

MY WORK AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*Vocation = not just a job or career,
but the story of my life and my work*

In 1977, I discovered the new field of Life/Work Planning, pioneered by John Crystal in his book of that name and receiving notoriety by his unorthodox methods. Richard Bolles then took Crystal's ideas and popularized them in his book *What Color is Your Parachute?*

Don and I were growing restless in our work at the Urban Life Center and had hired two new staff persons to join us—leaving a door open for us to consider new options. At a conference for persons in higher education that I was attending in my role as director of the Urban Life Center, I was drawn to an obscure workshop offered in the basement area—perhaps as an afterthought on the part of the organizers—but I was fascinated with an approach that used unorthodox methods that went beyond “finding a job” or “identifying a particular career field.”

I read the books, then attended a weekend workshop offered with the title “Life Work Planning”—the broader term that fit with my own sensibilities. As part of that workshop based on the Crystal-Bolles approach, I was required to write my work autobiography.

A Child at Work

My very first recollection of work goes back to two entrepreneurial ventures, surprisingly enough. Though I cannot recall an actual time and place when I had the proverbial lemonade stand with lemonade sold at two cents a glass, I know I did this during my early years, at some point.

And at the age of 11 or 12, I embarked on a more ambitious project with friends. An athletic coach had dropped a box of tongue depressors on the floor, rendering them useless. His two daughters and I salvaged them and conceived the idea of buying alphabet soup letters and making plaques out of them. We sold these strange looking items to college students for a dime.

Soon however, our partnership foundered on the shoals of pre-adolescent rivalry and petty bickering. June went off with another friend and started a competitive business with more elaborate plaster of Paris plaques, which sold for fifteen cents. Unabashed, her sister Priscilla and I imitated her, but did it in style: assorted shapes and sizes and colors. In the end, *our* partnership was the only one to survive with a profit and at the end of a couple of weeks, we closed out, divided the profits, from which I bought a pair of roller skates.

Looking back, I wonder what was so involving about this last undertaking, and it seems to me it was the taking in of money—counting it, figuring how much it would take to buy materials, how many plaques we would need to sell to buy us both roller skates, and seeing the pile of coins grow. It is almost embarrassing—this interest in the money itself. I apparently like seeing direct results from my efforts.

In later life, I am fascinated to see that most of the time I have been involved in semi-entrepreneurial ventures that have been hand-to-mouth in this same fashion.

About the same period in my life, I had one of my first *bad* work experiences. Summer we spent partly at Grandma's farm home in Maine. Four of us cousins hired out to a farmer up the hill to "pull kale" for a dollar a day. The money looked enormous to me in 1941. But I only lasted one day on my hands and knees pulling the stubby prickly stuff. Eight hour of scratched bleeding hands, and bent back gave me my first lesson: I can't do backbreaking monotonous work just for money. It is not sufficient motivation.

I preferred picking blackberries up on me grandparents' "Old Place" in the hot sun. Coming down into town at dusk, I went door-to-door selling heaping quarts of the luscious black berries for 15 cents a box.

The Teenager Experiments with a "Job"

I was 14 when I held my first "job."—working for strangers with regular hours, and a weekly pay rate. My father went into the Wheaton Sweet Shop with me to apply for a Christmas vacation job packing chocolates in boxes. And so began two weeks of grueling work, under the supervision of a very unpleasant gruff woman and her more mild-mannered but jovial husband, who, I think, tried to make up for his wife's sharpness. I was not much tempted to eat the candies—under the supervisor's watchful eye. Also, I soon became sick of the sight and smell of them. I had to stand all day from 9 to 6 with a break for lunch. I was extremely exhausted by day's end and dreaded each day as it came. Taking this job was a symbol of my independence, and its importance lay for me in that fact—not in skill or wages. I had proved that I could work on my own outside the home, and learn to do something well for pay.

I remember, though, that I did receive reprimands every now and then. I have never been a meticulous worker, nor do I enjoy having to be.

