that now we bought a house we have to get married." I said, "I suppose we do." The next day I had the ring.

I don't think it was I sat down and said, "I don't think I'm going to get married." It was, "This is what I want to do now." And I didn't factor marriage into it. I suppose I might have changed my mind if I had been swept off my feet, but I wasn't easily swept...but if that had happened, I don't know. Would I have throw in all in, started over? I don't know.

I think even my own mother wondered about what I was doing. You know, "So you've got a college degree, why are you going on to two more?" We had bought a flat and we were renting it; it was a great source of income, but it was a lot of work, always something that needed to be fixed. One day my mother said, "Instead of all those degrees, why don't you take a plumbing course?" I think she was thinking in more practical terms. But, she would never tell me this...I think she was kind of proud to see the money coming in.

I have always been money oriented. A lot of this was not prestige; it was the money. It was a big thing. I didn't want some big honorary job without the money. I could tell some people, they were thinking, along the way, "What is she doing? Why is she doing this?" It sounds a little bit conceited, but there was always the recognition that, "Well she does seem to have ability."

I have no regrets. None. Because I firmly believe that you do your best with what you've got. Someone asked me the question what would you like to have put on your tombstone? And I said, besides my name, of course, "She did the best with what she had." At any point in life, in time, you assess what you can do and what you can't do. There might have been times when I would have loved to do other things, but because of circumstances beyond my control, I couldn't do them. But if you said "What would you like now that you haven't got?" I'd like children like some of my friends; but not all. With my luck, I'd probably get the rotters. If there was anything we both have missed, it would be having that. And then grandchildren like some of my friends' grandchildren. But not many.

You take the good with the bad. Would the tradeoffs have been worth it? I don't know. You do the best you can with the circumstance you have at the time. And they you say: "Here you is baby. And there ain't nothing you can do with it."

Beatrice Sachs

Detroit, Michigan, now of Huntington Woods

Beatrice Sachs, or Bea as she is known, was born in 1919 in Brooklyn, New York, and came to Detroit in 1946 with her husband, Abe, after World War II. He had served five years in the Army signal corps, and she still treasures the notice he received of the cease-fire. They were married in 1942, shortly after he entered the service. Their son Andy was born in 1947; daughter Laura, in 1950. Her father, Alexander, who sold real estate and was president of his Temple, died when she was seven. Her mother Mary became a licensed practical nurse; her sister Pearl, nine years her senior, worked for an armored car company. Both her parents were born in Russia. She graduated from Erasmus High School in New York in 1937 and began working as a secretary, attending college at night until she became involved in the war effort. Typical of the women Life portrayed in its editorial columns, she set aside her work career during the 1950s; in contrast to Life's women, however, she became immersed in politics, which led her quickly into paid work again as the decade ended.

I came to Michigan with my husband after World War II; he also was a New Yorker. During World War II the soldiers and the military people were entitled to their jobs back. But when he came back—he had traveled to Chicago and westward for this firm, he sold men's apparel, but that job already had been taken by somebody who was very successful—his boss said, "Well, you can have Michigan and Ohio."

[My family] had lived in a little town, Boro Park, in Brooklyn. It was just about as big as Huntington Woods. Everyone knew each other. My father was a religious man who did not believe in getting his picture taken; to this day I have not one picture of him.

So we came out here. Didn't know a soul. Not a soul. Nobody. We had no place to live; we couldn't buy a car. So we lived in one room in somebody's house, near Dexter and Richmond. I was twenty-seven, and here we move out here, don't know a soul, have to eat three meals a day out because all we had was a bedroom . . . and he traveled. I was on my own a lot.

We moved from that room to a unit in the Seward Hotel. A one-room apartment. We were on our own a lot; we knew nobody. He made friends with the people he called on. He sold merchandise that had the store label, like Saks Fifth Ave. So he sold to the better stores, therefore we met wealthy people, and we didn't have a nickel to our name. But they were wonderful to us; they really were.

I became a Girl Scout leader. I went down to Temple Bethel on the street car and asked where they needed some help, and they needed a Girl Scout leader, so I became a girl scout leader.

Al and I married after he entered the service. I dated his best friend. I worked in an office with this guy who was just about the most handsome guy I ever laid eyes on. My husband, his territory was Chicago, so he wasn't living in Brooklyn at the time. My friend said, "Bea, my friend Abe is coming into town; can he join us tonight on our date?" I said, "Well, does he have a date?" He said, "No." I said, "Then why would we want him along on ours?" He said, "He has a car." So I said, "Sure." And that was it. We went back to my house and my sister and mother—especially my sister, her opinion was important to me—said, "I like that fellow Abe. He's solid." Shortly after that he was drafted and went to Fort Benning. He began to write me. My mother called it a paper romance...

My sister was older than me, and she had friends in the 1950s who were labeled Communists in New York. They were school teachers, and they lost their jobs. I experienced none of this myself. Having been transplanted here, I soon became pregnant and I didn't even understand what labor pains were. I was a totally naïve kid. My neighbors, they were wonderful; they all were stay-at-home moms. They were all Detroiters. But the friends we made were through my husband's business, and those became my dearest friends—my family.

I was a big baseball fan because I was from Brooklyn—a Dodger fan. I couldn't believe people here didn't sit outside with the radio on listening to the baseball game. They were very different from me; just stay at home folks.

We went from this just-a-bedroom place to the Seward Hotel to a tiny a little house on Indiana in Detroit. Then we moved to Huntington Woods, where I still live, in 1952. When I lived in Detroit, I was learning to be a mom. But it was when I moved to Huntington Woods that my life opened up.

My neighbor and I—my neighbor is Lila Johnson, probably the single person most responsible for Oakland Community College. At that time it was a dream, a thought, to have OCC. It was on the ballot; the board was elected, but the millage to support the college did not pass. She did it a second time and then the millage passed. She and I talked one day. I live in the Berkeley School District, and we read in the paper that there was going to be a millage election. I didn't know what that meant coming from New York. And a school board election. I didn't know what that meant. My children were getting ready to go to school. So we found out as much as we could about the election. It turned out that there were two Catholics running for school board, and there

were two Catholics currently on the school board [whose children went to Catholic schools]. So on the board would have been a majority whose children did not go to the public schools and did not support the millage.

You know, I didn't know about schools, Catholics, Protestants. I thought they were all just Christians, you know, I didn't know anything. But I learned quickly. Lila and I talked and kept reading the newspaper articles, and we decided that we should do something about it, just the two of us.

We contacted these two men—one of them was the PR director of the Detroit Public Schools, and the other was the curriculum director of the Detroit Public Schools. So they at least knew about school matters. One of them taught us how to write a poll, so we wrote a poll and circulated it through the Huntington Woods and Berkeley areas.

We took a poll, we worked very hard, we formed an organization called the Berkeley Council for Better Schools. I was its chair; meetings were in my living room. We were successful. We defeated the two candidates, reelected the incumbents. My daughter Laura still remembers the campaign slogan: "Hurry hurry, do not tarry, re-elect Leone and Perry." It was Wanda Perry and Leonard Leone.

It was my total life. We were moms who stayed at home but we did this, and the kids licked stamps and licked envelopes. Laura says now, "Mom, that's all you did." The reason we were so successful, and this we learned, was that on every square block we had a neighborhood representative. We found out who were the yes voters and made a list. It was very sophisticated then; we know that now. We had challengers at the polls, and we took this list, and as somebody came in that was on our list we crossed that name off... at 4 o'clock, we went home and called everyone on our list who had not voted.

These two men, they helped us. One day I got a call form this tiny little voice and it was Vicki Levin, [future state Senator Sander] Levin's wife. She said, "Can I come to one of your meetings?" I said sure, and she started coming to our meetings and then she would go home and tell her husband about what we were doing.

My husband still traveled; Monday through Friday, I raised the kids myself practically. But he was very proud, very supportive. When we heard the election results, he said, "Great, now I can get clean underwear." That was his statement to the press. But what we had was a wonderful collection of people who were interested in education. We made wonderful friends.

I really and truly did not know that there was this dissention between Protestants and Catholics. Lila and I were thinking, we need to get a very prominent Catholic to come and speak to this group and to say, "We need public education." Who do we decide to call, from my home? Senator John Kennedy. We wanted him to come before the election and [his staff] said, no, he couldn't come in the spring, but he can come in the fall. We thought it would be better to have him in the fall than not at all; after all, there would be another election in four years. We were very excited about this. Lila was a Protestant, and the next time we had a meeting, this one woman who was a Protestant said, "You bring in that Catholic and I am leaving this board." And she had a following. I said, "Well, what's wrong?" She said, "You'll have the Pope running the schools." You know what? We dropped it. We did not bring him in. And he went on to be president! But we did the right thing by dropping it. It would have broken apart the whole community, the organization.

My daughter tells me now, "Mom, you were the organizer and you were the leader. Do you realize what people think of you because of all that you did?" I never liked to talk about myself. It wasn't just me.

I continued with this throughout the Fifties. Better schools...we didn't let up on this. Then I get a call from this guy named Sander Levin. I had just read in the paper—the Daily Tribune was our bible—that he was thinking of running for state senate. Called me at home. Said "Hi, this is Sandy Levin." I said, "Oh, I was reading something about you in the paper." "Yes," he said, "that's why I'm calling you...I wondered if you could be my campaign manager if I run." I had just learned about school; didn't know anything about politics. I said, "I don't know anything about politics and you know Sandy, I am from New York." He said, "I know how you handled that school campaign. The principles and the concepts are the same. It's not very different and you can do it." That's what he does, you know, and everyone rises to the occasion. And so I became his campaign manager in 1963.

The 1950s were a time of great change but I'm not sure that I even realized that. It was a slow transition, going from living in one room, eating three meals a day out, to learning how to sew and cook and garden, and then getting involved in the larger world. My world was very small when I moved here. And then it became larger and larger. Then I learned about the educational world, and then the political world.

He was in the state senate for a two-year term, then it was a four-year term. In the meantime, Deb, my dear friend Lila Johnson, and another friend talked to me about going to college.

I had about a half a semester of credit from Brooklyn College. I had gone at night, worked during the day. Abe was overseas. I married him, and traveled with him for more than a year. We started in Arkansas, I got on the train, all the soldiers...I still remember that. I was always on my own, really, ever since I was seven. Anyhow, we went to Arkansas and lived on the base; I still remember going to the market to get some sour cream. I asked for sour cream and the fellow said, "Lady, when our cream turns sour we throw it out." That was Arkansas. And there I got my first real hit of segregation. I was talking to a woman on the base about the schools...the woman, she said, "When the teachers meet, the black teachers sit on one side of the room and the whites on the other." This was in the 1940s, you know. I said, "We have somebody who comes to our house in Brooklyn to help once a month and we all eat lunch together." She could not believe that. Then we went to Louisville, Kentucky; to Tennessee, till Abe went overseas. My mother and my sister lived together in Brooklyn and I went back. Worked as a secretary and went to college.

Then I signed up to work for the Red Cross. I did several things. I had a position at the Metropolitan Opera House to solicit blood donors during intermission; we would go around and as people if they would be blood donors. Then they said they needed people to ride on the ambulance; we had to go down to the docks and the Queen Mary—it was made into a hospital ship—the Queen Mary would come back with those who were so severely injured that they could not be repaired and sent out again. We would have four soldiers in the ambulance and I would ask them if they wanted ice cream or a doughnut or milk...And I had to feed them.

At that time, I had been working in an office where there were four of us and I had two bosses and there was a woman who was over me. She had a brother who was missing in action, a colonel. My boss, his son was in Patton's army for about two weeks and the doorbell rang and there was telegram that Freddy was killed and Mr. B, he died a week later. This was just in my office. That world then was just a military world, especially if you lived in New York.

When he came out of the Army, [my husband] was very confused; the boss tells him you can't have Chicago, you can have Michigan and Ohio. I knew he loved his work. He said, "Maybe I can sell something else." I knew that he loved the men's business. I said, "Let's go." No regrets. None.

So we move out here, I'm raising kids, trying to make a life out here, and this Lila Johnson and another friend...the year was 1963, we were out in the back yard. They were college graduates. They said, "Bea, why don't you go back to school?" I said, "I don't think I am smart enough to go back. What do I have to do?" They said that first I had to get my credentials from Brooklyn College. When I got them, I saw that I got an 'A' in trigonometry and I said to myself, "You know Bea, you're not that dumb." So I was back at school, and running his campaign ... I attended Wayne State and earned a combined degree in education and poli sci. Began teaching in 1967 at Southfield High.

That was the best thing in my whole life. I would go back there in a second. I taught for fifteen years. I was forty-three when I went back. A friend of ours was visiting and I was really thrilled. I said to this person, "I'm so excited about going back, a little bit nervous." She said, "I have two sons at Wayne now and they hate people like you; they keep telling me that these older women who are coming back to school, they do their

work and they're smart and they raise the curve." Well, that first term I had English and sociology and in the English class I never opened my mouth. One day the professor was handing back the papers and I had gotten an 'A' on this paper and she said, "I would like to see you at the end of class." She told me that she didn't quite understand how I had done so well on this paper when I never said a word in class; she said, "Part of your grade is class participation." I told her the story and explained I didn't want everyone to hate me. Then I told her, maybe I won't be the first one to raise my hand, but I will speak up.

Teaching...I loved it. I just loved it. What I loved about teaching was the relationship between me and the kids. I could look at them and they could look at me and there was just something there. I could throw away my lesson plan and talk about what happened last night. The kids would say, "Can we have a free day?" I'd say, "You never have a free day. What do you want to talk about?"

