

## **MY LIFE/WORK DIRECTION**

### How Experiences Shaped My Vocation

From the time I left my first career—my 16 years in Pioneer Girls—I began to be formed by a series of experiences that were life-altering. In retrospect, I can see how these influences prepared me uniquely for the vocation that crowned the second half of my life — Life/Work Direction.

#### *Social and Political Awareness*

The years spent in graduate school at the University of Chicago during the turbulent decades of the sixties and seventies were mind-bending. I was a latecomer to political and social awareness. Although the inception of Pioneer Girls had occurred in major cities with ethnic and racial diversity— Chicago, Detroit, Toronto, Boston, Los Angeles, New York City and northern New Jersey—the organization quickly followed the trend of evangelical churches in the fifties as they gravitated to the suburbs. At the time I left the organization, racial tensions were felt in some areas, such as our nonsegregated camps. I could see the handwriting on the wall—that Pioneer Girls' largely conservative constituency would not readily respond to the challenges posed by the civil rights movement.

Attending the University and living on Chicago's South Side, I was located in the middle of racial tensions and in contact with fellow students much more radical in their attitudes. I found several outlets for my raised consciousness. I started teaching a Sunday School class in a biracial church in the blighted Woodlawn area bordering the University. I participated in sponsoring a national conference on race for concerned evangelicals. I joined a small biracial group of ministers and others in ongoing "Conversations on the City" where we supported one another in staying in the city when many white churches fled to the suburbs as the racial mix in city neighborhoods changed. And finally, when a small group of us conceived of starting the Urban Life Center, a residential program for college students, a major component of the program had to do with raising the consciousness of white Christian college students by introducing them to persons of color who were willing to talk about their experience of life in the inner city. During this period, I was focused on what spiritual writers call "the active life." I was not yet tuned to the inner contemplative dimension, nor did I know its terminology.

## *Exploring the Inner Life*

It was not just the times—the turmoil in the country over racial unrest and the war in Vietnam. It was my own inner clock that needed to be reset. Something needed to happen at the core of my personal life, my sense of who I was. As competent and successful as I may have appeared in that impressive string of job titles in Pioneer Girls, the inner reality was wobbly and unsatisfied at the core. I lived in a fairly small and enclosed world within Christendom, where I could easily “pass” as an able professional in ministry. I did not heed the more basic questions about my identity or my sexuality, if any one raised them with me.

Thomas Merton, a major articulator of the character of the inner life, is one of many writers in the contemplative tradition who insists on the connection between the psychological exploration of one’s self and the coming to know and love God in intimacy. I had never done this kind of work before—exploring the unconscious compulsions that drove me, or plumbing the extent of the self-deception that made me think I was happy. Secretly, I longed to marry, but I had repressed and denied my sexuality, wearing a pious Christian cover of acceptance of my single state. The usual avenues of change presented to me in my Christian milieu seemed to promise that there were clear spiritual answers that I had missed. The God I knew and preached to others promised abundant life and joy. But inside I was desperate.

My best friend at the time, Char Smith, was training to become a therapist, so our conversations together took a decidedly psychological turn. At one point, she gently suggested I consider therapy. I was initially resistant, but in 1967, I took the plunge. An intensive six months with a caring therapist helped me address the surface issues—shame about my body and its capacity for feminine sexuality, and the resulting distorted hatred of myself. The transformation was huge: “I was born again!” The change occurred rapidly, for I was “prepared ground”—prepared in part by the measure of my desperation, and by my tentative explorations of the psychological domain that opened me to the therapeutic mode. Also I stubbornly hung onto a faint hope that God was at work in my life. This made it possible for me to yield quickly to the therapeutic process.

## *Opening to Sexuality and Marriage*

As a logical outcome of my therapy, I opened my arms and heart to the possibility of marriage, and to men who suddenly became available for friendship and romance. A year later, I met Don Schatz, a Jewish artist and poet who was surprised to find a woman on the University of Chicago campus who had a rocklike faith. It did not take him long to gravitate toward the circle of friends in a Bible study I was attending, and soon we were talking about marriage.

Meeting Don was a little bit of a miracle in itself. Although I was very intentional about seeking marriage, Don had a totally different mindset.

*While traveling to Europe in 1962, I had a religious experience on the Isle of Majorca one day in a cathedral, and that set me on a spiritual quest. When I came back home to America, I started visiting the Trappist Abbey in Gethsemani to see if I had a vocation as a monk.*

*On one visit, Thomas Merton came up to my room to talk about some of my drawings I had brought with me. He was a giant presence. But I did not see how my vocation fit into the life of a monk.*

*I had no interest in dating. If I showed interest in a woman, it would be for marriage.*

Don began working as a research assistant to a Psychology professor at the University of Chicago while I was a graduate student. We would pass each other casually in the hallways, or in the elevator on his way down to the coffee machine in the basement. A few times I was a guinea pig for some of the research experiments he performed for his professor. The research project required Don to measure "pupil dilation and its relation to interest" while the research subject watched a film. But Don was measuring something else, as the months rolled by. He detected something special in me, but could not identify what it was. Miraculously, a chance stumble on my part one day catapulted us into a momentous encounter. I needed his rescue from a dilemma of my own making and he responded obligingly. We wound up sitting in a South Shore café eating a Reuben sandwich and drinking a coke on a sunny October afternoon in 1968. Love was stirring in us both. We began being together from that moment on. He explained:

*I wanted someone to be my friend and not someone who would have a critical relationship to me, like my parents and others I knew. I tested the boundaries during those weeks and found Eunice was my equal in her confidence and sense of herself.*

The day before we got married, Don was baptized in an African American Baptist church on Chicago's West Side. This epochal moment stands etched in time and memory as the culmination of Don's long quest for meaning as an artist and a person. He describes it in his characteristically oblique way as "the move from modernism to postmodernism." I saw it as his moving away from tradition and the law into freedom and the spirit. Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit set him free.