Most of my part-time jobs in both high school and college were doing housework—cleaning and ironing. I much preferred the latter. The satisfaction in neatly finished work is much greater. The pride I felt in a stack of pillowcases smooth and ironed is similar to later feelings when a stack of typed papers or letters written could be piled on my desk. Something about the visual aspect of accomplishment pleases me.

Work as Play in the Camp Setting

So much of my adolescent and adult life was spent in camp that it seems important to include here. I didn't earn very much money working in camps, but I certainly went into the situation with as much seriousness of effort as though it were a paid job. After several years of volunteering, during college I spent two summers in a camp for pay. To me it was almost obscene to be paid for something from which I received so much pleasure. As was the case in most of my later life, I was doing something I dearly loved doing, and which I did well, and on top of that, I was being paid for it. I can say unequivocally this has been my life pattern. Anything I have ever done for any length of time has been part of the flow of my life, organically, and a good part of the pleasure in my life has been derived directly from my work.

What was it about camp life that was so pleasurable for me? Living in the out-of-doors was very important. Nature was almost like a second mother to me, so intensely did I suck in its breath and life.

It was at camp that I discovered new skills. My self-image was enhanced considerably. Here I was able to function as a dynamic, somewhat charismatic leader. I was at the center of social forces rather than on the periphery as at school. At school I was not popular, had few friends, and felt socially inept. In particular, I had no boyfriends and didn't know how to attract them. So an all-girls camp provided a safe and satisfying social world for me.

Camp leadership also provided a forum for my dramatic talent and creativity. Many of my most meaningful roles were "on stage"—as song leader, campfire storyteller, mealtime entertainer, or as a participant in skits.

I also developed special program events involving song, story, and action. I was at my best when threading these elements together in intricate patterns. Always there was some point, some purpose, and some message—powerfully conveyed. I liked dramatic intensity and I created it continually—even in the course of a noontime sing around the dinner tables.

I was also a teacher at camp and I enjoyed using the informal setting—an interest and skill that has persisted throughout my life.

At camp I received much pleasure from specific individual relationships I developed with campers and counselors. It was important then, as now, to make some mark on others by my life. I always continued camp relationships through letters during the year. Many of these writing relationships drew out my literary powers, and especially my sense of humor.

Another element is worth drawing out as a separate item: it was camp that drew upon my sense of humor. I was looked upon as funny, and capable of producing humor. I

often wore a special hat that became a signatory element evoking humor. I was a "character."

Earning my Way by the Labor of my Hands

One college part-time job was working in the dining hall in various capacities. What I remember in those grueling jobs is that of the "toast girl." For this job I had to rise at an ungodly hour, and yank out the heavy shelves of a commercial oven range, place slices of soft white bread on them, then watch to make sure they did not burn. I was warned, when I started this job, that at one time or another I would probably do what all my previous toast girls had done—pull the rack out too far and drop all 20 pieces of toast on the floor. Well, I was determined to avoid that calamity, and I did even better! Whereas before me, toast girls would make up lots of toast all at once ahead of time so they could sign out early, leaving late breakfast eaters with stacked up cold toast, I kept at the job steadily, turning the toast out hot and crisp as needed. My reward came when one or two guys came by and praised me for what was an unusual act. "The toast is always hot when you are on duty," said one.

The satisfaction of doing that job well and the acknowledgment I received were the twin pleasures of what was otherwise a boring and distasteful job in a very unpleasant environment: the basement of the dining hall, with pipes running across the low ceiling (I saw a rat on a pipe one day). I also enjoyed the cook, Rudy, who was often nearby, joshing me as we worked.

I did not like wearing a uniform, and a hair net; I didn't like the smell of the environment and its general ugly appearance. All those things have some importance for me. Years later, working at a job I liked, I remember how annoyed I was to have an office without a window!

Graduating to Work in the World for Pay!

All of this has been preliminary, I suppose. This is not yet mining my official "work history"—fulltime jobs taken for pay and embarked upon after my schooling was over.