I taught government, American history, sociology. I wrote and developed a class called minority groups. That was pretty far out at the time. I started out with black and Asians—then we called them Orientals—and Jews. The next year I added women. It was a wonderful curriculum; it went throughout the state. I was teaching the kids the concepts of discrimination and prejudice and all kinds of theories.

I was a rebel. I had a principal who was a John Bircher. When he hired me, my transcripts hadn't caught up; I don't think he'd have hired me if he saw I was a Democrat. He had a spy in my class, a little girl whose mother was a bus driver; she would go back and tell her mother things I had said in class. And he reprimanded me.

I filed a grievance against him. And I won. It was the first time anyone had filed a grievance against him for ethical conduct and I won. The superintendent stood behind me.

How did my world change? I went back to college. And I worked for Sandy. I learned. I just learned. All new doors were opened to me.

I knew a lot about life. I knew a lot about surviving, because we were poor. I had a husband who just encouraged me all along, even though he himself is not college educated. He was the kind of guy who didn't feel like, that woman had to be home, she's my wife and she's got to be home. He was proud of what I did. But I also ran a decent home.

I learned that I could organize and I could lead. I don't think that I was aware of it overtly. I didn't say to myself, "You're some organizer," but it seeped into me that in my living room, we were meeting and we even persuaded one man from the other side to come. I learned so much. I learned how a little person could make a difference. I learned how a person like me could gather all these people together. I mean, I'm from Brooklyn. I'm from hunger. They had all gone to college. It was just delicious. It was just so good. And then the success of it...it was like an adrenaline shot all the time. Every day we had something, and I was in the company of all these people. And I was so far removed from Brooklyn. It was just another world. I was in another world.

Eva Evans, Deputy Superintendent (Retired)

Lansing Public Schools, Lansing, Michigan

Formerly of Detroit

Evan Evans was born and raised in Detroit, where her mother was a teacher and her father worked for the post office. Her father was a World War II veteran who attended high school in Memphis, Tennessee. She graduated from Detroit Northern High in 1956, attended Eastern Michigan University and graduated with a teaching degree from Wayne State University. She retired as assistant superintendent of the Lansing Public Schools in 1995, after teaching, serving as a principal, and holding a variety of other positions in the district. She still works on occasion for the administration, when requested to by the Superintendent. She would have been marginalized in Life's editorial and advertising columns for several reasons: She was a career-oriented college student, both her parents were professionals, and she was black in a time when Life's families were almost solely white.

I was an only child. We owned a home; I can recall my folks were pleased about that. My folk came from the south; my great-uncle and aunts came to Detroit at the turn of the century. It was the beginning of the great migration, as it were. They came to Detroit and eventually moved to what became known as the eight-mile area, or Ferndale. My great-uncle was, almost until he died, on the city planning commission of Ferndale.

Those two great uncles—they built their own homes. They built them themselves and they lived in those houses until all of their children were adults. I don't know how they did it, but they educated five children and sent them away to the colleges they themselves had attended. It's a small world; the college my mother attended was the college where Mrs. Kennedy's mother taught. I did not know that until many years later, but the college that my five cousins attended was the same college: Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee.

My family came routed through Louisiana to Mississippi to Tennessee, from what I know. My uncle and I always say we're going to do great research on the family. I have an uncle in Detroit who is a school psychologist and a practicing clinical psychologist. That branch of the family, who came to Detroit, one was my grandmother's sister and her husband, and the other was my grandmother's brother and his wife. They lived next door to each other in Ferndale and raised between them ten children. Then my parents moved to Detroit, following this migration from the turn of the century.

My mother had cancer. She had breast cancer and she had a mastectomy, and eventually she died of cancer, in her forties. My dad died of ureic poisoning. I was in college when my parents died. We were, as a family, all set to do things. Then my dad died. And my life was never the same after that.

I wanted to be the first prima ballerina, the first black prima ballerina of the Metropolitan Opera Company, or some great dance troupe. I had been studying since I was five or six years old. I had dancing lessons, baton lessons, piano lessons . . . I used to get cross because my Saturdays were spent that way, but now I'm very happy that my mother let me do those things. I went on to college, and even in college I continued to dance. Right now Detroit is having its three hundredth anniversary; I can remember dancing in Detroit's two hundred fiftieth anniversary celebration.

In Detroit at the time, in the 1950s and 1960s, there were two good show bars, maybe three. One was the Flame, and the other was the Frolic. They had great entertainment...Nat Cole, Diana Washington, people like that. This man named Ziggy Johnson, he trained the dancers for those show bars. But he also had a dance school, and both those dancing schools were in that big Detroit celebration. We also danced at the

University of Detroit out on Six Mile Road. I can still remember it...the white satin tuxedoes that we danced in. We had a walking cane, top hats, and white satin tuxedos. And for the one downtown, there was a whole ballet to "Rhapsody in Blue."

When I first graduated, I went to Eastern [Michigan University]. I took the dancing classes that they had, but I studied education. I was going to be an English teacher—which I became. Every time they had a show in the dormitory, I would dance in the show.

I knew that I was going to college. It was just which one. Not only for me, but for all of my friends. I grew up with the children of physicians, lawyers, school teachers like my mother. That was what you could be. If there were professional men and women in Detroit they were part of my social circle. Luckily. Luckily.

I went down to Detroit last year for the one hundredth birthday of a lady named Alice Burton. I grew up with her daughter Gail, who wound up a psychiatrist in Manhattan and now runs a substance abuse clinic. She lived in the lap of luxury, so to speak. She lived on Arden Park, which was, for black people, the place to be. This girl—Woody Herman played at her coming out party, so that you will give you an idea. I grew up with people whose parents were somebody, so we knew we were going to be somebody.

Among that mixture there was an interesting phenomenon, among African American people. It's a phenomenon of us, not the world at large; what the world had done to us, but it was us. Any limitations that you felt...well, they were very big into fair skin. They were very big into who your parents were. It was economic, in the main. In the United States, in those days, the number of African American people that had college

degrees and so forth, in the 1950s, from city to city to city to city, you knew each other. If you went to one of the historically black colleges or universities, they were in places like Nashville, Tennessee and Atlanta and Jacksonville, Florida, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Places like that—if you were in that circle, and you traveled all over the country, you knew somebody.

It's the same in black America. Those people whose families had gone to the historically black colleges or universities, the HBCUs, all of us are how many generations from slavery? If you were lucky, as I was and my folks were, and you were ambitious, as my folks were and their folks were, you came out.

I worked all my life for everything I had. But in Detroit there were "our kinds of people." The best kind was to be married to a physician and have fair skin.

Nobody ever said to me, you can't be this or that or the other. It never occurred to me I couldn't be this or that or the other. They never said when are you going to settle down and get married, but I kind of knew. My mother wanted me to be what she thought of as settled. Secure. I have been married, but now I take care of myself and do it beautifully.

I worked a different way than what my mother worked. I started as a teacher, but I didn't stop as a teacher. My competition was not other teachers. In my time, it was other men who were also trying to climb what was in education that corporate ladder. I had to hone my skills. Men wanted to be superintendents. And so did I.

At Eastern you were probably going to do your student teaching at Ypsilanti or Wayne or Bellevue; I wanted to work in the Detroit schools. So I transferred to Wayne and they accepted my credits, and Wayne State did and does have an excellent college of

education. While student teaching, you had to do elementary, middle, and senior high school. I still have the teaching and lesson plans from my first class downstairs. I kept them. At Wayne State, your lesson plans had to include a goal, an objective, a purpose for the lesson, what you were going to teach and how, what audio/video materials you were going to use and an evaluation to measure how much your students had learned from those lessons. I was so glad to have gone to Wayne State.

I started teaching at East Detroit High School, which was converted into Joyce School. Then I went to Franklin Elementary School. I moved to Lansing in 1965 to get married; married in December of 1964 and moved in January of 1965. I didn't get a job right away in Lansing. I did substitute teach. Lansing had a quota on how many African American teachers it would hire. Lansing, when I came here, was beginning its school desegregation plans. Dwight Rich Middle School had just opened as a middle school. That was a beginning. Secondary school busing preceded elementary school busing.

When I was a Detroiter, I was knee deep into civil rights things. I was a young adult member of the NAACP. I picketed and I marched and I demonstrated. I can recall that we took the nonviolent training to be a Freedom Rider. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee came to Detroit to teach us nonviolence. Among the most serious talks I ever had at home was whether or not I would be a Freedom Rider. My mother, she said, 'Let us do that, let us do that, let us do that.' We are the ones who took the nonviolent training from SNCC. At that time, a girl that was maybe seven or eight years older than I am, her name was Claudia House; she went to law school, and she went as one of those young attorneys to Mississippi. It was brewing in Detroit in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The first time I cast a vote was for President Kennedy. I saw him at the Sheraton Cadillac Hotel. My mother sent me down to get tickets to *A Raisin in the Sun;* it was playing downtown. I saw this crowd and I saw him...candidate Kennedy, at that time. I remember thinking, "Uh huh. I don't know who the other one is, but I'm going for *him.*" We found that we could forgive him his trespasses because his heart was so good.

I understood it when he talked about being the best and the brightest generation that the country could give. When I was the national president of Alpha Kappa Alpha that's what shaped my life: civil rights. I thought I knew what my goal in life was to be. I wanted my term at AKA to reflect that as well. We are the best and brightest African Americans the country, we are all here together. Everyone has a college education. Everyone has a good job. Now let's do something with that.

I recall in the late 1950s, sitting in the Mart Room at Wayne University—it was a room inside the student union where the students gathered. We'd gather there at lunch time and we'd talk politics. The fate of the nation. Getting into law school. Getting into med school. Passing physical chemistry...We were going to change the world. I remember us debating who was going to do what.

I had another great uncle who was a big-time Republican. Uncle Isador. One time I asked him, what is with this being a big-time Republican? For him it was the party of Lincoln. That explained my Uncle Robert and my Uncle Edward also. We were Democrats, though. I've never voted otherwise.

I was twenty-something when I came here. When I got to Lansing it was a very different city than it is now. There were only three schools that black people attended: West Junior, Michigan Avenue and Main Street School—and probably Kalamazoo Street

school, too. I subbed from February to April before I got a job. My husband Howard was an appraiser for the state of Michigan. He was up in Capac, Michigan, one day—he was a very good-looking guy, he had his tripod out and was nicely dressed and doing some work...this little kid came out of a house nearby and said. "Daddy, a colored man! You think he'll steal the chickens?"

There wasn't a universal belief, as there is now, that there was joy in diversity. Before, it was more, "Oh Lord, all these different people are coming to Lansing." Now it's, "Look what made America." It was every immigrant who stepped off the boat. Brought their own creativity. Wanting to do something with it. And look what we've become. Instead of us lamenting that we are getting black people, brown people, let's say instead, "What do they bring with them? What can they add? Do they have a different idea?" Now people have been able to more embrace the diversity, saying, "Maybe it can teach us something about how the world works."

I'm a fifties values person. In my household, in my life, when I was coming along as a child, we held certain values. Everybody stands on somebody's shoulders and moves on. You help the race move on. In our household we felt you had to be as good as you could be, because you had to be twice as good if you were going to get a chance.

The whole feminist movement was a puzzle for awhile for African American women. We finally got it after awhile; we didn't resent the movement. But we didn't resent the same things that white women resented. Our husbands weren't anywhere where we could be taking power from them. It was different. It was more detrimental in this country to be black than to be female.

It's left over from the Civil War, and also an improper production of history in this country. We've never been really taught our history. This country didn't grow up with *noblesse oblige*. Most of the noblemen, they're not the ones who originally populated this country. They were scuffling and ragtag and trying to make it.

I grew up among African American people who were accomplished. I had yet to hit the wall. When I hit the wall, I knew it, though. I grew up among African American people who expected us to succeed. The wall came when I went off to college. I knew then that for the first time I met different groups of people that you live with. I was one of the few African Americans in my dormitory. A friend of mine who went to the U of M knew even fewer, because U of M was bigger than Eastern. Then I began to know what it was that white people felt about black people. I don't think it was so much in my consciousness before that. Except once in high school, this girl who looked white but wasn't...in gym class, we swam, and she was always using my comb. The white girls were always saying to her, 'You shouldn't use her comb.' I didn't get it—then.

When I hit the wall, I think, was in college. I then began to feel what the differences were. And for the first time in my life, real racism. I had not known so much racism. I think was a metamorphic sort of thing. I knew it was out there; Detroit wasn't a bed of roses. But it wasn't anything I had run into, because I had been sheltered in the arms of black people.

I knew what it was like to be the only black person in class sometimes. It was strange. I never understood why people thought you were supposed to be less. It was always a puzzle to me. People would say, 'I didn't know you were an African American.' I didn't get that. And I'm sixty-five and I still don't get it. I was raised with the notion

that God passed out brains pretty equally to all people, because to be poor was not to be dumb, to be black was not to be dumb. I knew that to be a fact. And I was puzzled. I was raised with the notion that hey, you can do what you want to do. That's what shaped my life. That came out of the Mart Room. It came out of my home. It came out of my uncles and aunts and cousins. It came out of the *Negro Caravan*—it was a big book we had at home, and in that book was all of Langston Hughes, all of James Weldon Johnson, and when I was a child in school we learned *Lift Every Voice and Sing.* I've known it all my life. In the late 1950s and early 1960s people resurrected *Lift Every Voice and Sing,* but I've known it all my life. They call it the Negro national anthem; "true to our God and true to our native land." So in the late 1800s you have a black man writing this in a country where it was hardly that good to be black.

