



Veteran Feminists of America Newsletter

January 2008

VFA HONORS JUSTICE RUTH BADER GINSBURG AND LAWYERS JUNE 9, 2007



At the beautiful Harvard Club in New York City, VFA will honor the lawyers, women (and men) who guided the movement and forced the change of antiquated sexist laws. Special tribute will be paid to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg has worked tirelessly for women's rights, beginning in the early 1970s when she launched the

ACLU's Women's Rights Project. Since then and through her years on the Court she's been unrelenting in her defense of a woman's right to control her reproduction, a woman's right to define and achieve self-actualization and every woman's right to determine her spiritual imperatives and her place in society.

It promises to be a memorable day; old friends, stimulating panels, great food, elegant affair. (Photo: Ruth Bader Ginsburg by Steve Petemeyer)

Check lawyers.vetfems.org for info on reservations.

HELEN THOMAS AND DC-AREA PIONEER FEMINISTS HONORED OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT SEWALL-BELMONT HOUSE IN DC

This gem of a house is where Alice Paul and company planned the actions that finally resulted in the Suffrage Amendment of 1920. It's the house where Paul and cohorts formed the National Woman's Party and worked for years to get the ERA into the Constitution. Most of us didn't know until October 30 that the house was given to the NWP by the wealthy Belmonts so that women, coming into DC to lobby and demonstrate, would have a place to stay. This was necessary, as in those days only prostitutes stayed in hotels! That tidbit was part of the welcoming speech on a beautiful afternoon by Amy Conroy, Executive Director of the Sewall-Belmont.

The former back garden, now an auditorium, was filled with over 200 honorees and guests. After welcomes by Karen Mulhauser; Sheila Tobias (VFA Co-president and

Executive VP and Chair of Events), and Muriel Fox (VFA board chair), Barbara Love, who is responsible for the magnificent "Feminists Who Changed America" talked about the why, when and wherefore of her priceless project.

After a welcome by Audrey Sheppard, president of the NWP, emcee Maureen Bunyan stepped up to the mike and introduced Feminist Majority leader Ellie Smeal, who introduced Helen Thomas, the grande dame of the White House press, our special honoree of the day. Thomas, who served 57 years as White House bureau chief for United Press-International, covering every president since John F. Kennedy, graciously accepted our medal and special award. Her speech was short but strong:



She voiced her opinion of our country's leadership today, expressed dismay at the unraveling of women's rights and reminded us that the feminist movement doesn't have the clout it once had. After a standing ovation, Thomas stayed to see others honored before taking off. (photo: J. Ceballos & H. Thomas :by Lois Herr)

Bunyan presented the first honorees, Ellie Smeal, Kim Gandy, president of NOW, and former Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, and then read off the list of honorees, most who'd lived and worked in the DC area. Some, such as Bunny Sandler, Mary King, Heather Booth, Barbara Bergmann, Karline Tierney, Anne Turpeau, Allie Latimer, Mary Jean Collins and others had been honored many times by great institutions, but all honorees were just as thrilled to have their efforts acknowledged by their feminist sisters.

I closed the event by remarking what a wonderful organization VFA is. The applause said they agreed. Announcing that VFA is collecting mother-daughter-granddaughter stories for our webpage and ENEWS. I urged women to send stories of interest about their progeny, and then introduced my daughter Michele who, as a child, had demonstrated with us, and often helps me with VFA events today. Last year she held a memorial celebration for Betty

Friedan and this year organized an event for "Feminists Who Changed America." Both took place in Phoenix, where she's lived for the past 20 years.

VFA thanks co-chairs Karen Mulhauser (whose firm, Mulhauser & Associates, organized the event), Heather Booth, Sheila Tobias and all on the host committee who helped make this a super event.

Jacqui Ceballos/Helen Thomas: Photo by Lois Herr,

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF HOUSTON CONFERENCE, November 10-11, 2007

FREEDOM ON OUR TERMS - CARRYING ON HER MOTHER'S LEGACY Bella Abzug's daughter Liz was very young when she attended the famous conference in Houston that united feminists from around the country. But being Bella's daughter is enough to understand the importance of revving up the feminist community today when so many early gains are being scratched out. Attorney Liz, who teaches a course on women and leadership at Barnard College and Columbia University, founded the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute in Manhattan three years ago because, she said, there is a need to "mentor girls who feel and express that they haven't had good role models."

In 1977 Bella obtained federal funding for the conference and presided over it, marking the only time the federal government sponsored



a gathering of women for equality. With \$5 million from Congress organizers drew more than 20,000 attendees, including First Ladies Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford and Lady Bird Johnson. (At the 2007 event only a few politicians showed up, but presidential candidate Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton sent regrets.

There were to be annual conventions to continue working on the movement's goals, but dissension between President Carter and conference organizers affectively cancelled those plans, so there was left a long, unfinished agenda.

Thirty years later, the anniversary of this landmark event drew more than 600 people to Hunter College in New York. Liz was on stage with leaders from almost every feminist organization (except Veteran Feminists of America, one of the first to give support to the event), among them NOW president Kim Gandy and Feminist Majority's Ellie Smeal. Gloria Steinem, who was to give the keynote address, was attending a memorial service for her sister but returned to give the closing speech on the 11th.

Rosie O'Donnell, the only one the press was interested in, gave a quiet but passionate speech about the state of the

nation, the danger to our Constitution, the danger of the corporate-controlled media, and called for the impeachment of George W. Bush. She expressed her "horror beyond words that we have to fight again for our right to choose" and about having sustained strong public criticism for everything from her weight and lesbian orientation to her antiwar stance.

Gloria, whose appearance as always electrified the younger women, urged all to think of the 1977 conference as "simply one step" forward, which transformed individual groups and activists into a "national, populist movement with an agenda. But," she pointed out, "no movement that lasts less than a century stays in this culture, so we have at least 60 to 65 years to go."

"There has to be a re-energizing, a re-igniting between younger women, older women and women in between," Liz declared. "I want you to spread the word: Feminism is alive and well and moving into the 21st century." *Photo of Bella Abzug: Bettye Lane,*

BETTY FRIEDAN MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Virginia Watkins of Minneapolis, MN, VFA's secretary for the past six years, has formed a committee to see that Betty Friedan is not forgotten. On this committee are Mary Eastwood, Linda Stein, Amy Hackett, Mary-Ann Lupa, Ivy Bottini, and Jacqui Ceballos.

The Betty Friedan Permanent Memorial Committee will propose a stamp to the United States Postal Service.

This is in accordance with a resolution passed at the last VFA board meeting. The stamp cannot be issued until 2010 due to the policy that a person must have been deceased at least 5 years. But the proposal process is lengthy so its work has begun.

Ginny says, "We would like to honor Betty in many ways that are visible to the general public, such as statues, plaques, institution and street names," and urges everybody to consider opportunities in their locality." For instance, there is a Margaret Sanger Way on New York's Lower East Side. Suggestions from any of you who have "how to" knowledge of placements of this kind, would be valuable. More general ideas, particularly in regard to fundraising and other aspects are welcome as well. Please contact Ginny at ginnylsw@q.com.

(Painting: Betty Friedan by June Blum)



VFA MOURNS DEATH OF JUDITH MEULI

After a long battle with cancer, Judith Meuli died Friday, December 14, 2007 at her home in Los Angeles. She was 69 years old. Born and raised in Chippewah Falls, Wisconsin, Jude received a B.A. in Zoology and Chemistry from the University of Minnesota. She moved to Los Angeles in 1963 where she met Toni Carabillo, who was her partner until Toni's death. The two helped changed the face of the city.



An integral part of the backbone of the Second Wave, Jude co-authored "The Feminization of Power" and "The Feminist Chronicles," a detailed history of the modern women's movement. She co-founded the Women's Heritage Corporation, a publishing company that produced the Women's Heritage Calendar and Almanac and a series of paperbacks on such figures as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone. Also a graphic designer, she formed Women's Graphic Communications, which produces and distributes books, newspapers, political buttons, and pins. Jude designed many of the symbols and logos of the women's movement, including VFA's medal of honor.

A real estate developer, Jude designed and constructed a building to house the Feminist Majority media center and archives and made the first six-figure donation to the new capital campaign that will, in part, build a permanent home for the national NOW Action Center. She also donated a treasure trove of feminist history to the Schlesinger Library

at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute.

Judith was a staunch supporter of VFA and a member of the national board since its beginning. At a May 2006 event to honor Los Angeles-area pioneer feminists, VFA presented her with a special citation, the Trailblazer Award. The VFA board and membership sends condolences to her family, her partner Stephanie Palmer, and to all her friends. She was much loved, and will be sorely missed.

A celebration of her life will be held at the Feminist Majority's office in Beverly Hills on January 19, 2008 at 11 a.m. For more tributes to Judith online go to judithmeuli.com

NORMAN MAILER

On Saturday November 10, 2007, author NORMAN MAILER died at age 84. Mailer was a key figure in the early movement. Admired by men and women, his sexism was tolerated until Kate Millet outed him in "Sexual Politics" as a first class MCP.

In 1971 Mailer led a panel on women's liberation at Town Hall. VFA president Jacqui Ceballos, then president of NYC NOW, was on the panel with Germaine Greer, author of the bestseller "The Female Eunich"; Jill Johnston, Village Voice writer, and literary critic Diana Trilling.

As journalist Mary Reinholtz says "Mailer was indeed influential and an amazing writer unafraid to take on the big subjects, but that doesn't excuse his treatment of women."

Vaya con Dios, Norman. Thanks for helping move the Movement into high gear.

VISIT THE VFA WEBSITE! WWW.VFA.US

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If you haven't paid for 2008, PLEASE HELP KEEP US GOING! Your tax deductible dues are on a sliding scale. Regular is \$40, but pay whatever you wish, up or down (just \$5 will subsidize mailings)..

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