We entered into marriage with courage and optimism. We were sure it must have been God who arranged our paths to cross, since otherwise the intersection of two such different people was unlikely.

Don went out and got his first job, working at a prestigious art gallery downtown two months before the wedding. It was the cultural expectation of his upbringing that he should provide for me. He said:

*I had never worked before. I wasn't made for that kind of life. I enjoyed Eunice being happy. Making her happy was the tune I played, a core melody. My experience in the art world was what I had to give.*

Soon after our marriage, Don and I fell quickly into working together. The Urban Life Center launched us into the first of three decades of partnership in work as well as life. At the Center, I brought sociological and psychological orientations, and Don his art. He commented:

*Eunice and her friends were focused on civil rights. I was not. The friends to whom she introduced me in those first months of marriage had no urban sophistication, and were naïve about my interests. I could adapt by living on the surface of social interactions.*

*They were idealists. They were not alone in this in the 1970s; this was also true of movements like New Age, Hippies and Yuppies.*

*I left the Frumkins Art Gallery job and began hanging out at the Urban Life Center. It was a rich, meaningful learning experience. I felt I could live on a different plane, evaluating students' artistic attempts without probing into the world of high art as I knew it. I was no longer painting. I became practical, used a common language. I wanted to encourage students to be self-directed in their art, to find their own voice.*

In retrospect, I see that the Urban Life Center was more suited to my vocation than to Don's. Yet, he left a profound mark on the students with his refreshingly original and provocative challenges. Some may have thought that I had hitched my wagon to a star, but others thought it was more like a cyclone.

At any rate, my story and Don's are inextricably linked. The pattern of working together would continue on several fronts: he joined me in teaching classes at universities in Chicago and Boston, and our partnership would culminate in the formation of Life/Work Direction. Working together as a married couple feels natural to us, and we recognize that it poses distinct blessings and challenges—both for us as a couple and for those who work with us. We influence each other deeply and can work harmoniously, and at the same time we cherish the free expression of our independent strengths. It is the story of our marriage. It is a vital part of what we would give to Life/Work Direction as well.

### *Attunement to the Psychological Dimension of my Calling*

One area where I differ from Don is my interest in therapy. I investigated a deepened form of therapeutic work new at the time called bioenergetics. This attuned me to the body's place in carrying emotional expressiveness, and led to my artistic experimentation with clay, participation in "creative movement" and enjoying dance for the first time. My activities in these realms climaxed in my participation in a yearlong training program for Encounter Group Facilitators. I discovered I had gifts in using my psychological insight in my interactions with others as individuals and in groups. I was now defining myself in a particular sector of educational work previously unknown to me, one that coincided with my natural psychological bent and which would serve me well in my future work in Boston. I respected my own interior growth process, and I had experienced transformation in my own life. I wanted to help others unearth their true selves in all their authenticity and complexity.

### *Doors Open for Change*

On a practical level, there were encouraging developments in the Urban Life Center that made it possible for us to move on. The Center had stabilized organizationally during the 1970s. When Scott Chesebro and his wife joined us in 1977, Don and I saw an opportunity to take a three-month sabbatical in 1978 to consider our options. We had become restless in our roles and were ready for change, even a major transition that would involve a geographic move.

An entry in my journal, written before leaving Chicago, may have been prescient in anticipating a deeper current of movement than I knew how to articulate.

*Will I find my new future in some exploration of self, rather than service to society? Is this the deeper, more daring trip? I am taught that it is weaker, escapist, self-centered. I must be very sure before I embark on this Second Journey.*

*“The images and symbols of our minds introduce us to a wider world than that of our actual historic life.” Perhaps some answers will come to me through the life of the imagination as I set my sails, and remain open to the winds that blow. Winds of the Spirit. Winds of my dreams.*

When I wrote those lines, I thought—as most people do—that transitions are a move upward, borne by those “winds of the Spirit.” I had not yet grasped the essential truth that an inner journey always begins by a movement down. The downward spiral that was occurring in my outer life in Dorchester was a necessary precedent before I would be ready to embark on a more interior “Second Journey.”

Right now the interior path was on hold; I needed work and a pay-check. Because I had explored the field of career assessment, I knew how to step into the flow of our new life in Boston and find a way through to finding an opening for the work I knew I was called to do—attending to the life and work direction of others. The chart following places my entire life work into context—each part flowing into the next

# *My Life Work Direction*

1950 - 1966  
teenage youth

## **PIONEER GIRLS**

1967 - 1969

*therapy*

*marriage*

Urban  
Research  
Corporation

Research  
Projects

American  
Hospital  
Association

*survival  
skills*

1970 - 1978  
college

## **URBAN LIFE CENTER**

1979 - 1980

*move to Boston*

*inner journey*

Temping

Womens  
Resource  
Center

Northeastern & Lesley  
University

*transition  
skills*

1981 - present  
post-college  
through midlife  
and on

## **LIFE/WORK DIRECTION**