If there is a variable in common with those who succeed, it's that nobody told them what they couldn't do. I wrote my dissertation on teacher expectations. I'll tell you, the literature shows that if you believe that a child can do something you behave very differently toward that child than if you believe a child can't do something. Sometimes, even in the classroom, the child understands the belief that he or she can or can't do something.

I do believe that you do different things if you believe a child can do versus if you don't believe. Some people overcome it anyway. I don't know whether they're the exception or the rule. But I would say this: the likelihood that you'll do better if you're raised to think that you will do well is greater than the alternative.

I had a road not taken. I didn't know what I was going to do in 1970, 1971, 1972, and so I applied to law school. I was accepted; then I got a job as the vice principal at

Otto Middle School and was accepted as a Ph.D. candidate at the same time. So I said, "Maybe this is where my life was intended to go." I did not go to law school; I pursued the Ph.D. and completed it.

I don't regret it; it's just a road not taken.

Margaret Fishman, Peace Activist and Retired Secretary

Detroit, Michigan

Margaret Fishman was born in 1925 in Fairpoint, Ohio, the only daughter and oldest of four children of parents who immigrated to the United States from the Croatian province of Montenegro. Her father came to Ohio in 1913, then—seeking a wife—sent for her mother, who barely knew him but dutifully joined him in America. The Detroit auto industry drew her family to that city, where her father worked for Hudson Motors. She graduated from Detroit Southeastern High School in 1943, worked in Washington and in Detroit, then married Al Fishman in 1951. Their son Dan was born in 1954; daughter Marcia, in 1956. The financial benefits of work were so important to her that she defied her parents' wishes for her to attend college to instead enter the work force. She is an example of a woman whose work role would have been culturally accepted, since she did clerical work and her husband was often unable to find work during the 1950s. But her ties with organizations and causes that were deemed anti-American clearly relegated her to a marginalized category of women.

My father was a coal miner who came from Montenegro in 1913. He knew my mother's father. They were both Montenegrins from neighboring villages. He sent for my mother—she was an orphan then, living with a sister and a male relative, and they sent her. They thought that was a great opportunity for her. She could read and write, which was unusual for women in those days. My mother was very bright, for women of Montenegro in those years. She was one of very few educated women. There were ten women in the village school, and she was one of them. Her father, he wanted her to have an education. That's unusual for women who were born in 1898.

They were married in 1924. It was not a romantic thing at all; it was one of custom. Her dad had died, her mother died when she was eight years old, and she had siblings, mostly sisters, who all died when they were very young. She had one brother. In Montenegro, having a son is very important. If your wife couldn't bear sons, you are free to move away from her and have another one. This brother of hers was older, and she remembers when she was 8 years old that he left for America. He was about seventeen. Her father did not want him to go to America; if your son was bright enough, you sent him to Moscow to the military school. There was almost a maternal attitude toward Montenegro by the Russians.

She was doing her duty. Fortunately, my father was a very bright man who had finished four years of school, and he was an only child. It's a legend, a story at this time that my grandmother was supposed to have been a beautiful young woman, and the rumor was that she had an affair with somebody. He had the right to beat her, so he did, and then—my mother never told me this—then this woman who accused her of having this affair changed her story; she said she was just making it up because she was jealous of my grandmother's beauty. My grandfather was so humiliated that he killed himself.

My mother never talked about it. Tata was gone by the time we heard this. He was retired from Hudson Motors for one year and he died.

My father, he was raised by his mother's people. He was a coal miner and John L. Lewis was his god. And Franklin Roosevelt. He was a greenhorn, as they used to call him; he spoke about John L. Lewis as best he could. He didn't speak English very well. At the plant, there was a man named Mr. Tahl; they laid him off, but Mr. Tahl, whenever

they could squeeze him in they would. But he stayed there; he died a member of the local.

My mother wanted during the war to work in the plants, where she could have perfected her English. She was good enough, although she mixed her Serbo-Croatian and her English. But he wouldn't let her. And she really resented that, really resented it. Once I heard her say when they were arguing upstairs, "If it weren't for the honor of my father, I wouldn't be here in this country." From coal mining she came up here to a dumpy little house...

My father had a terrible argument with me. He said, "You must go to college; you must have an education." I said, "I have enough education Tata. I want to go to work." I wanted to buy furniture for our house; I was always embarrassed that we didn't have any. We didn't have anything, not even a couch. I went later in life to college and took courses; I took a course in Russian. I took a course in anthropology and did very well.

I met Al in 1951. He was a student at the University of Michigan and I wasn't a student anyplace, but I was working for the Army, in the Detroit Ordinance District—I was all in favor of World War II. In 1948 was my first vote; Roosevelt had just died, and before he died he had appointed Harry Truman as acting vice president and had removed Henry Wallace. Anyone who was for Roosevelt had to be with him. During the war, we and the Soviets were close as peas in a pod; we were supplying arms to them. Henry Wallace organized another party, a third party, called the Progressive Party. I said, "That's me. I'm going for him." My father was for him, too.

I wanted to continue peaceful cooperation with the Soviet Union. I went to a party—we had a lot of parties, the Young Progressives did—and I met Al there. I was

attracted to him right away; the typical student of the 1950s, with the tweed jacket and the elbow patches, you know. He probably didn't even notice me. But he came to Detroit, dropped his education, and worked for Henry Wallace during that campaign. Al came up to work, then moved in with [the family of] a girlfriend of mine. This girl's name was Bert, and Al and his friend each had a room at Bert's house. That's how we met, and we started double-dating; she and this guy who lived over there, and me and Al.

I thought my father would love him, because they agreed about Henry Wallace. I went with my father and a friend to meet Henry Wallace and Pete Seeger while they were campaigning. One of the Young Progressives was there with his girlfriend and they were both black. I didn't know many blacks, but I knew these two from the Young Progressives. They said, "Let's go across the street and get some coffee." Well, I knew we wouldn't be served. It was an all-white neighborhood. But I said, "Let's go," and we went. When I got back, my dad was steaming mad. He said, "Don't ever let me see you with a black person again." I was shocked; I said, "He's a friend of mine from the Wallace campaign." A friend of mine came in and defended me to my dad. I was my dad's favorite, and he saw all of my dreams going down the toilet in getting involved with what he thought were then radical activities.

We were going to get married in June of 1951; my father said, "You're the first Slavic girl who ever married a Jew." He thought Al was Italian; he had never met any Jews. Al, when he came home, he would stay overnight upstairs where my dad had built an extra room. When we told him we were going to get married he just blew his top. He said, "I don't want him here again." I said, "Well then you don't want me either." I packed a bag and left. I didn't know where I was going. I had a black friend, she lived

alone with her mother, and I said, "Can I stay with you for a few nights?" She said, "Absolutely." So I stayed with Hannah and her mother for a few days.

My mother was very cool about it. She was in California at the time, and she didn't hurry back. My father, he was afraid everyone in his village was going to be against me marrying a Jew. But they weren't. They didn't give a crap. My mother had come back by that time and they must have talked about it. He said, "We're going to give you a party." We went to court to get married; one of my brothers came to witness the marriage, but not my mother and dad.

We knew he would not want my friends [at the party]. So we talked about it: Do we invite them, or don't we? We huddled with all of our Progressive friends, and they said, "Oh forget it. Don't have the party now. Have it when you move into your apartment." So we did. And my dad, he was all right. We'd visit them every week. He was cool with Al; they agreed politically. They were both for Wallace, and Wallace went down the tubes. Al, since then, has said, "I was so disappointed I almost just went to Israel."

My one brother was an officer in the air corps during that time. In 1953, he was called before some kind of army board and asked to turn in his insignia, his status—he was a first lieutenant in the air corps—because of close association—well, it was me and my father. I don't know what they called us. They did not call us Communists but the inference was there; your close continuing relationship would make you a security risk, and they wanted him to give up his commission. He said, forget it. He was married and had a little girl by that time. . . .

I worked for the lawyers from 1951 on, and they became almost like an extended family to us in that tough time. They stood up for us. One time, one of the partners called me in and he said, "Hey Marge, get those bastards off your back. The press . . . They won't hound you and they'll stop calling you a red. Just tell them that you're not a red." I said, "No way. They can't ask me that. Mr. K, if my refusal to cooperate with them threatens my job, I'll leave." He was head of B'nai Brith and if that came to their knowledge—he has a secretary that might be a Red, you know...well, that could have really hurt him.

My bosses told me, "Your job does not depend on it. We just think that you'd get them off your back." I said, "No, I can't do that. It goes against my grain to bend against these fools who don't know as much as I do if they think I'm a Communist."

It's part of my upbringing. My father, the only thing they had against him was that he read a Serbian paper that was pro Tito. It's true; he did read it. Against me they had a bigger deal; from 1948 to 1951 or so, I worked for the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Washington. Now, that was my college education. It's another world, you know, that diplomatic world. I had a lot of exciting times there, including my first love, who just died.

I just never did believe that the Soviet Union was our enemy. They made a lot of overtures to this treaty or that treaty. The Yugoslavs were always independent of the Soviet Union; they had a leader that they loved dearly. There was this battle going on between the theories of Tito and the theories of Stalin, and they had a clash, and the Yugoslavs pulled out of the Eastern bloc. They formed a third bloc of neutral nations.

That's all fact, but they ignore the facts; it's too difficult to explain. Instead, they say you're pro Red. My bosses stood by me; I never will forget that.

We didn't have a car when I got that job; it wasn't three months, we were looking for a used car, and one of the bosses said "How much do you need?" He gave us—I paid it back— $900, which was a lot of money for a used car at that time. They were fantastic. In those days, I would do the dictation...they would dictate to me their briefs, and one of the senior partners would make briefs of twenty pages, and they'd come back to me and I'd have to correct it. It was a clerical job, but the relationship was different than the usual. I was really quite independent on my job. Nobody complained about any work piled up on my desk. I could follow a case from the beginning to the end. In fact, when I finally left [in 1979] I worked at home for the state of Michigan, where they gave me the tape and file on a case, and I'd work on it from home. There was so much work that I couldn't keep up with it, so I'd hire some other women to help me. I eventually ended up with about ten women, and that was great. I could have made a lot more money, they gave me $2.50 a typewritten page, and I paid the women who helped me $2. Most of the women who were doing this kind of work got about a dollar a page. I made decent money doing that.

When the children were born...I worked up until about a week before Marcia was born. I had no problem with my pregnancy. I could just continue to work normally. When Danny was born, I worked part-time for my firm, then they needed more help and I went over to another firm, then I came back after six weeks which was the automatic length of time you would be gone in those days.

In the 1980s I worked for the Michigan Apparel Club, an organization of sales reps who represent the firms and sell the retail trade in men's wear. They paid me for a year. I had my own beautiful office; I had the records of the association, who paid dues, who didn't. I was a lone wolf doing that. Then finally my husband insisted: "That's enough already. You've been working all your life." But I love it. It was his insistence. Ee was a third deputy chief of the police department in Detroit. He's going to be seventy-four this year, and he's been retired seven years.

I always worked. I always had a job.

When [Milo's case] hit the press, it was all over the country. This had happened to other people in the army or the air force, but they slunk away. My brother refused, and they court-martialed him. That's when [reporter Edward R.] Murrow got involved, with a half-hour story. It was settled by 1954, when Eisenhower was president. My mother, she never liked Republicans, but she attributed Milo's victory [to the fact that] Eisenhower gave a speech the night before to B'nai Brith, saying, "We've become a nation of faceless accusers." When Milo went to that court martial—the reporters came to our home. I was pregnant with Marcia. We laugh about it now; I said, 'Milo, you made me a year older;' I was twenty-eight; he said I was twenty-nine.

Everyone knew, and it affected Al. The papers called him my husband, Mr. Al Fishman of 5143 Holcomb, and he worked in shops at that time. He finally got an apprenticeship in a union [tool and die] shop, and they kept him. Then he decided he was going back to school and finish, and he did. I worked; I just worked continuously. My bosses stood by me.

My girlfriends, none of them went to college. I am surprised that I held my own with my dad. A couple times when I had a date...it was after that incident with the black kids. I went to a jazz club; I used to come home on time, but this time, the guy really had a flat tire. We got home pretty late, probably about 2:30 a.m. I saw the light on; I knew that he was waiting for me. I didn't want a confrontation with him; when I came in, I remember him pacing and saying, "Where were you, my daughter? We didn't know who you were with." I never forgot that; that I disobeyed him. I was sitting on the steps, waiting for him to chill out, and I was shaking. . . .

Maybe I'm afraid now that I should have [gone to college]. We have friends who are Ph.D.s or this or that, and they are not necessarily good people because they went to college. They are good people because they are who they are.

I don't think I have regrets. I think I learned from everything, whether it was unpleasant or pleasant, because that's where I was at the time. Wherever it was, it was me at the time. It wasn't anyone else. I don't regret not going to college; I'm bilingual, which I have used to my advantage. I have translated at courts and for a lot of the new refugees who came over from Bosnia. I have used it to good advantage.