I graduated from Wheaton College (Illinois) in 1950 with a degree in Christian Education. My first job began Labor Day weekend that fall.

The way I got my first job is of note, I think. I got the usual suggestions from my departmental faculty advisor. Most persons with my degree either took a job as a Director of Christian Education in a church, or taught released time Bible in the public schools in Virginia (the only state with such a plan well-developed).

As a star pupil in my department, I was given three offers. I don't even remember what they were, except one was from Virginia. One by one, I turned each one down—mostly

by instinct. None of them interested me. Or I felt somewhat inadequate, or unsure about pulling up roots.

What I really wanted to do was to go to work for the organization that had sponsored the camps I had been involved with for many years—Pioneer Girls. My qualifications for that organization were superb. So I waited the summer out and went on a month-long hiking trip through the Appalachians with two friends. By August I was at home and still jobless. I panicked and began looking about for “a job”—considering returning to school for a graduate teaching certificate as a safety valve.

Then one bright morning, the offer from Pioneer Girls came, and with it, inner certainty that this was right. In all major decisions, I seem to need—and receive—this feeling of inner certainty about the rightness of a choice. It was true in jobs I have held that were satisfying; and it was true in marriage.

My choice was about: a common sense of mission and purpose (I could identify with the goals of the organization); colleagues (I knew the people I would be working beside and trusted and liked them and knew they cared about me); atmosphere (I knew it to be informal, friendly and unpretentious and open to humor and fun).

The pay was low. The job was in Chicago, and I was uncertain about housing. I had a few apprehensions about the job itself because of its imposing title: Publications Manager. But none of these things were decisive: goals, colleagues and atmosphere were what counted.

It is appropriate to spend time discussing the process by which I got this job because I kept it for 17 years. My responsibilities and title changed, but I stayed with the organization that long. I can divide my work history at Pioneer Girls in various ways. One way is by changing job titles. Another is by periods of administrative change marked by several upheavals. As I grew in responsibility and influence I was drawn into these struggles. Still another way of charting my work history these would be by geographic location: twice the headquarters moved, so I experienced three quite different settings that were significant for me. Through all of these grids I can locate threads of my own personal and professional growth and development.

The Problems With Staying—and Leaving

Let me start by saying that I stayed with the organization too long. This left me with a fear that I might do this again—failing to recognize the signals that it is time for me to leave. To be truthful, I was afraid to leave, to launch out. If I had realized more about life planning, it might have helped; I don't know.

I look at my 17 years with Pioneer Girls through all three grids, and others as they occur to me, and see what comes of it.

I began as Publications Manager, responsible for a regular monthly publication including program tips for club leaders. Day by day, this was my major task—finding ideas, writing them up, typing the stencils, running them off on the mimeograph, collating the sheets and folding them, stuffing them into envelopes, applying stamps and even sometimes taking them to the post office. Did I ever develop clerical skills! I became an 80-word-a-minute typist—though I had neglected to take typing in school—something considered essential, especially for girls in that era. I will never regret learning all those basic simple skills.

I also had responsibility for public relations—producing the monthly newsletters to our constituency of support. It was several months before I was permitted to do the creative writing, but I did all the rest. Since it was printed outside the office, I learned another invaluable set of skills: getting estimates for a print job, how to talk to a printer on the phone, giving specifications accurately, talking about “bleeds” and “halftones” and “copy ready for camera” and “overlap” and “close registration” and “parallel folds”, etc. A whole new language had to be learned. I loved knowing all that.

I also had to learn to meet printers personally in our office as they courted our business, how to tell printers #2 and #3 that #1 had gotten the bid, and how to insist on a rerun when a printer made an error. I also learned about the seriousness of careless mistakes, and I made many: typos, misplaced paragraphs pasted on wrong, crooked paste-ups, bad layout, and so on.

I was also responsible for revising pamphlets. This meant rethinking the array of literature we used, assessing needs and planning long-range to fill gaps. It increasingly meant consulting with other staff as to needs for certain kinds of materials that needed to be developed.

It also meant some knowledge and understanding of budgets. I was never made adequately responsible for money, so some things I never learned, or perhaps I chose not to learn them. I see a weakness here now in the way I function both in my personal life and in my job regarding budgetary planning and implementation.

As I think back over those first three to four years as Publications Manager, I find it hard to separate out the skills I used then and some I developed later as Program Director. The main difference was that in those first three years, I did little over-all planning and revising or creating. I usually simply revised (minimally) the materials that existed, that someone else had developed. My work was crude and unsophisticated. But it was better than some of what had been done before and mostly because I was assigned to do it as my sole responsibility.

I still managed to spend part of most summers in the organization's camps. By 1954, the camping program (my first love) was becoming very well developed, and I was transferred to the position called National Camp Secretary—a sort of assistant to the director of the organization (then called General Secretary in the British style adopted) in the area of camp publications.

It helped the organization when a new Director was hired whose vision was large and whose competencies led the organization to purchase its own headquarters space in a northwest area of Chicago. Gone were my bus and train rides to the Loop, hobnobbing with the workmen who still ran the elevators to the high floor where our offices were located. I had moved from my suburban location where I had lived with a family, doing babysitting sometimes in exchange for rent. Now I was in an apartment with the new director, where the lines of work and play intermingled.

Our organization was becoming known for its excellence in the field within a small segment of the Christian community. This provided an opportunity for me to make my first creative contribution to the organization: to research and help develop guiding standards, then compile and write a camping manual geared to the increasingly complex and sophisticated organization of our camps. The result was a rather fat spiral-bound book: *Camping Pioneer Girls Style*, published in 1958 and sold widely outside our organization.

During those years, I became very active in the camping movement nationally, and helped found a camping organization for Christian camps. I attended conferences and began to be known in the field in a small way.

Through this I learned how to work with outside groups and people in a profession. I began articulating and communicating a distinctive philosophy of camping that had some sharp contrasts to established church camps. I found myself in ideological conflict, and handled such situations rather poorly much of the time. I tended to make my own point at the expense of valuing the other person's points.

As I look back on this, I think I have pinpointed another weakness I would like to remedy: how to communicate a specific point of view that is in conflict with established tradition in subtle but important ways, and how to do this effectively and lovingly or with mutual respect.

Beginning to Step Outdoors — from Office to the Field and to Camp

It is important to bring up-to-date an area of experience outside of my place the headquarters office of Pioneer Girls. Even my camp counseling, camp directing, and

camp evaluation duties were assigned by the headquarters office, in a way, though they were carried out locally in camps from Maine to California, and from Canada to Missouri. I did intense traveling all summer and *loved* this part of that job.

But also, beginning in 1954, I began doing a small bit of field work in Denver, Colorado. The field work aspect of the organization always had a glamour and prestige associated with it that “office work” lacked. Every fall, field representatives convened at headquarters—or at a retreat center nearby—for staff conference. Important decisions involving the future direction of the organization would take place there. Because of the nature of the field representative job, these persons had more of the background and ability to plan and direct and decide, whereas many of the office staff tended to be concerned mostly with bookkeeping, mailing, and records.

There was often subtle tension between the two groups—the one feeling the other didn’t understand its position. The field staff claimed most intimate knowledge of the constituency, since they were out there on the firing line.

For many reasons, it was attractive to get field experience. I was a good public speaker. I taught well. A field rep did much teaching. I wrote curriculum, used both by local leaders and by staff persons. And I was directing camps, evaluating them, and developing standards and other materials for them. It was logical and natural that I should do some field work, and thus stay in touch.

Denver area was in need of help, its field worker having resigned. So in 1954, I began semi-annual trips to Colorado. Over the years, these trips came to include Kansas, Nebraska, and eventually Missouri. By the time 1962 rolled around, the area had developed to require a full-time staff worker. I have always been proud of my field work. I built solidly, chose capable volunteer staff, and left no scars for others to heal. The happiest times of my work life after 1958 (for sure) and perhaps earlier, were those trips to Denver and the summer camp sessions in the Rockies. I have lifelong friends as a result, too.

Clouds Gather—Fraying the Threads that Kept Me Staying

During the 1959-1960 years and following, there was some administrative turmoil in which I began to be involved by virtue of being “next to the top” in position and friendship in my relationship to the Director of the organization. The petty jealousies and bickering that erupted during this period followed me for many years. I believe much of my effectiveness was hampered from this time on.

In 1956, I took off three months to work toward a Master’s degree in my field, and the following year, I decided to take off the nine months necessary to complete it, graduating in 1958. This extended nine-month leave was crucial to my future. It allowed me time to regain some objectivity about myself, and about the organization with which

I was so personally and emotionally involved. The topic of my thesis, indeed, was *The Development of Pioneer Girls Philosophy*.

I seem to function in peaks and troughs. I often overextended myself emotionally and physically—then had to get away to regain my energy. And then there were times of intense creativity and voluminous output. The year in graduate school was such a time. I did a lot of personal reassessment, and opened up some profound inner stirring that were to come to fruition slowly and much later. I also used this time to develop new ideas for Pioneer Girls upon my return.

My role, upon returning, was not crystal clear. The camp role was diminishing; the need in Publications was on the increase. I wound up back in this area and eventually was given a title that expressed more accurately my contribution: Program Director.

I came back in the midst of a major administrative upheaval, during which time the Director resigned and was replaced by a woman who had taken her role during a sabbatical the Director had taken. The organization was somewhat split by the subversive way in which this was done and I got caught in the middle of the trauma. I was presented with what amounted to a “loyalty oath” that I managed to sidestep, even as I stayed in place.

To this day I regret that I did not resign. From then on, I was cynical—not idealistic. I was far more skilled than before, but the heart was gone from my work.

I had been in on the inception of this dynamic organization when I was a young girl of 12 and 13. I had watched it grow into a comfortably sized bureaucracy with a modicum of influence in a certain sphere of service to churches and communities. But disillusionment set in at this point. It had been growing for years. My idealism and optimism for the organization never returned, to this day.

I felt sincerely—on the basis of my graduate studies and reflection on philosophy and history of the organization—that it ought perhaps to cease to exist, that its vitality was gone, or in danger of going. And I said this aloud.

Finding my Own Fiefdom Within the Turmoil

Meanwhile, the dust settled after the changeover in management, and I made a quasi-peace with the new director. We were expanding rapidly in staff at that time, and it was my department that we elected to move into new space rented down the street from the headquarters building.

It was a crummy storefront with no partitions, but I was glad to be away from the rest of the organization with my small loyal staff of five. I built my own little organization within the larger context, and over the course of the next couple of years supervised the work

of 23 persons, including full- and part-time, and writers living across the country who came in annually for staff conferences.

In a way, this situation in the storefront resembled my camp experience. Since 1955, I had been directing several camps each summer. I seem to function well in a setting of limited size where I have a good deal of control over programming.

But this move could only be temporary. And soon there were rumblings about moving out to the suburbs—to Wheaton.

Standing Outside, While Still Inside. . .Afraid to Resign

Geographical locations are important. I had become attached to Chicago very early in my work life. Our first office was in the Loop. In 1953, buying a building on the Northwest side was an exciting development.

But now, to “abandon the city”, to pull up stakes and go back to the suburbs—and especially to Wheaton (where I had grown up from age 7 to 20)—I couldn’t do it.

So in 1962, I began commuting 26 miles a day to work. My alienation was complete at this point. I disdained those who moved out with the organization. My roots were now beginning to be elsewhere than in the organization.

I am not sure what this all means now. I only know, as I write this, that I feel strongly about the issue, and again, wish I had resigned at this point. But I was too afraid to leave and move out on my own. And the longer I stayed, the harder it got.

The lovely modern building meant nothing to me: my first office there was in a room without windows and I complained loudly. I *hated* being back with the rest of the headquarters staff, and under their jurisdiction in subtle if inconsequential ways. I had grown to prize my independency.

The Director saw and sensed my dissatisfaction, and another job change evolved. A Leadership Training Center was being developed in the upper peninsula of Michigan. I was given leadership responsibility for its program.

Simultaneously, there were stirrings in various parts of the world and a developing interest in cross-cultural adaptations of our program. I was a logical person to direct this thrust. I had thoroughly digested the basic philosophy of the organization, yes even created it in part, or at least be the one to articulate it. It was this philosophy, I claimed, that was cross-cultural. The trappings of the program were thoroughly American, and Western. But these could be transformed and adapted. In fact, Canadians had already expressed an interest in having their own branch of the work somewhat separate from our jurisdiction.

So it was that I began to move to two sidetracks in my work: the Leadership Training Center, and cross-cultural program development—which would take place, in part, at the Training Center.

It is not surprising that this job expansion occurred. I seem to need frequent job restructuring. It is like moving the furniture around in my apartment. I am quickly bored with sameness.

Another aspect of change was the continually expanding sphere of influence. I had begun in the office. Then had come the camp job taking me across the country in many locations. This new job thrust would expose me to the world. For some time a round-the-world trip had been talked about for me. Although it never materialized, I am flattered now to think that it was considered.

I was now officially titled Program Director. The title was my choice. I was growing more and more insistent within the organization, and more critical of it. My satisfactions lay in the parts of the job where I was more or less independent, where I had control. And as the organization increased its layers of bureaucracy, and the sophistication of its budget controls, particularly, there were fewer and fewer places where I could function with freedom. I was not especially interested in taking the responsibility that would have given more independence, unfortunately—such as fund raising. Unfairly, I wanted a free hand with the budget money, without the hassle of responsibility—a weakness that persists.

When In Doubt, Go to School!

When in doubt or distress, go back to school, take a leave, get away. My discontent was growing. The cross-cultural programming was the most attractive option, and this is the direction I decided to pursue with graduate studies in Anthropology.

I had really outgrown the organization long ago. I needed to “cut or saw.” I had a lot of influence in the organization, yet not enough to make the changes I really wanted—radical changes—like emphasizing city programs reach a diverse population. I was still angry that we—like so many white churches in Chicago—had fled the city for the suburbs. The board of directors was entrenched—and now increasingly male-dominated. I had a hostile encounter with one board member during the 1960 administrative upheaval and threatened with being fired if I did not go along with their decision about the director.

So in January of 1965, I took my first sabbatical leave of three months, and became a special student at the University of Chicago. Three months was long enough to thoroughly whet my appetite; but not long enough to *begin* to sate it. Had I stayed

away longer, might I have stayed on? I will never know. I only know the exceedingly short stay at the University left me restless.

In the fall, I got permission to return to the University part-time. I continued there through two quarters. The longer I stayed away from total involvement in Pioneer Girls, the more “weaned” I became. I was giving only half-hearted service to my employers these months. I was still commuting the 50 miles round trip, so I made frequent excuse to stay home and write rather than go into the office.

Leaving a Mark, Before Exiting

By the spring of 1966, I was deciding to leave. The new Leadership Training Center on Michigan’s Northern Peninsula would be a beautiful setting where I might stage a last farewell. Even the new name, North Star, was emblematic as I looked for guidance for my own uncertain future. I had announced that I would take a leave of absence at the conclusion of the summer—a leave that would be permanent.

My job at North Star was responsibility for training 8 interns—young women who wished to become professionals in the field of girls’ work either overseas or here. An assistant trainer and I lived in a cabin with interns for six weeks—and were responsible for group life, study, and practical field experience. After that, the women spread out over several midwestern states to direct or take leadership in camps. I visited each one on site for evaluation.

This “*last shot*” was a kind of apex of that first 17-year career: it called forth all my powers, skills, and talents. And it signaled a way to the future in that it was a *small context* (8-10 persons at a time). The *training function* was one I felt at home in. Also working with *group process issues*. Surprisingly (as I wrote afterwards when in another job in the urban Chicago environment working with college students) it was very similar to the kind of thing I now feel I do best. *A few persons open to change and growth come to me, and I help create an environment and situation (program) conducive to their development and the attainment of their goals.* Editing this in 2018 makes me see the startling similarity to my work in Boston now over 37 years!

Back to School Again—and So Much More

Everything but the official ties to the organization were cut in the fall of 1966, as I began my University studies, now enrolled as a PhD candidate in Sociology. I had originally taken courses with an eye to my goal of preparing myself for cross-cultural program development in Pioneer Girls. Now I was taking courses based on personal interest and, to some extent, based on the requirements of the degree, though this last factor was no very influential yet.

By November, I had decided to officially resign, though my actual letter of resignation was written the following April when I was in an entirely new state of mind and being.

His was because in January of 1967, I entered psychotherapy—a major development, and one recorded in more detail in my memoir *Still Woman Moving: A Lifetime of Change*.

Exploring the Inner Cave of Life to Understand the Outer Life

This record of my work history omits important elements in my personal life and growth, for they were intertwined. . .and sometimes strangling. . . my work life.

A combination of factors led me to look at myself negatively at this point in my life. A major factor was my non-acceptance of my sexuality, stemming from a strict Puritanical upbringing with a lot of repressive emotions.

I had never dated much at all; I was lonely and “out of it” in high school. College was only a bit better. But in Pioneer Girls, among all women, I was popular, accepted, admired, approved. Small wonder I drank it all in so eagerly, and stayed so long.

But deep down inside me, I longed for intimacy, for love, for sexual relationship, and for knowing men. Men had always interested me greatly; they talked of more interesting things in many of the professional settings I had inhabited. I actually felt like a “liberated” woman. Being a homemaker and raising children were of less interest to me than many of my female peers. But I saw no way to fulfillment of myself as the person I was with the hungers that dogged me. The result: a crushing recurring loneliness and depression.

These elements climaxed in the winter of 1966-67 when I finally decided to *try* therapy. I was skeptical about its potential to help me. How little I knew then!

For the next six months were the most important in my entire life! I experienced a miracle of change and transformation and my life took a totally new direction and possibility.

I became an adolescent again—in order to seize upon my lost youth and puberty. I became 13—and then 15—and then 18 in rapid succession over a two to three week period of time as I recovered a lost earthiness, a full-bodied woman emerged. I looked different! I walked differently. I thought differently about myself.

My life with men began, and with it, a new confidence, a new expansiveness, a new directionality. I began to take charge of my life. I could make decisions where before I waited for events to shape my life and thus force decisions.

My first decision was to get married. I was 37, and the prospects were not all that great for someone of my age and education and religious bent. I also was a strong-minded woman, and needed an equally strong man.

So my first decisions were in directions that would lead me into contacts with available men. For the immediate future, this meant spending a summer on the West Coast in a co-ed camp, then staying on at the University of Chicago, becoming fully involved in campus life. I moved from the north-side apartment I had shared for five years with a well-loved friend, and taking a room on campus.

Moving Into Life Together With Another

It took approximately one year to achieve the goal. In the fall of 1968, after a series of serendipitous encounters, I had an instantaneous strong connection with Don. Within a few days we were sure of one another and were married the following spring April 13, 1969.

I had decided not to pursue the PhD, though I did take the preliminary exams, which I passed with a high grade—surprising my professor who now wanted me to stay on as a “fellow” in his research group. In June of 1969, I was awarded the M.A. in Sociology. There I was, Mrs. Schatz now, the wife of a Jewish artist/poet/musician. