

**THE HONORABLE BARBARA HACKMAN FRANKLIN**  
**“A FEW GOOD WOMEN...” A WATERSHED FOR WOMEN’S HISTORY**  
**PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
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*REMARKS AS DELIVERED*

Sandra Day O’Connor... Hillary Rodham Clinton... Condoleezza Rice... Madeleine Albright... Kay Bailey Hutchison... Dianne Feinstein... Nancy Pelosi... Ruth Bader Ginsburg. It’s an impressive roll call of powerful women. Most of us, especially those of you under age 40, probably don’t think twice about so many women holding important jobs.

But almost 40 years ago, when I first came to Washington, D.C. to work in the Administration of President Richard Nixon, such a list was unimaginable. You could count the number of women in the House and Senate on your two hands plus one toe. And, you wouldn’t have needed any additional digits for the women sitting on the Supreme Court or in the President’s Cabinet – because there weren’t any. Back then, the government – and the corporate world – was still very much the exclusive province of men.

Then, in the early 1970s, thanks to the pioneering efforts of “*A Few Good Women...*” and the support of the President, it all began to change.

Today, at Penn State, in the Library, you can see a special exhibit, showing photographs and quotes from those women leaders in the Federal Government in the 1970s. It illustrates the way these pioneering women transformed American life. They truly blazed the trail for the women who, today, are in positions of leadership in Washington, D.C., in state capitols, in corporate board rooms and in every realm of American life.

With this exhibit, as a start, we hope to ensure that generations of Penn State students and faculty can learn the story of these women. Thanks to the power of the Internet, the teachings of this exhibit, which includes a treasure chest of documents and a marvelous collection of oral histories, are now available to scholars, students and interested people wherever they live.

In the next few minutes, I’d like to take you back to how it was when “*A Few Good Women...*” started out and share with you a little bit about the time when America began to change for women.

**Opportunities For Women Were Limited**

Oddly enough, all of the social unrest of the 1960s, left women’s circumstances pretty much as they had been. The Civil Rights movement achieved historic breakthroughs for the rights of America’s black citizens. The anti-war movement upset our politics. But when that decade closed, women’s opportunities for leadership and/or a career

outside of the home remained just about as limited as they had been for generations before.

Yet, looking back, it seems that the seeds of change *had* been planted; they just took a little bit longer to germinate. An early seed in the 1960s was sown by Betty Friedan and her book *The Feminine Mystique*, which was published in February 1963. The book told the story of frustration and wasted talent because most women were denied the opportunity to expand their horizons outside of the home. That book became something of a rallying point, especially among young women like myself who were in college at the time. I know that all of the women in my Harvard Business School class read it – all 12 of us. And, we hoped that at least some of the 680 or so men in our class might read it also, so that their eyes would open. Very few of them did.

To that point in time, only two women had ever served in a President's Cabinet – Frances Perkins under President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940s and Oveta Culp Hobby under President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s. 180 years after George Washington appointed the first Cabinet, only two women had ever sat at the Cabinet table. It seems remarkable to think about that now. But, that's how it was.

In January 1969, Richard Nixon took the oath of office as President. Somewhat surprisingly and without great fanfare, that's when things began to change for women in government – and also in American life. As women began to advance in the Federal Government, the rest of the country had a model, and change began in many other parts of our society.

If you stopped somebody in the street today and asked them which party and which President initiated the process that brought women closer to political power, I suspect few would guess "Richard Nixon." Probably, they would expect the spark was lit by a liberal Democrat. In fact, it was a conservative Republican who first opened the door. Although, to be honest, I'm not sure it was initially on President Nixon's agenda. If not, it was a female journalist who may have roused him to action.

### **Vera Asks The Question**

Her name was Vera Glaser. At one of President Nixon's early press conferences, Ms. Glaser stood amid a forest of male colleagues, raised her strong, clear voice, and asked:

"Mr. President, since you've been inaugurated, you have made approximately 200 presidential appointments, and only three of them have gone to women. Can we expect some more equitable recognition of women's abilities, or are we going to remain the lost sex?"

The President seemed surprised, but he agreed: "We'll have to do something about that." It was a promise he kept.

President Nixon's pledge to Ms. Glaser triggered a chain of events that led to the appointment of a White House Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities. Virginia Allan, a well-known Republican businesswoman, chaired it, and Vera Glaser was among the others asked to join.

By the end of the year, the Task Force delivered a report entitled, "A Matter of Simple Justice." It contained five forward-thinking recommendations. One key recommendation was this: "The President should appoint more women to positions of top responsibility in all branches of the Federal Government, to achieve a more equitable ratio of men and women. Cabinet and agency heads should be directed to issue firm instructions that qualified women receive equal consideration in hiring and promotion." It also recommended creation of a White House office dedicated to advancing women in appointive positions. (That's the job I filled shortly thereafter.)

Exactly what happened next is still a bit unclear. But we believe that Robert Finch, Counselor to the President in the White House and former Secretary of what is now known as HHS, made it his mission to move these recommendations to implementation.

Another key player was Helen Delich Bentley, the Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission and a former journalist renowned for her salty language.

And, it didn't happen overnight. It was more than a year before that first promise to Ms. Glaser moved into the implementation phase.

### **President Nixon Acts**

But one thing we know, in December 1970, the President approved an action memo that ordered the implementation of many of the Task Force's key recommendations. A copy of this memo, with the President's handwritten notes, is one of the items in our exhibit here at Penn State.

In April of 1971, the President publicly announced a three-pronged initiative:

- **First**, he asked each Cabinet Secretary and agency head to submit an action plan for hiring, promoting, and advancing women in each department. He told them he wanted the plan by the middle of the following month.
- **Second**, I was hired away from Citibank in New York City to join the White House staff and recruit women for high-level jobs in government. I was also directed to build a talent bank of women and monitor progress by the departments and agencies on their action plans.
- **Third**, Jayne Baker Spain, who had been the CEO of a company in Ohio, was appointed Vice Chairman of the Civil Service Commission with responsibility for watching over the advancement of women in the career civil service.

And, President Nixon asked two Counselors to the President – Bob Finch and Don Rumsfeld – to oversee progress. Bob Finch, as I noted, had previously served in President Nixon’s Cabinet and was an early convert to our cause. Rumsfeld, as you know, later served as Secretary of Defense for President Ford and again for President George W. Bush.

We set out to double the number of women in top jobs – GS-16 and above – during the first year. We did better. Within nine months, we had met our full first-year goal. In April 1972, a year after we began, the number of women in policy-making jobs had tripled from 36 to 105. That sounds like a small number now, but it was a big deal back then.

Even more importantly perhaps was the nature of the jobs themselves. There were many “breakthroughs” – jobs women had never held before. In other words, we were blasting through glass ceilings. And, remember, every “first” makes it easier to fill that job with a woman the second time around and forever after that so that eventually gender would not even be a consideration.

And, we were building a permanent pipeline as well. Thanks to the President’s support, more than 1,000 women were hired or promoted into the middle management ranks of the career civil service. All of this occurred at a time when the Federal Government was reducing employment by 5%. For the first time, women were serving as generals, admirals, forest rangers, FBI agents, and even tugboat captains.

By March 1973, just two years after the effort got underway, the number of women in top jobs had quadrupled, and Anne Armstrong had become Counselor to the President with Cabinet rank.

President Nixon’s efforts to lift up women in the Federal Government spilled over into the rest of American society as he challenged the private sector, as well as, state and local governments “to follow our lead and guarantee women equal opportunity for employment and advancement...” Business leaders, state officials and sometimes governors themselves – came to my office to find out more about how we had achieved success.

The Nixon Administration effort is a powerful example of Presidential leadership that shows what can be accomplished with genuine commitment. It also shows how the stories that grab the headlines are not the only places where lasting change may be taking place.

Looking back now, we know that President Nixon’s actions brought gender equality into the mainstream of American life. He made equality “legitimate.” This legitimacy rippled through our society and helped create new opportunities for women in business, education, the professions, the arts and athletics.

Today, we take this equality for granted. But as someone who was once told she couldn't have a raise because "you're doing fine for a girl and besides you have a husband who works," let me assure you these changes were extraordinary.

In the 1960s, our society really didn't accept women in careers very readily. Those who were managing a career and a family were rather rare, and there was some societal pressure against being a "career woman."

But President Nixon threw himself unmistakably behind the cause of change, telling the nation in his 1972 State of the Union address, "While every woman may not want a career outside the home, every woman should have the freedom to choose whatever career she wishes, and an equal chance to pursue it." That was a bold statement by a man of that time and that generation.

### **The 1970s – Remarkable Advances Are Made**

And, with each year, the momentum built. Here's a few of the other things that happened during the first half of the 1970s:

- **Equal Rights Amendment** was passed by both Houses of Congress in 1972 after nearly 50 years of rejection. Sadly, the ERA never made it into the Constitution, falling three states shy of ratification. But the Congressional action signaled a new era in American life. President Nixon supported the ERA.
- **The Secretary of Labor** issued guidelines requiring all firms doing business with the government to have action plans for the hiring and promotion of women.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Act** became law in March 1972. It empowered the EEOC to bring lawsuits in Federal courts in cases of gender discrimination to enforce rights guaranteed under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- **Title IX** of the Education Amendments of 1972 passed, prohibiting discrimination in education.
- **The Roe v. Wade** case, 1973, before the U.S. Supreme Court resulted in a landmark decision regarding abortion.
- In 1974, Laws were passed prohibiting discrimination in credit and housing.

Those four years were a watershed era of advancement for women. Many people, working together, made it happen. Their stories are commemorated here at Penn State in the oral history project, "*A Few Good Women...*"

### **The “A Few Good Women...” Project Begins**

This project began because many of us who lived through this era wanted to document these pioneering efforts but did not know how to do this. Lee Stout, the head archivist at Penn State University at the time, who had been reviewing my White House papers, came up with the idea of an oral history project to collect the memories and stories of the pioneering women of the 1970s. We liked the idea and decided to do it.

It took a while to put this together – longer, in fact, than it took to hire all of those women in 1971 and 72. In 1996 we launched the “A Few Good Women...” project literally on a wing and a prayer to compile the oral histories, reports and documents of prominent women (and men) in the Nixon Administration. I found the funding for the project and also provided my Washington office as a base of operations. We now have collected 50 histories and are very close to completing the project. Some of those influential women included in this project are:

- **Virginia Allan**, former Deputy Secretary of State and Chair of President Nixon’s Task Force on Women’s Rights and Responsibilities.
- The **Honorable Anne Armstrong**, former Ambassador to Great Britain and Counselor to President Nixon.
- **Julie Nixon Eisenhower**, President Nixon’s daughter and accomplished author.
- U.S. Air Force General **Jeanne M. Holm**, former Director of Women in the Air Force recognized for making women “part of the mainstream military.”
- And many more...

Today, these oral histories belong, proudly, to the Penn State Library Archives, Special Collections. There is a website you can access to review excerpts. Historians, scholars, students and others are already reviewing the histories and lives of these women – heroines and role models – to learn about their courage and persistence in breaking barriers. Dean Nancy Eaton, Dean of Libraries at Penn State, has been enormously helpful with this project. So have Lee Stout and more recently Bill Joyce and Jackie Esposito.

The collection has been available for research for the past several years, and beginning today we are excited to give it a more public face. Lee Stout is helping us put together a coffee-table type book about the exhibit. And, Karla Schmit, Education and Behavioral Sciences Librarian at Penn State and Assistant Director of Pennsylvania Center for the Book, is preparing teaching aids for grades 6 through 12 to help young people understand the pioneering effort that opened new opportunities to women across America.

We’ve developed a relationship with the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, CA. Working with its director, Tim Naftali, we have linked our oral history project to the Nixon Library’s website. Next year the Nixon Library expects to have a permanent exhibit about women and will highlight this chapter of advances for women in the Federal

Government. We are also in the process of collecting links of other organizations where our “*A Few Good Women...*” interviewees have given their personal papers.

### **Some Samples From The Oral Histories**

So, that’s where we stand and we feel that we have come a long way. But before we conclude, let me give you a flavor of some of the women and their stories featured in “*A Few Good Women...*” Let me start with President Nixon’s daughter, **Julie Eisenhower**. Here’s what she said in her oral history:

“One thing Mother (Pat Nixon) felt strongly about, in 1971, is that a woman should have been appointed to the Supreme Court. As you know, my mother’s style was not confrontational. She did things in a quiet way. She tended to be very supportive of my father and she really didn’t think it was her role to argue policy with him, but I remember she was very strong about a woman on the Court. This was one instance where she really spoke up. I remember a family dinner where she didn’t tell him off, but she said I think there should have been a woman and I’m very disappointed.” (Pg. 20 of Eisenhower Oral History).

The failure to put a woman on the Supreme Court back then wasn’t for lack of trying. In fact, we worked hard to find a woman appointee to fill one of the two vacancies that arose on the court in 1971. But, at that time, there were not enough women in the pipeline and the few we found were not philosophically compatible with the President.

A woman by the name of Mildred Lillie, a local court judge from Los Angeles was briefly considered. Her name was floated by the Department of Justice as a trial balloon, but the American Bar Association was vitriolic in its criticism. So, no woman was appointed... but the idea of a woman on the Court was now out there.

Julie’s mother, Pat Nixon, was responsible for the first woman becoming a White House Military Aid. As Julie explained: “In 1970, which is really quite early in the women’s movement, my mother had the idea of why are they men? There should be women. So, that’s when they first began to have military aides who were men and women.”

Another pioneer was **Catherine May Bedell**, former Congresswoman from the state of Washington and Chairman of the U.S. Tariff Commission in the Nixon Administration.

In her oral history, Catherine tells a terrific “inside Washington story” about how sex got into the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She was serving in the House at the time.

“The Civil Rights Act was very very controversial. And of course, attempted to give equal rights on voting and civil rights to all classes of people, regardless of race and color. Somebody left sex out of there... And women were left out. So we wanted (to put gender in) – you had to get permission (for an amendment) after a bill had come out of committee. But of course, all bills have to go to the Rules Committee. And our wonderful Judge Smith, a famous man as far as

conservatism... (was concerned)... was very powerful on that Committee. And we went to him to get permission to offer an amendment ...when the Civil Rights Bill came to the floor... and said we wish to offer an amendment that would add the words shall not be discriminated against, that's already in there, but 'and sex.' He greeted us with all the courtesy of his great southern hospitality, 'Ladies, I'm so glad to see you, sit down here, and you know I'm not only going to allow you to offer that amendment, I'm going to get up on the floor of the House and offer it myself.'"

"Now, you know, that if the head of the Rules Committee offers an amendment, that was tantamount to getting it in. Of course, he really didn't fool us. He hated that Civil Rights Bill, and he was hoping that, if we put women in there, it would really kill it. We got to that day, he stood up, he offered the amendment, it passed, and then so did the bill." (Pg 2-4 in Bedell's September 29, 1997 Oral History)

One of my personal favorites is **Dixie Lee Ray**, a marine biologist I recruited from the University of Washington, to be a Commissioner of the old Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), now the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. She later became Chairman and then went on to become Governor of the state of Washington.

Dixie was one of the most unique characters to carve out a role in Washington, D.C. Her typical choice of attire was a blazer and white knee socks. She lived in a 28-foot motor home parked in rural Virginia and was chauffeured to the AEC offices in Germantown, Maryland, in a limousine. She had two dogs, a 100 pound Scottish deerhound named Ghillie and a miniature poodle named Jacques, who accompanied her to the AEC office. I once invited her to a meeting in the Roosevelt Room in the White House. The secret service wouldn't clear her dogs in and she refused to attend.

To quote another historical source: "Dixie Lee Ray was a highly idiosyncratic woman forced by the particular time in which she lived and held public office to break new ground. During the 1970s, public understanding of women in leadership was still evolving. Ray was judged and often condemned for her personal style, begging the question of whether another politician identical in every way save gender would have fared differently..."

The story of **Cynthia Holcomb Hall** offers a good insight into how Washington has changed. Today, we celebrate "power couples," but back then when Cynthia and her husband, John, both took government jobs it was something of a scandal.

I recruited her for a seat on the Tax Court of the United States. She was a partner in a law firm in Los Angeles. After the Tax Court, she served with distinction on the Circuit Court of Appeals, 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit. She still sits part time today.

We believe this was the first time a wife and her husband had served in a top position in the Federal Government. When I first approached Cynthia, she said, I don't think I

could do this. I'm a partner in one law firm. My husband is a partner in another and between us we have 6 children. We couldn't move to Washington.

Her husband was also a well known tax attorney. So, I reported her comments back to our White House team and we set about solving the problem. Here's how we did it. It happened that the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury knew John Hall from Harvard Law School. So we asked him to go to see John. He did and offered him the post of Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy. That way, both he and Cynthia could come to Washington together – and that's what they did. This move generated a lot of publicity because it apparently was a "first." Now having spouses in the same Administration is commonplace, but back then there was a lot of outrage because they were earning about \$76,000 in combined salary off the taxpayer.

Let me share one other story. This one is about one of the earliest advocates for women, the great suffragist, **Susan B. Anthony**.

Several women's groups (prodded by my White House office) got together to give a symbolic gift to the White House. They decided on a copy of a bust of Susan B. Anthony and had a bronze copy made of the one that resides in the U.S. Capitol.

Between the time "Susan" arrived and we were able to arrange a formal presentation to Mrs. Nixon, the Anthony bust resided in the closet in my office. In the dead of night she would steal out of the closet and make her way to the office of someone on the staff who had said something detrimental to women. And then the next morning, I would retrieve her and put her back in the closet. Ron Ziegler, the press secretary, and Pat Buchanan, the conservative speech writer, were favorite targets.

She was presented and stood for 15 years on a pedestal at the entrance of the East Wing of the White House.

I told this story to Tim Naftali at the Nixon Library. He persuaded the White House Usher's Office to find her. It turns out she was in the White House basement, and the Nixon Library plans to borrow her for the Library's permanent exhibit.

### **The "March of History" Continues**

These stories are part of what I like to call the "march of history" toward a day when a woman will be elected President of the United States. If we think about milestones, you will see that the pace of progress has accelerated rapidly since President Nixon and "*A Few Good Women...*" helped make the Federal Government a place where women could serve up to the limits of their individual ability. What follows is a sampling of "firsts" for women dating back to 1870.

- **1870. Victoria Woodhull** was the first woman to run for President. She ran on a platform of birth control and free love.
- **1916. Jeanette Rankin** (R-MT) was the first woman elected to the House of Representatives.

- **1920.** Women received the right to vote with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution.
- **1933. Frances Perkins**, Secretary of Labor, was the first woman in a President's Cabinet. (Administration of Franklin Roosevelt)
- **1953. Oveta Culp Hobby** as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare was the second woman in a President's Cabinet. (Administration of President Dwight Eisenhower)
- **1964.** The **Civil Rights Act** includes "sex"...and **Margaret Chase Smith** (R-ME) was noted as the first "qualified" woman to run for President.
- **1969. Helen Delich Bentley**, Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission, became the highest ranking woman in the Federal Government since Cabinet Secretary Oveta Culp Hobby.
- **1972. Anne Armstrong** became Counselor to the President with Cabinet rank. Earlier the Nixon initiative made breakthroughs in the appointment of women in government, in numbers and in jobs never before held by women. Equality for women became a mainstream value in our society
- **1973. Carla Hills** became Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the third woman to head a Cabinet department. (Appointed by President Ford)
- **1981. Sandra Day O'Connor** was the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court. (Appointed by President Reagan)
- **1984. Geraldine Ferraro** was the first woman who ran for Vice President on a national ticket (Democratic).
- **1997. Madeleine Albright** was the first woman Secretary of State. (Administration of Bill Clinton)
- **2005. Condoleezza Rice** was the first African American woman Secretary of State. (Administration of George W. Bush)
- **2007. Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA) was the first woman Speaker of the House.
- **2008. Hillary Clinton** became the first woman to come close to being a Presidential nominee (Democratic); **Sarah Palin** was the first woman to run for Vice President on a national Republican ticket

Philosophers have argued for a long time about whether people control events or whether events control people. Historians debate whether social movements are inevitable or whether they need a dramatic catalyst.

I don't know the answers to those grand questions. But I am certain that without the leadership of President Nixon, the pioneering work of the women of this exhibit, and the energy of many other men and women who believed in gender equality, women would not have the opportunities they enjoy today and our country would have been deprived of many great leaders just because they happened to be women.

Women in America have achieved a great deal. We vow to keep going!

Thank you.

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