The Rosenberg trial...Al and I took it very, very personally because we didn't believe in their guilt. To this day I don't believe it. He was apparently in the young Communist league; there were a lot of now famous people who were then radicals. Her brother, he condemned them to death. One of them, this brother showed this very crude child's scribbling that the atom bomb looks like this. This guy, her brother, was semiliterate, but they had something on him, like he stole Plutonium, and to get him of the hook, he pointed to his sister and her husband. They maintained their innocence to the

electric chair. I can never forget that. If they were guilty of anything, even the smallest infraction, wouldn't they be proud? But they didn't. She especially, as a mother, these little kids were seven and nine and nobody gave a crap that they were going to be orphans. They had a line open to him from Eisenhower up until they died that that they would be spared if they would admit it. But they never did.

There's like an analogy with me, working at a foreign embassy, and my brother, an officer. This was when the Cold War was just beginning. I worked there for four years and my brother was in uniform—a meteorology expert—stationed in Washington at that time.

I was just a secretary. I joined any petition campaign that came around. The Pope called for clemency, and he was not particularly radical, that Pope. Finally there was a demonstration in Washington for clemency and Al and I were both there. There were thousands of people; it was not a small demonstration. I don't know who they were; I have no idea. You just marched along. We stayed on that picket line until it was time to go home. We drove down and we drove back. And on the way back we heard that [Supreme Court Justice] Douglas had given them some kind of clemency that would have them re-hear their case at the Supreme Court. By the time we got all the way home, another Supreme Court Justice had called the court together and overrode Douglas. It was Justice Kaufman: He said, "You have caused the death of thousands of American boys." Come on; get off of that. Even if they have done something terrible, you don't have to get dramatic about it. I saw myself in that position because of my activities on the left, my political activities.

After the Young Progressives died I joined a labor youth league. That was even considered more radical. We studied. We read, or we found other countries whose youth were more organized that American youth in the 1950s. Sometimes they would let some of these people in the country for exchanges, even during the Cold War. We could get closer to them during visits.

How did I do all that? I think about it sometimes. I used to be guilty—I'd share it with Ron at the office—I spent so much time away from the kids. They were first graders and kindergarten. They were very good students and they had a babysitter after school until I got home. And then in the evening I would type sometimes after home after they went to bed. If there was a meeting at night I'd have a babysitter coming in...He said, no, you'd be hurting them if you were there so much. I really was protective of my kids. I still am.

It was a frightful time. It was scary. When Mr. Murrow interviewed all of us and I was asked, "What do you think about what is happening, Mrs. Fishman?" I said to myself, 20 million people are viewing this...I said some interesting things, but they didn't all make it into the story. I said something about that it's a terrible thing that's happening in our country. Something about it's not a democracy as long as this fear exists. I was not very convincing. I said, Senator Hubert Humphrey—the great liberal—and another man had a bill in Congress to create camps should we need to arrest Communists and we'll have someplace to put them. I said, my god they are talking about concentration camps. If they could kill the Rosenbergs, they could do anything they want with me.

Lucile Belen, Floral Shop Owner and Longtime City Council Member

Lansing, Michigan

Lucile Belen was born in Laingsburg, in rural Ingham County, in 1912. Her family moved to the city of Lansing when she was an infant. She was the oldest of three children. Her brother Frederick went on to become deputy United States Postmaster; her sister was severely burned in an accident as a youngster and died at a young age. After graduating from Lansing Central High School and attending Michigan State University briefly, Lucile worked a variety of jobs in Lansing until 1955, when she took over the family's floral shop, which she still manages. She was recently inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, one of numerous honors that have been bestowed upon her for leadership, business acumen, and public service. As did Marge Fishman, she eschewed a college degree to earn a paycheck, much to the chagrin of her mother. Because she never married, her status as an employed woman during the 1950s would not have come into question as a cultural anomaly.

Mom was a registered nurse. Father was a meat-cutter, or butcher. He managed a store in the wholesale section. Then he started Michigan Floral. It didn't flourish too well. One day one of my mother's friends called and said, "You've made a horrible mistake. Everyone knows you, but they don't know that you own the floral shop." So my parents planned to close it down and then re-open under the family name.

Then, my sister was tragically burned. It was not until 1936 they started the business again.

My mother, she was the first woman elected to the state legislature in this district . . . She served just one term. You know those signs in the elevators that indicate that they have been inspected? Well, that was my mother's initiative and a lot of people, particularly in the big buildings in Detroit, didn't appreciate that. She introduced another bill for farmer's insurance. That was a problem with the insurance companies. So she was not re-elected.

Then the governor appointed her as worker's compensation commissioner—Governor Van Wagner. She served in that position until the Republicans were elected again. It was strictly a political appointment, you know...

I never expected to be an office worker. I expected to take physicians' training. All during high school I didn't take business training; I took the courses you needed for college. Then I started at MSU. The Depression was on, you know. My adviser, a woman, she told me the medical profession would be very hard. She discouraged me from it.

One day, I got a call from a man who said he had a job for me downtown... I knew that money was scarce. It was spring break, and I said, "sure." He said, "If you can get down here in a half hour, the job is yours."

Well, I was literally running downtown and what do you think...I passed my mother. She asked where I was going and I told her I was going to check out a job. She said, "No you're not; you're going back to school." I said, "No, I'm going to go get this job." I kept right on going. And I got that job.

This was in 1933 or 1934; I don't keep that close track of the years. I had a good memory, so I was in a position that people would come up to the counter and they would ask me to pull the information they needed and I'd know exactly where it was. One week, I got seventeen boxes of Sander's chocolates as gifts from people. I was doing, apparently, a pretty good job.

Do you remember Dr. Mary Sharp? [Dr. Sharp was a longtime Lansing physician.] Her father was a banker. He came to me one Saturday—we worked until noon on Saturdays—and said, "You can have my secretary's job on Monday." Well, I didn't

tell him I didn't know shorthand. I went home and from Saturday noon to Monday morning I made up my own shorthand. I know now that it was like speed reading.

You don't realize what women do on the job. This man who replaced [my boss] was an alcoholic. Of course, I didn't know that then; I just knew that he always had a headache in the morning and came in late. I used to cover for his job, too. As we got bigger and bigger we got more people in, and I still was getting the same wage as the other girls.

One day the boss came by and asked me to do this and this and this...I know my face got all red and my eyes probably were flashing, I was so mad. I said, do you realize I'm getting the same amount of money as those girls in there? How about a raise? He was so startled, he turned around and left. But he came back and gave me a twenty-five dollar a week raise. I was making a thousand dollars a year at the time, so that was pretty good.

My mother always made us kids read the newspaper. We'd sit around the kitchen table and discuss the political situation, whatever we had read about. They treated us as grownups.

My mother ran for state legislature and got elected. She served under Murphy; this was in 1936 or 1937. I still was at the national youth administration. I looked at the postings, you know—the state would post all the jobs and the pay scale—and I found this job as secretary to the head of the Public Utilities Commission. It paid $3,600 a year; that was a lot of money then. I finally got the job, so there I got a broad knowledge of utilities management.

At first they said the woman who had the job before me, she was a Republican, she would come down and help teach me the job. I got so mad—I'm sure my face got red again—I said, "If you don't think I can do the job, I'll go right back to my other position." I flare up, you know, and then I get over it in a hurry.

A few years after that I went back to the shop; it was picking up then. My mother started advertising in the *State Journal* on Saturdays. She analyzed the paper and noticed that there was nothing there on Saturday, so she figured anyone who read the paper on that day would have to read our ad. Then Mom was appointed workman's compensation commissioner.

We were always active politically. We always helped our local councilmen get elected. Even working on the election board.

A lot of people were hungry then, and mother would feed anyone who dropped by. People would "accidentally" drop in right at lunch time. We got to buying cheaper items and buying larger quantities, you know, so that we would have enough for anyone who dropped by. To this day I like neck bones; my father cooked them, and they were so good. And you could get twelve pounds of smelt for a dollar; he'd cook that, too. My mother told me once, "You children should never go hungry because we have fed so many people." To this day my biggest contributions are to groups that provide food or shelter to those who need it.

One day we were sitting around the table, talking, and Mayor Crego dropped by. There was an opening on city council in the third ward. I said, "Who do you think is going to run for this ward?" He said, "Why don't you?" I ran, and I got elected. This was in 1957. Right after that, the city adapted a new charter at the same time I was elected;

two councilmen in eighty-nine wards was changed to one councilman, four wards, and four at large. She decided that, since my mother and my dad knew people all over the city, I would run the next time at large. So I did, and I won with the largest number of votes.

My parents, they thought that there wasn't anything we couldn't do. They didn't think of us as little children. When my mother and dad were taking dancing lessons, they'd dance with us; then they'd have two couples. When they learned to play cards, they'd play with us; that made a foursome. My mother entertained a lot then, and we sat in the same room with them. We were part of the group.

We had to read the paper as soon as we learned to read.

My mother was from a German speaking family. She made up her mind that the only way she was going to get an education was to go to nursing school, even though she'd never even seen a nurse. She was seeing my father at the time, and he said, "If you go away to school, I'll be married when you get back." She said, "Go ahead." Well, needless to say, he waited for her.

One reason I never married was, during the Depression years, people my mother had been taking care of would come by and pour out to her all of their problems. Maybe they had been beaten, or there was something else going on. I decided I wasn't going to get involved like that, and I never did.

During World War II, mom was on the Victory Garden group; I was on the First Aid committee under Civil Defense. During the Cold War, we thought that we were so far removed from a bomb dropping here. My brother at that time was going to law school at George Washington University and there was more discussion of it there.

My friends' families...they were different. Their mother was a house body; my mother was outgoing and into everything. She offered us up to social clubs for programs. I took dancing lessons; my brother took elocution lessons. My mother, after I got out of high school, wanted to take a public speaking course. She said, "You can go with me." I went to this class with here and they were all older people. The instructor said, "Next week, everyone will get up and give a three-minute talk."

Well, there was no way I was going to do that, so I got there early so that I could tell him I had a sore throat. But he got there late. As he called on people, everyone turned him down. I could just tell he was crushed. When he got to me, I thought, "By gosh, I can't let him down." So I started to talk about my job. But I didn't have a conclusion; eventually, I just sat down. You know, I haven't stopped talking since.

When I was on the council, I never thought that the men were better than I am. I was on the committee that gave out the liquor licenses. Some of the people would come down and they would talk to everyone else on the committee but me. I said, "You tell those people that if they want that license they're going to have to talk to me; I'll never let it out of the committee."

I had the nerve to speak out. There must have been something about me; I was on the council just two years when I got named president of the council.

There's something relaxing about working with flowers. And you see people at a time of emotional reaction. You have a new granddaughter you're getting married, you have a death in the family. And I can help.

I don't believe in retirement. I see the people who retire and they get senile. I've had a really full life. I've enjoyed life as I went along; everything I did. I have friends,

people who are my age and their children are gone, their husbands are gone. They're alone just like I am.

In thirty-seven years worked with five or six mayors. I've had a number of young women who said I've been their mentor.

I'd like to be remembered for saving the trees on the Capitol grounds. Back in the late 1960s, the legislature was planning to bring parking around in front of the building. I thought that would be just terrible. One day I was coming out of the Olds Plaza and I saw one of the senators outside the elevator. I said, "Senator, I hope you'll help me save the trees on the Capitol grounds." He said, "I'm going to show you who's running Lansing." Well, he said that to the wrong person.

When I look at the grounds now in the spring and the fall, at the beauty of those trees, I think I really did something.

I don't think that the young women today realize what women like myself, and other women, did to help them get where they are today. We made people recognize that women had capabilities. Men still aren't happy about the fact that women are in these positions. I can see it.

I never recognized that I had a handicap because I was a woman. That makes a difference. I had the same amount of ability as anyone else. We were just taught to go for it. It's the family background.

Hortense Canady, Director of Financial Aid (Retired)

Lansing Community College, Lansing, Michigan

Hortense Canady is one of two children of a pharmacist and a social worker. Born in Chicago in 1927, she and her mother moved to Tennessee when she was about ten years old, following the death of her father. Hortense graduated with a biology degree from Fisk College at the age of nineteen; her mother, too, had graduated at nineteen, as her daughter and niece did later. Eventually, she earned a master's degree from Michigan State University. She and her husband, Clinton Canady III, a dentist, had four children, including a daughter, Alexa, who became the first black neurosurgeon in the United States. Their three sons all are lawyers. Her achievements were very much defined by the fact that her mother was a college-educated professional; thus, her world was constructed much differently than the women's world depicted in *Life*.

Although I was born in Chicago, when anyone asks me where is home I say Tennessee. My mother had a master's degree from the University of Chicago and she was a social worker in Chicago. My father died when I was ten years old, and my mother, at the urging of my grandfather—he was a was a fireman on the railroad, he could get on the train any time he wanted and visit, and he did—did finally give in and we moved to Tennessee, where we lived with them. I often think about that; it was quite a sacrifice for her. She was a young woman, and to move in with them again was quite a sacrifice for her. She already had taught school when she finished college, at the age of nineteen . . . so did I, so did my daughter, and so did my niece. She taught school, and was able to get on at Lane College, a historically black college founded by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.

So she taught at Lane College, then went to Howard University in Washington, D.C. and got her master's in teaching. She became head of elementary education at the college; she taught teachers to teach.

I go all over the country and meet people who knew my mother. That shows you how life has twists and turns. My daughter is very much like her at age fifty; if I close my eyes when she is speaking, I can hear my mother talk.

The year Mom went to Washington to get her master's degree would have been my senior year in high school. It was around 1942; the war years were beginning. The government was recruiting people to come to Washington to fill all the positions they had. A lot of people in town were taking those examinations and failed them; my mother couldn't figure out how they could fail them. I had learned to type early on. Just to see what would happen, I went down and took the exam—I was only 14, I took the exam, and the next thing you know I got a letter to report to Washington in June. Well I couldn't do that, obviously. But that's when Mother decided to go to Howard. She said, "We'll go up to Washington and see how it goes, and I'll go up to Howard."

We went up to Washington in August. Her first concern was whether I would be able to graduate...From Codoza High with my class. She went with me and we interviewed the people there to see if it was possible for me to be employed and still get my degree. I took a correspondence course from Indiana University and worked as a typist with adjunctant general's office. Mother enrolled in school. We thought we were settling down to a great winter; it was very productive. I was making good money. But the unit I was assigned to moved to New Jersey. They wanted me to go to New Jersey, but I couldn't do that; mother was in school, so I had to decline. Then I was assigned to a

unit that did correspondence for the White House. They were the first group to move into the Pentagon; the Pentagon was brand new. In fact we had to take some days off so that they could adjust the air conditioning. I was the only person who had been hired into that group. It was an all white group, so you can imagine they looked at me crossed-eyed when I came in; they were all from Virginia, and no one had been hired in that group in over ten years. So I'm the first new person, and a black female at that. It was quite a shock to their system.

I graduated in 1943, then went to Fisk in Nashville, Tennessee. The whole history of that college is amazing. W.E.B. Dubois went to Fisk. Wade McCree went to Fisk. Robert Hayden, the poet, taught there. In fact, I took a class from him.

That's where I met my husband; he was at Maharry, and that was right across the street. He thought I was his girlfriend, walking across the campus, and he came rushing over. She had a red Chesterfield coat, and I had a red Chesterfield coat. Of course, he realized his error, and back then you just didn't start a conversation with someone you didn't know. But he proceeded to find out who I was. We went out one time, but I think he thought I was kind of young; I was just 16, and he was in dental school. But that didn't last.

He graduated and then went into the Air Corps. He was a commissioned officer. We got married when I was eighteen, in 1945.

I graduated in 1947 from college; he had established his practice here [in Lansing] in 1946. I joined him in 1947. I had majored in biology and got a job in the Michigan state health department labs, doing testing for specimens for other labs. Well, then I got a call from a group that wanted to start a nursery school here and they were trying to get on

the list for funding with the United Way. They had a person directing it who contracted tuberculosis; they needed someone with a degree to replace that person. By that time I was expecting, so I came to work for Community Nursery School in July of 1948. I stepped out of the work force until [my son] Mark went to Cranbrook [a private residential school in southeast Michigan, where he enrolled in the 1970s]; I stayed home, much to my chagrin.

When I finished Fisk I had an offer for a fellowship to University of Michigan to study genetics. My husband, he said, "If you go you won't come back. You'll want to get your Ph.D." He had been very patient; I knew he was right. I said, "I'll give this marriage a chance."

He could not see having someone who would be less efficient than I was staying with the children. But let me tell you the opportunities that arose from that. Because I had the time and the energy, I was able to be very active in the community. I was treasurer for the United Way. I was active with the YWCA, which let me to the national board. I was with the NAACP; I was involved in the desegregation of the Lansing schools. That was a great position. That then led me to become a member of the Board of Education.

After Mark went to Cranbrook in the mid 1970s I stepped back into the workforce. I had been very active in the community, and people would call me up to recommend people for jobs. I had a call from Lansing Community College wanting someone who could work in financial aid. I said I could. He said, "Do you have a college degree?" I said, "Somewhere!" I found my transcript, took it down there and was hired immediately. So while I was working part-time I got a master's degree from MSU in higher education administration.

I had misapprehensions of course, because I had been out of school for awhile. But after I got the first few examinations under my belt, I felt fine. I went year round, and immediately I was hired fulltime and became assistant director of financial aid. During this time I was also moving up in the hierarchy for the sorority [Delta Sigma Theta, of which she eventually became national president].

Was I conscious of the Cold War? Sure. McCarthy, I was just sick about him. You knew it was wrong; you just wondered how long it would take before people realized it. I was active in the Delta Sigma Theta sorority; my co-chair was the sister-in-law of Alex Haley, who wrote *Roots.* We contacted people who were very prominent and very active; a lot of legislators. One of the things that we did, Doris Haley and I—she was a Republican and I was a Democrat—we started the state movement to get people involved in revenue sharing. Before people didn't pay much attention to state commissions and county commissions and so forth, but now they were going to be very important. To this day they're still doing that; we have Delta Days at the state capitol and the nation's capitol. People come to visit and get to know who their legislators are. And the legislators also know who they are. It's a very big sphere of influence.

I remember talking to my mother—I was unhappy about my husband wanting me to stay home. A lot of housework and that kind of thing. My mother says, "You're supposed to be an intelligent woman. Don't you see how that frees you up? You can do things in this town that others can't because you aren't beholden to an employer. Cooking? Housework? Do what everyone else does: Eat beans and hire someone else to do it. Have someone else come in and help you with the ironing. Don't bother your husband about it; just do it."

Have you ever noticed that how once a door is opened, other opportunities open beyond that first door? Once you get out there and get involved, you have more than you can do. You have to pick and choose. You seek people out who you think will follow through. I like people who once they say they're going to do it, they'll do it.

I had been asked several times [by the Democrat party] to run for office. I don't believe in running for something I don't have a chance of winning. I have worked on campaigns, though, including for [U.S. Representative] Debbie Stabenow.

My children had a lot of lessons, a lot of activity, a lot of travel. I believed in traveling with them. Wherever we went, they went. My mother came up from Tennessee one summer, and we were getting ready to go to Idyllwild [a west Michigan resort popular at that time with black families]. My mother and my husband decided overnight we were going to New York instead. Well, my daughter was very young; I'm driving around New York, with the kids, and we decided to go to Radio City. I don't remember what the movie was, but I didn't realize they didn't allow children in under a certain age. I said, "I'm from out of town...I didn't know about the rule. Can't you just let us in?" He said, "You stand over here and I'll go check with the manager." They were just testing to see if your children were under control.

We were always very aware of the political situations.Very aware. In the first place, we are great newspaper readers. We take the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Lansing State Journal*, the *Free Press* and my husband always goes out and buys the *Detroit News*. Magazines; tons of them. Very much into current events. Current affairs. We were every much aware and had discussions about the principles at that time. We were political in that I don't think we have ever missed voting in a single election on any issue.

During the Cold War, there was a lot of dialogue on both sides. If you have a Soviet leader saying, "We will bury you," that's a severe threat. Not just that we'll overcome you or crush you, but we will bury you...that's a direct threat. You always think, well that's a great waste of money. Look at the arms race. That is what really crushed Russia; we outspent them. That's what created their downfall.

I remember the ideal [American woman]. You remember all the comparisons between the way Pat Nixon dressed and Khrushchev's wife. All that petty stuff; I thought it was petty. A lot of people don't know this, but most blacks didn't like Richard Nixon. When Watergate came along, you know what we said? "We knew it all along."

Lansing had a very small black population in the 1950s, and the schools were very segregated then. My husband is from Detroit. He always thought this [living in Lansing] was going to be temporary. I finally said, "This is going to be our home." But I recall the rigid segregation. When I first came to Lansing, my husband was the first black dentist.

In the 1950s...we had a busload of people here who went to the March on Washington. My son, he remembered my putting people on the bus for the March on Washington. When I read that it brought tears to my eyes. All of these terrible things were taking place before, but you did not hear about them. Now you've got your cell phones, cyberspace; how can you hide? You hear about them. That makes atrocities harder to occur, without a hidden cloak of secrecy. There was a time that the newspapers wouldn't publish scandals about Congressmen, for example. That's all changed.

I still like genetics. And just look what's happened in the field, since the days of the...very rudimentary type things. Wouldn't that have been an exciting field to be in? I

think about that every now and then, but not with any sense of loss. It's just a turn in the road, of what might have been, in another time and place.

*Kay Werner, Former Police*woman and *Self-titled Professional Volunteer*

Lansing, Michigan

Kay Werner was born in 1936, the oldest of four children—two boys, two girls. During her childhood, her family moved frequently, living in Petoskey, Detroit, and other cities while her parents looked for work. Her mom worked intermittently, usually as a waitress; her father, who had not finished high school, typically held manufacturing or manual labor jobs. Although she started school in Detroit, she graduated in 1953 from Petoskey High School, moving to Lansing when she decided to attend Michigan State University. She entered police work at the urging of Clarissa Young, Lansing's first female police officer. Her story exemplifies Zora Neale Hurston's notion of a woman building her own statue—in essence, constructing her own life—because she had little familial support and no financial assets on which to draw in an effort to break out of a cycle of struggle. She was not, however, held back by her gender, and chose a field of work that not only allowed her to achieve financial stability, but to have a positive impact on society.

I came to MSU in the fall of 1953, and lived in Mayo Hall. It was a different experience being away from home. My parents moved back to Detroit so the family followed them. So it wasn't that long a commute to see them.

I put myself through school by working at the State Room in the Kellogg Center. First I worked in the dorm cafeteria. I was enrolled in recreation—health, physical education, and recreation. You didn't get a teaching certificate with recreation classes. I had to do field work placements in the summer, and one of mine was at Camp Dearborn. Another summer I was supposed to work in the playgrounds in Detroit. My playground was so far away from my parents' home, and I didn't like the neighborhood and would had to have taken the bus to the playground every day. Well, I didn't do that. I went to

work as a waitress. It was a restaurant not too far from where we lived—we lived in Redford Township—and so consequently that created some problems with my curriculum.

After that I did field work with the Lansing Police Department. I got involved with their Friday night program, which was a program at theYWCA downtown. Clarissa Young was in charge of that program. I became involved in that and worked with groups of boys. They had the use of the pool and I did other kinds of physical, sports kind of things with them and I tried to work with them on some of their problems. With that I got better acquainted with Clarissa. She wanted to do a study with the juvenile crime file. It was pretty intensive. At the time I was working out of the old city hall which was on Ottawa Street. It was an old, old, building. Clarissa tried at that time to get me to change my major to police work. I said, "Clarissa, I can't, I can't afford it." I was kind of interested, but I said, "I'm too far into my program now." Then I got a job in Long Beach, California, as a playground director. I graduated and went out to Long Beach for a year. My folks were having a lot of financial problems; they had bought a house in Redford and were about to lose it. I just felt I needed to come back and help them with that.

Clarissa said she was going to have a job coming up because one of her officers was pregnant. I came and took the test. Of course, I was short; I barely made the height requirement. I weighed 107 pounds. But I got the job, and started in 1958 as a police woman. This was before the police academy was a gleam in anybody's eye yet, so I got kind of on-the-job training. The guys that I came on with—I was the only woman—they were going to be in the patrol division and I was going to be in the youth division. They

would be on uniform patrol, while I wore civvies and I was assigned to the youth division. There were men in the youth division, too, but only men were on uniform patrol.

I do recall some of the other women. There was Georgia Brown, a colored lady; she had a daughter who was in social work. And there was another gal who worked this program. They were in the helping career area so we could pick these kids apart and figure out what made them tick and see what we could do to help them in the few hours a week we had them. It was also to get them off the street.

I had always had kind of an interest in police work. But I had never even planned to go to college until I was in the tenth grade. My parents didn't encourage it, and they didn't have the money to send me. It never occurred to me that I could work my way through until my aunt talked to me; she said, "There's no reason you can't go to college. You can get a job and work your way through."

There were lots of opportunities in the field of community rec and that was what I was looking at. When I went to California, I loved it out there. I probably would have stayed if my folks hadn't gotten into financial difficulty.

I had to work hard in school. I had to work for my grades. I worked hard, plus working to get money to get through school...I always kind of resented that but I thought, well, I am going to go and do the best that I can.

My parents...I think they were supporting me in their own way. They were so busy trying to keep their heads above water financially that they were just glad I was on my own and able to take care of myself. My dorm friends were probably my biggest support group. My husband...we went there at the same time—he graduated in 1958, in

business—but we didn't meet there. It wasn't until we both were out working that we met.

I belonged to the ski club—the Jug and Mug, for single adults. I met a lot of kids through that group. It was a social thing, and I did learn to ski, too. I ran around with my husband's sister, Joyce, and through her I met him. Six months after we started dating, we got married.

This was pre-academy days. From what I remember, I would go to class in the afternoon for a couple of hours with the guys and we learned basic procedures—none of these guys had had any police training either. I was twenty-two and I think that's what you had to be back then. I'd go to class for a couple of hours in the afternoon, and when class was out I'd go back upstairs. I worked nine-to-five. My recollection is that I wasn't in class for more than a couple of weeks. They issued me a gun before I knew how to use it. It was in the winter and we couldn't go to the outdoor range so I went to the range in the basement. The firearms instructor showed me how to use it, how to clean it, that sort of thing. This was before anybody realized how damaging that kind of noise could be to your hearing; as a result of that, I now wear hearing aids in both ears.

A lot of the stuff I didn't go to classes for because it dealt with patrol duty and I wasn't going to do that. I was going to be on the level of a detective, doing that type of work. The men didn't need a college degree; only the women. We didn't question it. That's the way it was. The reason, they said, was because we were going into straight investigative work, and you needed the background degree. The other requirement they had, which I didn't question until we got married, was that you had to live inside the city limits. I was told by the city administrator, If you move outside the city, you're done.

You always had a case load—cases that you were assigned to investigate. They were all different kids of things. You'd come in, look at your case load, take any new cases that were assigned to and plan your day around whatever was necessary—interviewing kids at school, interviewing parents. Part of my tenure was prior to the Miranda law. You could talk to a suspect without advising them of their rights. We had court appearances; sometimes we had to file petitions in probate court, for kids who were in need of the court's protection. We had statutory rape cases; those were quite common. We had court cases; your day might include one of those. Later on, we had a night shift.

There was one year we had a series of school break-ins so Clarissa set up night time surveillance. There was one time I was asked to work with the [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms] guys. They were on some kind of a deal where there were some guys from North Carolina who were running moonshine or some darned thing on a really big basis. They wanted somebody to go in with them because they were undercover. So I went with them to this house or trailer, I think it was, and we peeked in the windows. I backed off and said, "I can't go in there. One of the gals I've had on a child neglect case is in there and she'll recognize me; it'll blow the whole thing.'

One of the first things that Clarissa said to me was, "You have to leave it at the office. You cannot take it home with you. You're going to burn out." And she was right. You saw so many horrible, horrible things, conditions that kids would live in ... you wanted to save the world, and after awhile you realized you could not save the world. You could only save a person.

The thing that really attracted me to police work was it never got boring. It was always something different every day. The only thing I didn't like was the reports I had

to write. You never went to work knowing what was going to happen; anything could happen. Anything was possible.

It might turn out to be a bad day. It might turn out to be a really good day. I guess that basically is it. Although I guess I always have been a caretaker type person. My dad was an alcoholic; my mother was on the verge of. She tried to keep up with him, I think. That was a bone of contention all my life; I had to deal with that. It wasn't something I enjoyed; as a result of that, all of us have borne scars from it, although we turned out okay.

My parents moved back to Petoskey in 1988. For the latter part of their lives they had worked together cleaning carpets and upholstery. What didn't he do...he pumped oil, worked for John Deere, worked on the railroad when I was really little. Worked for Continental Airlines. I suppose we never really wanted for anything, but I didn't go to the drugstore with my girlfriends after school; there was no money for that. I guess I felt cheated out of a childhood, basically.

During the Cold War, some of the people that I knew went into the service. But I didn't really have any close ties with anybody. I did correspond with the brother of a friend who went into the service; lots of people did that. Now my husband was in the service at the time and he got stationed in Alaska. He was in radio operation school and he was monitoring the transmission across the Bering Strait. But I would say it didn't have a direct impact on my life at the time.

I was married in 1962. At that time you had to quit the police force when you were either pregnant or adopting, and we adopted a son in May of 1965. You had to be married for two years before you could adopt. David was three months old when we got

him. After that I did volunteer work for the Community Services Council. At that time it was a function of the Community Services Council to run what was called a Christmas Clearing Bureau. I was the assistant director under Pat Wynans; she was the ultimate. She inspired people to do volunteer work. I had done volunteer work with the police department after I left. I had done some work there and some volunteer work with the city relocation office, helping people who were displaced when the I-496 expressway was built. The Christmas Clearing Bureau ended up being a full time job, but only four months a year. That was really the last paid employment that I had. Since that time I have become what I call a "professional volunteer."

When I was in college, my grandparents were supportive at that time. After my folks moved back to Detroit I still had to work to earn money for school, and I had worked a couple of summers previously at Jasperson's Restaurant in Petoskey. So I lived with my grandparents that summer between freshman and sophomore years. At that time, you didn't have the horrendous expenses that you do now, but on the other hand, I was only making fifty cents an hour. When I started with the police department and started dating Bob, I was making more money than he was.

The major reason that I wanted to go to college was to get away from home—get away from the problems at home. I didn't want to live a paycheck-to-paycheck existence like my parents had done. I wanted to do better. But in order to do better I had to have the tools to do it. I still didn't have a real clear idea of a career. At that point I had so little experience in knowing where that would lead me . . . then you get into the college experience and you experience a whole lot of other things. People coming together from

all walks of life. Living in close quarters. Learning how the other half lives, so to speak; I'm sure I was surprised to find that not everybody lived the way we lived.

Clarissa was a big influence in my life. Once I met her...I really, really wanted to try police work when I was still in college. I just felt that this was something where I could do some good. But I just couldn't see my way clear to spending another year in school. She decided when she hired me that my career path was close enough. She felt that it was a companionable program. You're working with kids in both areas. Not all the other gals that were hired came out of the criminal justice program. Jane was a teacher; Ardith, she was in a social work kind of vocation.

I can't say that I've had any regrets. I would like to have stayed in police work longer than I did. I feel so far removed from it now with all the advances in technology. I tried to keep up for awhile, kept in touch with the people I worked with, but it just got too hard. I never went back to school; never had any desire to, and I don't regret that.

Mary Kovacevich, U.S. Navy Commander (Retired)

Bessemer, Michigan

Mary Kovacevich was smack in the middle of eleven children born to Croatian immigrants in the mining country of Michigan's western Upper Peninsula. Their home was near the Colby Mine, in a part of town dubbed Colby Hill. She was born in 1918, six years after her parents emigrated and two months before her father, Tom Kovacevich, died in a flu epidemic. Her mother married another man by the same name, and the family went on to have six more children. She attended Catholic elementary school and graduated from Bessemer High School in 1937. She retired from the Navy in 1970 to return home to care for her mother, who has since passed away. She still treasures her friendship with Aileene Duerk, the first woman to carry the rank of Admiral. Culturally, nursing was an accepted profession for women in the workforce, which is one reason it was represented frequently among the work roles portrayed in Life. However, Mary's

> dedication to her profession likely would have garnered the same skeptical viewpoint with which Life profiled the young woman who was devoted to her teaching; a focus not on what she contributed and gained, but on what she missed out on and loss. Mary's story indicates that, as with the other members of the working women's culture, she didn't believe she missed a thing.

My stepfather was a wonderful man. He worked in the mines for about forty-five years, always underground—various mines throughout the area. As they closed, he moved on and retired from the Geneva mine. My parents raised eleven kids on a very minimal wage. They were able to put us all through school—we went through the Depression years, no welfare, no nothing. They improvised. We rented land from the mining company and we grew our own vegetables and had animals; this whole Colby Hill area had our own animals. We had hayfields and we grew wheat—I remember when the Depression occurred, we took to the fields and we grew wheat. In the fall the women in the area, about fifteen, helped my mother harvest. It reminds me of the portrait, *The Reapers*—the women bending over and cutting with the sickle. Fifteen of them, they cut and tied the wheat. My father at that time owned a Ford ten-and-a-half truck. He hauled the wheat to the mill and out of that we harvested nine hundred pounds of flour and six hundred pounds of bran [for the animals].

My father had a Case car, one of the first cars that was produced after the model T. It had isinglass windows. The back of the front seat had folding chairs, and we'd stick a board across it and all of us could pile into that car. We could pile eight or nine kids and go wherever we needed to.

It was a wonderful life. All the family was tied together. We stayed that way for the rest of our life. During the war there were six of us in the service—two nurses. My

sister Helen was in only six months, but for awhile there were four brothers, my sister Helen and I in the service. So my mother had that little panel with six stars on the door.

We were poor, but we were never hungry. Two cows, pigs, a hundred chickens . . . We had plenty. After we did our harvesting, we would give food to the neighbors if they needed it. During the Depression years [my father] only worked one day a week, so there was not too much money coming in. We had purchased forty acres of standing timber, and we harvested the timber. The two boys were in their teens by this time so they harvested the timber and we sold it. My father could do anything. That man knew mechanics. He even built us a circular saw out of a Model T Ford, and with this lumber out of north Bessemer he'd saw it into chunks. He made the drive belt out of a piece of fire hose.

After I graduated from high school 1937, I was enrolled and accepted into a business school in Kalamazoo, but my mother became ill and my two older sisters were already in college. Somehow they had the funds to send us to college. I was the oldest girl at home and I had to take care of the children behind me, and there were still six of us, maybe seven. The following year, my father said, "What are you going to do about your education?" My father wanted some of the children to go to college. My parents were derided for the fact that they were sending girls to college at that time; the neighbors thought it was terrible. They should have been engaged, married, raising kids. The son of another immigrant was a pathologist at the University of Wisconsin at that time. He encouraged father to educate the children. The boys didn't want to go, so he sent the girls.

My sister Ann went to St. Scholastica. Alice, to St. Mary's in Duluth, Minnesota. That was a three-year nursing program. Ann and I were in the five-year nursing. My sister Helen convinced me that I shouldn't go to nursing. As a child I had pneumonia, and back then there were no antibiotics; if you had the strength and lived, you might have a future. My sister said, "Nursing is too hard for you." When fall came, my father said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "If I can't go to nursing school I think I'll just be a bum." The next day he packed me in the car and off we went to Duluth.

For some reason I always wanted to be a Navy nurse. But I was missing two molars; I was underweight. So I couldn't pass the physical. I didn't know how to swim. But when the war came on, I took a chance. I was three months from finishing the five-year course. I signed up in the fall of 1942, and was called to active duty.

My first duty station: the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Norman, Oklahoma. I wondered what the Navy was doing inland, but they had a huge technical training center there. I was commissioned an ensign in 1944 and then orders to the hospital soon followed. I wanted to be with my friend [I had enlisted with], but it didn't happen. My orders came; I had to go. My friend had already gone. So there I was; a very backward, extremely timid, frightened youngster, on my way via troop train to Norman, Oklahoma. I had never been farther away than Duluth. On the way, we encountered floods, and the train was delayed. So when I arrived in Norman, I was AWOL, so everyone knew me as the AWOL nurse.

Forever vivid in my mind is my initiation to the Navy nurse corps. It was a two-hundred-bed patient hospital. After reporting to the chief nurse's office—I was in civilian uniform—she donned a Navy nurse cap on my head and, arm-in-arm, we went down to a

sixty-five bed ward. No instruction, no orientation. I knew nothing about the Navy or the lingo. The head? What was that? The galley? A sixty-five-bed orthopedic ward, with sixty patients, and no one to show me what to do. I just went to work.

In 1946, I was going to go on to get my master's. I had a B.S. in nursing and applied to the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. I couldn't get in because of the demand; under the GI bill, everyone was going to school. During that time I worked at Henry Ford Hospital, then Carney Hospital in Boston. Ann was teaching in Boston. Then I got my notice that I was accepted. I graduated in 1949 with a B.S. in nursing ed., then Korea came along. I was recalled for Korea and that ended my master's degree.

I was a lieutenant JG when I was recalled. This was 1951. As I moved along, the responsibilities became a little greater. I served as lieutenant JG in the Great Lakes Naval Hospital in northern Chicago, was promoted to lieutenant, then remained in military after that. By 1954 I was at Charleston Naval Hospital in Charleston, South Carolina, as a surgical nurse.

You had to live in quarters. You could not be married; if you got married, within forty-eight hours you were discharged. Later it became if you were pregnant you were out. Now those things don't matter. You had a choice of either getting married or making a career bid. I did think about it but it didn't bother me. I just went for it. From Charleston, since I had degree, they felt I was capable of teaching. In the Navy I did everything...From Charleston, I got orders to Bainbridge, Maryland, and began teaching hospital corpsman in nurse practices. In 1956 I transferred to hospital corps school at Great Lakes, in Illinois.

At first if you were in the Naval Reserve you could not go into the regular Navy, but then it opened up; if you stayed as regular, then retired at twenty years, you could get seventy-five percent of rank held. I signed up for regular Navy in 1957 and was promoted then to commander; I had been promoted to lieutenant commander earlier. In 1962 I went back down to Charleston, in a third tour, as assistant to the chief nurse. Then I went to Guam, assistant chief nurse, as a commander; from Guam I got orders to Vietnam in 1966 as a commander on the *U.S.S. Repose.*

My parents were very proud of the fact that I was in. They were all for this country. Having been born in Croatia, under communist rule quite a bit of the time—they were under Hapsburg and then Tito. I think that's why they escaped. They encouraged me. My father Tom was in World War I in Germany. He was a corporal. They were always suppressed over there in Europe. They weren't ruled by a Croatian government; they were ruled by Austria or Hungary or, when their parents were living, King Peter, who was Croatian.

I have been to Croatia five times. My mother was born in a thatched roof home with a dirt floor. Isn't it remarkable that out of eleven children, brought up in the Depression years, we did so well? Everyone married, except for me. In the military, you establish relationships but not for long; you get orders and off you go. I did my own thing. When I was in the service I did date. I thought, I don't really have to get married. By time I was lieutenant commander, there was no reason to be married. I was self-sufficient. It never bothered me. When my mother got sick toward the later year, I was able to get leave. The military was wonderful; I would highly recommend it. Along with the hard work, there was a compensation in that after work, you had your friends and you

can do what you want. In civilian life, there are more rules that you have to follow than there ever were in the military. There weren't restrictions. As long as you did your job, no one bothered you. I never second-guessed. Never ever.

I felt that it was a security matter. Especially my parents influenced me in that regard. When you heard the term Communist, my parents knew what communism was all about. My parents told me, they can't be trusted. I never worried about getting hurt or hit or anything. I never gave it a thought. I knew that there was some reason for worry, but I never was of that nature.

We never were paid at the same rate [as men]. Until 1950 we held relative rank, until the federal government approved the Navy Nurse Corps. I may have held a rank of lieutenant, but I was not paid the same as my counterpart male. But to me, it never was [an issue]. I had enough to manage on and I sent some money home. I had nothing as a child, so I think my attitude was much different. My attitude was, "I never had anything until I got in the Navy and things are great now. I can help my parents. It's payback time."

I was happy to be in the Navy. That's what I wanted all my life. I saw this picture of a Navy nurse, and I thought, oh, if I could get in the Navy that would be something. That was my ambition all my life. And when the war came on, I said, I bet I can get in now.

I never gave any thought to any increases in my rank. I just did what I had to do and I loved being in the Navy. As I progressed through the years, my promotions came right on time. Still, when I left there was only one admiral in the Navy, Aileene Duerk, and she was in Washington D.C. Imagine—it took until 1970.

I signed up with Frannie Floriano, from Hermansville, Michigan. For some reason they put her in the regular Navy and me into the reserve Navy. So there I was, petrified when I got my orders; there I was, all alone, I had to go into the Great Lakes Naval Hospital, pass a physical, had to take a train, a cardboard suitcase, with all my worldly possessions. I was a timid person all my life. I was so timid and backward, coming from the woods up here, but I was determined I was going to do anything I wanted to do. If in my own mind I wanted to do it, I knew I could do it. [The neighbors] would tell my mother, "Why are you educating women?" That always came up. I'd say, "What's the difference?"

I may be different from a lot of people. I don't approve of a lot of things that the NOW [National Organization for Women] people do. I don't see a balance all the time with them. I don't always sway toward the feminists. You can do whatever you want to do. Nobody helped me get through all those promotions. Here I am and all those years I got those promotions only on merit; I didn't need any NOW person to help me get through my life. If I felt in my own mind I could do something, I'd do it.

My parents never thought that way. They'd say, "If you can do it, if you think you can do it, do it. Whatever it takes." My parents were different. None of the other women in the neighborhood ever went to school. Then here comes this Kovacevich family; they're educating women.

My mother didn't have one day of school, either there or in this country. Not one day. My mother couldn't speak English. If she could speak English, she could have been a lawyer. She had that natural intelligence. You couldn't fool her on anything. She had

the smarts. She even went to night school. But I don't know how she did all this; putting kids through school.

Because of the fact that she didn't have day one education, at all, she encouraged us. Every one of us graduated from high school. We were allowed to pursue whatever field we wanted to. There were no limitations. My mother would say, in Croatian, 'Whatever bed you make, you sleep in it.' That was the way it was. You wanted to do well, because in the eyes of your parents, you wanted to look good. My mother, she was so proud.

A woman was out of the picture. I knew that. But it didn't bother me. I always felt, this was America. My parents came here so that they could escape that repression. I thought, "I'm in America. I can do what I want." I just didn't let that bother me. I was aware of that; the male figure was always up here and the woman down below, always, but it didn't bother me. I just did what I wanted to do and proceeded. And it seems like I didn't really have any trouble. I had a good family background; nothing to bother me.

Anita Schanning, Nurse (Retired)

Ironwood, Michigan

Anita Schanning was born in Antigo, Wisconsin, just outside of Rhinelander, in 1930, the oldest of three daughters of Alita and Wally Freedstrom, and the only child until she was seven. Her father was an assistant manager for Montgomery Ward; her mother had been a teacher, but quit when she got married; "At that time," Schanning says, "when you were a teacher you were supposed to stay an old maid." After graduating from Luther L. Wright High School in Ironwood in 1948, she attended the three-year registered nurse program at Augustana School of Nursing in Chicago. She married Harry Schanning, a patient at the Veteran's Administration hospital in which she worked, in 1952. Her story clearly was not one portrayed in Life: She married a divorced, disabled man; often was in the position of being a primary breadwinner in the home; and dreamed as a child of her career, not her home life. In addition, many of the

families with whom she worked resembled little, if at all, the culturally accepted suburban families portrayed in the media.

I had known since I was a little kid I was going to be a nurse. Teaching and nursing were the only fields open to women. I attended the Augustana School of Nursing in Chicago—the three-year program to RN. It was a year-round round program; it cost $110 for three years of nurses' training. When I went back and got my bachelor's degree, in 1981, at Milton College, Milton Wisconsin, I then became a school nurse in the Ironwood district.

We didn't accept the Japanese; not after their sneak attack at Pearl Harbor! My husband had been injured in Korea. He was a paraplegic there for rehabilitation. After we got married, we moved to Kalamazoo and he worked for an uncle of his in accounting.

I'm a people-liker. I enjoyed taking care of people. I liked the personal contact. I think you got more good feelings about it than bad. I was going to join the service when I graduated from nurses' training. My parents, they couldn't believe it. They said, "Here we got three girls, and what happens? They want to join the Navy!" I don't have any regrets that I didn't.

I was Lutheran, and I was going with a Catholic. I had options about getting married. I was living on my own, doing fine. My mother didn't want me to get married, mainly because Harry was a paraplegic. My mother, she'd put a real guilt trip on me. My dad said, 'Of course you're going to get married—in Ironwood.' He liked the guy I was going to marry. We were closer because of the fact that when I was seven7, I got a little sister that had a handicapped hand, and having another one fifteen months later, I kind of became my dad's gal.

My father was very supportive of me. My mother said I had to go to school in Duluth [Minnesota] so I could come home and baby-sit. Augustana was the one I really wanted to go to. I was babysitting one night, filling out the application for St. Luke's and crying the whole time. My dad came in and he said, "Well, why are you crying? I thought you wanted to go to St. Luke's." I said, "I want to go to Augustana." He said, "Anita, they're not your children, they're our children. We'll take care of them. Now, do you have an application for Augustana?" We filled it out right there. We didn't tell my mother until I was accepted at Augustana.

I worked full time up until 1960. My husband had been married before and had two sons. Their mother sent them to live with us in June of 1960. Right before they came, we had adopted Debra. So we had three kids in six months: Debra was two months old, and the boys were nine and eleven.

At first we were both working. My husband was one who would help with the cooking; he's a good cook. Then Harry decided to go back to school and I was the only one working. You learn to live on what you make. When he went back to school, I was the only income. He graduated from Illinois in 1958, with a master's degree in history and political science. Then we moved back to Kalamazoo, he went back into accounting in Kalamazoo and the children came. We had just bought a house. We hadn't planned on filling the house quite as fast as we did.

My husband died in 1965, and in 1970 I moved back to Ironwood. I can't say I really have any regrets. I moved back to Ironwood because my dad and my husband died two months apart. Everyone said, "Someone should be up here taking care of your mother." I came up to Ironwood; they were building a new hospital, but fortunately I got

the job as school nurse. I worked for twenty years as a school nurse. Now my daughter is a nurse, at Grand View Hospital [in Ironwood].

You know, we all came from nice, stable, loving homes. You think everybody did. When I came back as school nurse, did I get my eyes opened. I didn't realize the family relationships. What some of these kids went through at home; the homes that they came from were absolutely terrible.

Donna Maki, Former Telephone Operator, Seamstress, and Supervisor

Ironwood, Michigan

Donna Maki was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, in 1930. Her only sibling, brother Leon, was eleven years younger. She moved with her family to Duluth, Minnesota, when she was four, and then to Ironwood at ageseven7, where she has lived ever since. Her father, who did not attend school past the eighth grade, managed a shoe department at a local retail store, then opened his own shoe store in 1940. Her mother, who had attended business school, was a homemaker. She graduated from Luther L. Wright High in 1948, and went straight into the work force. In many ways, hers is a story that would fit the cultural construction: she worked out of financial necessity. However, due in part to the region of the country in which she lived, her work sometimes involved long commutes and odd hours. Her favorite work—that of being a telephone operator—was work that frequently was seen in Life, particularly in the advertising campaigns. It was work she found gratifying, financially rewarding, and fun.

I had classmates who went into the service, and veterans in my class from World War II who had quit school and then come back to school to get their diplomas. We feared the Russians. They kept talking that the Russians were going to bomb us.

After high school, I wanted to go to college. My mother wanted me to go to work, get some money and buy some clothes. So I did; I bought two fur coats. I graduated on Friday; started work on Monday. I worked for Michigan Bell, on the switchboard. You

picked up the telephone and I said, "Number, please." We had to test the number on the switchboard to see if it was busy. Then we could put your call through.

Then I met Roland, and got married on August 5, 1950. I met him at the bowling alley. Kept my job until I was six months pregnant; worked until March or April of 1951. The company said you had to quit six weeks before your baby was due.

We were the highest paid women in Ironwood. We made $35 a week. We made a lot more than the girls in the dime stores. But then Roland said I had to stay home with the baby. I liked all the girls I worked with. I liked the guys who repaired the equipment. It was hard work, especially when there was a big fire over in Hurley; it was nothing for them to call me out at midnight to come and work the switchboard. And I liked the people. It was a lot of fun. The only thing I didn't like was the hours; you worked swing shifts or split shifts.

Sometimes I wish I had done things differently. I got married too young. That's too young. You shouldn't go from your mother's house to your husband's house. You should have some time in between. But there was a stigma attached.

So I had two kids, three years apart. Then in 1957, I worked part-time for my father selling shoes; much to my dismay. He needed part-time help. I only did it because he needed help. My grandmother came and babysat, twenty-one hours a week. Yes, we needed the money, but Roland didn't think so; he thought I should be home with the kids. None of my friends worked.

Later on, in 1964, I got a job at Munsingwear as a sewer in Ashland; it was thirty-two miles, forty-five minutes, one way. I rode the bus to work. It was a full-time job; I left at 4:30 in the morning. The kids got themselves off to school. I was looking for a

paycheck. Then after my father died, I managed the shoe store. I also worked at Kodiak, then at Iron Wood Products, and I was manager of construction at a trailer building company. There were only two women in the trailer factory, but I was the boss. I was talking to [former state Senator] Joe Mack one day and he asked how it was going. I said I had nine men who worked for me and I told them what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

Of course, I cleaned the house. I cooked. The boys would do the supper dishes.

I saw people like the Cleavers at the resettlement [the housing development in which she lived]. But I don't know how happy they were. You always had that [the war] in the back of your mind; Russia. Korea. You had friends over there. We'd sit and watch the TV and see what was going on. We used to get the right channel and it'd get snowy, and then it would clear up and we'd watch some more.

I wish I hadn't gotten married as young as I did. I wish I had gone to school. There were so many things I wish I had done that I didn't do. We were married for thirty years before I went on a trip without him. I went to Connecticut, for three weeks, with my daughter-in-law and grandson]. I wouldn't give up my boys, but I still feel I missed a lot.

EPILOGUE

MY MOTHER'S STORY

Marlys Pozega was born December 14, 1930, in Bessemer Michigan, the second of four children of T. Oscar and Mildred Maki—the "T." stood for "Toivo," a common Finnish name at that time. She was born in the home in which she would live with her family throughout her childhood and early adulthood, a home which she and her siblings still own and share during family vacations, although their parents are deceased. She graduated from A.D. Johnston High School in 1948 and, eventually, earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Michigan State University. She was an elementary school teacher for twenty-five years and has been married to Paul Pozega, a retired high school teacher and coach, for almost fifty years. They had four children, all of whom were born in quick succession. Her story, as do the previous stories, illustrates various differences between the culturally constructed lives of women in the 1950s and the actual lives that women lived. She entered the workforce automatically, without really considering whether she had options, although she did start work on a college degree—a degree she would not finish until her children were born. For a short time, she was among the rapidly growing number of young, single women who moved to an urban area to work and form friendships. Later, she was among those who stayed home briefly with young children. Like the other women, she faced challenges rarely seen in the pages of Life or depicted in other media of the time.

I was the second to the oldest of four. My brother was a little over two years older than I was. I was the only girl for eleven years. Then my sister Judy was born; another eleven years later, my sister Janet was born. We were all born in a different decade; do you believe that? Roland was born in the 1920s; I was born in the 1930s; Judy was born in the 1940s; Janet was born in the 1950s. That just happened to be the way it fell.

My father was the son of a logger, so he himself was what you call a swamper at the logging camp. He did that until he married my mother, in 1927. Then he, from then on, worked at the county as a mechanic. He took classes through the mail and

studied to learn how to do that. I remember him studying out of this big book. So he was self-educated, and he did that job his whole life. He was twenty-one when he got married; my mother was nineteen. My mother was the oldest of four kids, and she was the only girl. Her parents came from Sweden; Grandpa's came from Finland. In those days, Finnish people were, and even in the Upper Peninsula still are, very clannish. So they were very upset when my dad married my mother, because they didn't think she was good enough to be a part of that family. All my dad's family spoke Finnish, so my mother never even knew what they were saying. Plus, my dad's parents lived right next door, in that green house, you know. It was very hard for my mother. [My dad's mother] was always criticizing my mother; whatever she said, my dad had to interpret. They never communicated.

My mother never worked outside the home until 1968, at which time she went to work at a resort in Wisconsin. She drove fifty miles a day, every day and came home every night. She worked at Dairyman's Country Club in Woodruff, Wisconsin, doing general housekeeping for the resort. Then one time she went off the road in the winter and was upset, so she quit that job and got a job at Powderhorn Mountain, a ski resort, cleaning rooms there, until about 1975.

In 1948 I graduated from high school. At that time, being a small high school—ninety-seven graduated in my class—they interviewed each person individually and asked them what they wanted to do. I said I wanted to go to college; I wanted to be a teacher. But I didn't know how I was going to do it because my parents didn't have any money. I didn't know what was going to happen after that, but one day this man that interviewed me came to my house and told my mother and

dad that he had arranged for a scholarship for me, fully paid, plus a part-time job in Ironwood at the dime store. So I was able to pay. It was Mr. Hough; he might have been from the community college. I went 1948 to 1949.

Then what happened...I don't know if it was him again, but somebody told me there was a job open and that there was a doctor looking for a secretary or a receptionist. The way it is in the U.P., everybody is very conscious of what nationality you are. He was Syrian, so thinking back, he probably was happy to hire me because I was Finnish and there were lots of Finnish people up there. That probably was good for his practice, because of the difference in the nationality, which up there was very important, and still is. So I worked there from the fall of 1949 to June of 1952. He always took me home to his house for lunch and his wife always had lunch for us. And so it was just almost a daily thing that I would go there.

And then, probably in the spring of 1952 . . . this was a large office with three examining rooms and his office at the end, the receptionist up here in front and the lab in the middle. He had this buzzer and he would buzz me if he wanted me to bring something or test something—I did do some lab work there, which he had taught me how to do. It got to the point when I would go in there he would just grab me when I went in the door. That happened about three or four times, maybe over a week or maybe even two weeks. That's when he made me a proposition: he could give me all these things, a car, a fur coat, anything that I wanted, and that his wife wouldn't care; she's very understanding and all this. I didn't know what to do. So when he went home that one day I called his wife on the phone before he had a chance to get home. I told her what was happening, because she had been so nice to me, and she would

wonder why I was quitting. I told her, I cannot stay here. I told her what was happening, and you know what she said? "It's OK with me." I thought, "Lordy, Lordy!" But that's what she said; "It would be all right with me." There wasn't anything I could do then; I just had to quit.

Then I had a problem, because my job was considered to be a good job. I made thirty-five dollars a week in a check, but he always gave me ten dollars in cash. It was like a gift. I had that from the first week I started. So that was considered to be a good job. And so of course, then I went home and I had to tell my mother and dad I quit my job. Well, they thought I was crazy; why in the world would I quit a job like that? It was one of the best jobs in the area, making all that money, you know. I used to pay them room and board, of course, so that ten dollars I just always gave to them. At that time that was reasonable. And I just didn't think I'd ever be able to tell them what happened, but they just wouldn't let up on me. They just kept asking; they couldn't understand. Finally I told them what happened. Well my dad was so mad; he was putting his coat on. He was going to go to Ironwood. He was going to tell him where to go. My mother had to stop him from going. I didn't want to cause any problems; he was a strong, influential doctor and my father was a mechanic. So my mother stopped him.

That was the end of that; he never bothered me any more, except I had to have another job then. So every time I heard there was a job, I would interview. And when they would call him for a recommendation he would give me a terrible recommendation. I didn't know that until I applied at Johnson Music Store. When I went in there and interviewed, he said, "I'll let you know tomorrow." Well, he called

me up and said, "I just had to tell you that Dr. Albert gave you a terrible recommendation, but I know what he's like, and I would hire you if you couldn't see or hear and couldn't even walk. The job is yours if you want it." I never knew what he was saying about me.

Well, by that time it was probably June, and [my classmates] Marlys Gustafson and Laverne Eastman were in Chicago. They called me and told me why don't I come down there instead? So I never did take the job at Johnson Music Store. So—I can't believe I did this—there used to be a train that went out of Ironwood, and—my mother and dad were just beside themselves when I did this—I got on the train, they dropped me off at the station, and took the train to Chicago and took a cab to where they lived on the south side. And then I had to have a job.

I didn't want to ride the buses, so I found this job in the paper for putting venetian blinds together and it was six blocks from where they lived. So I took that job. All I did all day was stand there and put those slats in the venetian blinds. I did that all day, every day. It wasn't really what I planned to do, but I was a small-town girl and Chicago was a pretty big place. I didn't want to go downtown to the Loop but I wasn't afraid to walk six blocks.

In the middle or end of August, that's when dad was discharged from the Marines—from Korea. I had dated him before he entered the service. He called Bessemer—I wasn't in touch with him at that time—and he called from Indiana, his sister's house, to Bessemer to tell me that he was coming home. My mother told him I was in Chicago, so he called Chicago and told me he would stop in, which he did. Well, I just decided to go back to Bessemer. Never even quit my job; just left. Never

even got my last paycheck. Never even went back. I think there I was making fifty dollars a week, but that was Chicago. My roommates, they had office jobs, both of them. I don't know where they went; they took a bus someplace. I was making good money. I know we all split the groceries and bills. The apartment? It was a "no-bedroom." It had a couch that opened up and we all three slept on the couch. Took turns sleeping in the middle. All it had was a kitchen, a living room and a bathroom. That's all.

For fun, we used to go out to the bars because that's what everybody did. But it was always where we could walk; well, we did take the bus sometimes. I remember we met some guys from Oklahoma, just a friendly thing. They were always there. They had been there awhile. So it was just fun thing. Went down to the Loop and went on those carnival rides, the roller coaster, the dunes in Indiana—I assume we took the bus there. It was fun; I probably would have stayed there if dad hadn't come through that way. I rode back to Bessemer with him on the train. He wasn't home for two weeks when all his friends were discharged too. And they said to dad, "We're all going to Michigan State; why don't you come too?" In those days you didn't have to apply that far ahead. So again, here I'm up there now with no job. So, dad was in East Lansing for probably a month, and he said, "Why don't you come down here and get a job?" So, I thought, well, I didn't even know if I could get that Johnson Music Store job anymore.

I went down there on the bus. And I met this girl on the bus; she was staying in Gilchrist Hall in East Lansing and she asked me where I was going. I said, "I'm going to East Lansing." She said, "Oh, are you going to go to Michigan State?" I said,

"No, my boyfriend lives there." I had no place to live; she said, "Well, you're going to stay with me then; you can stay with me for a couple days until you find a place to stay." Here this girl I never met...so I stayed with her a few days, and in that time I found a room, at 407 Grove Street, the upstairs of a house. There were four girls who stayed there, two in each room. That worked out good; nice girls. I stayed with a girl from Minnesota. It worked out well. The girl I lived with had a job and was earning money so she could go to school next year.

At that time, I worked at Michigan State for three months, till December. I should have never quit to go up north for that two weeks at Christmas. But I did. Then when I came back I had to find another job. Then this time, I found a job at the Michigan State Nurses Association, which was downtown, in the Hollister building, and I stayed with that job until dad graduated, in 1956.

We got married in 1953. At Christmas of 1952, Dad's mother told dad she thought he should give me a ring because she liked me and thought I was a nice girl. So dad bought me a ring. Can you imagine Grandma saying that? So then we got married the following September, after dad had completed one year at Michigan State. I had only been up there [to his mother's house] two or three times. The first time, they had that little dog Tiny and he didn't like me at all. He was always biting at my ankles. But I don't think I was up there more than three or four time before we decided to get married. But she was very nice. I used to see [his sister] Mary because she lived in Hurley, and [his brother] Bob was still in high school, so I knew who he was. [His sister] Theresa was still in high school, too, so I knew her. But not well.

After we got married we moved into what was called the barracks. They were just tarpaper buildings with four units in a building. It was by the stadium. Called Hawthorn Lane, but it's not there any more. At that point, we weren't worried about war; the part that I remember is in the 1960s when we built our house where we live now, they asked us if we wanted to have a bomb shelter built, because at that time people who were building houses were building bomb shelters in the basement. But at that point it didn't seem to be a scary thing any more. But I remember the builder asking about it.

I always wanted to go back to school. I knew I wanted to be a teacher. But then it was hard. Our rent was only twenty-seven dollars a month, so that was good. Dad went under the GI bill, but still we never had any money and never were able to save any. So I couldn't figure out how I would go to school. So I didn't go; I just kept working.

I had a baby in March of 1955. He died in July. I had gone back to work; that was the part that was too bad. I always felt that I should have been home, you know. But this one girl, there was another girl at work who had a baby at the same time and she had a baby sitter and she knew somebody who she knew would do it. So she babysat, oh, until June probably. We didn't go up north that June. But then Aunt Judy came down and she was babysitting. I couldn't stay home, and dad was going to summer school. He was taking classes, and Judy was there to baby-sit. She was only thirteen, and thinking back, I think that was too young. But at that time Grandma said, "I know she can do it. She was really good with Janet." And it most likely wasn't her fault; it was hot, hot, hot. And the barracks were very, very hot. They did an autopsy

of course; they have to do that. And on the death certificate, it said . . . I think it was dehydration and suffocation. I guess when Dad came home after his classes he found him in his crib. But it was too late. He always woke up in the morning before I went to work but that morning he didn't. He was sleeping. I always went in in the morning and picked him up, but that morning, I didn't; I figured, you know, he was sleeping; I didn't want to wake him up.

It had an impact on the way I raised you kids. I was always so overprotective of all three of you. That's why I never let you do anything I thought you were going to be hurt on. Overprotective. I know I was.

Well, we went up north then. We really didn't have any money to bury him; he's buried on top of Dad's father in the cemetery, and there's just a stone there. That was a sad thing. I came back, and went back to work; it was eighteen months later that Joan was born. I wanted all you kids together because I was afraid something was going to happen to Joan, then, and then to you, and then to Paul. That changed the whole way you kids were raised; we probably would have let you have a lot more freedom. The people next door to us in the barracks had a baby the same age. You could hear him crying sometimes, and you just could hardly stand it. That happened in 1955 and we stayed there until dad graduated in 1956. So it was a whole year. He looked like Joan; dark, with curly hair like Joan.

Joan was born in 1956, you in 1957, Paul in 1959. I had decided that I wouldn't go back to work until Paul was in first grade. Then when Paul was in first grade Dad said, "You wanted to go back to college; why don't you go now?" Grandma had always said, "be a nurse; marry a doctor." That's why I went into

nursing at first and got my pin; when your mother tells you over and over again, "be a nurse," you know, that has an impact. But you kids were little and I had to be at the hospital at six in the morning and you kids were little, it was just too hard. So I changed and went into teaching, but all those science classes counted, so I didn't lose anything. Then I went into teaching and I was really glad I did that. It was an ideal thing for me to do. I graduated in 1969, when Walter Adams was president [of MSU] for only three months. His name is on my diploma.

It wasn't easy for me to get there. I had to go to Sexton [high school, where he taught], with dad. Then I'd take the bus to campus, then afterward take the bus back to Sexton and pick up the car and drove home, because you kids were home. Then I had to go back at six o'clock to pick up dad.

Dad really encouraged me to go to school. At that point, see, he wasn't making a lot of money. When he first started teaching [at a Catholic school], he was making only $4,000 a year, and we really weren't saving anything. We had no savings account. The only way we paid our taxes the first year was they gave him a hundred-dollar bonus and that paid our taxes. Winter taxes. If we didn't get that bonus...money was that tight.

I just knew that I wanted to go to school. I suppose by time I went, in 1964 or 1965, he was making enough money. But I only paid $169 a term for classes. So it wasn't that bad.

We bought our first house in 1956. It was way out on the south side. I didn't like that. That was all we could afford to buy, and Dad wanted to buy a house. He was always oriented toward making good decisions about money, and he didn't want

to payment. So we got that house for $9,000, and when we sold it we sold it for $11,500 nine years later. That wasn't that big of a profit, but at least it got us our [new] house. I didn't like living out there; it was too far out. But dad likes to live out.

After you kids were born, there's no way I would have worked during that time no matter how little money I had. No way. And Dad never asked me to work during that time. It was only when Paul was in school all day. I babysat for maybe a year. I wasn't looking to baby-sit, but they asked me. I liked being home because there were other people there. It was nice being with other people who had kids and you kids played all the time. You always had fun playing. It was a fun time. But it was hard; we never went out. The only time I ever went out was when there was a football game, and [neighbor] Ila would baby-sit. That's all I ever did.

My parents always wanted me to go to school, but they never had the money to pay. If they had had the money to send me right away, I'd have gone four years right away, no problem. You know, my own mother didn't graduate from high school till 1970. She always wanted to do that. Always. She had quit when she was in the eleventh grade; her mother needed help in the boarding house. She had to help out in the home; she was the only girl. But she always wanted to go back, and she did. I give her a lot of credit for that. Then they opened a practical nursing school at J.C. [the community college] and someone asked her to go. I said later, "Mom, you should have gone. You could have done it." She said, "I wish I would have." She was sixty-three years old when she graduated from high school. I sent her a graduation present, the same year I sent Janet a graduation present. I sent her a compact. On it was the Eastern Star.

It certainly was a different way of life, coming from Bessemer to East Lansing. Even though there were only twenty thousand kids there [at Michigan State] at that time, that was a lot of people for us, you know. It was a completely different way of life. But I liked it. I still like to go back to Bessemer, but I don't want to live there any more. I lived away more than I lived there. I lived there twenty years; I've lived here more than fifty. But it still is fun to go back there.

When you think back, the 1950s...that was a fast-changing time. Think of all the guys who used to come home from service, everyone wearing their uniforms . . . it was very common to see guys, Army, Navy, Marines in those dress blues. To have the passenger trains running, service men coming in and out—they used to come over and visit my mother and dad, the ones who had gone to school with Roland, because of course he was in the service too. It was a very patriotic time. Very patriotic.

I still wish there was a way I didn't have to work after I had the first child. But I guess there was nothing you could do. Other than that, I certainly was happy that I was able to have three more kids. It would have been terrible if I couldn't have had any more kids. But I was happy with my job. And teaching; I really enjoyed that. I did do exactly what I wanted to do.

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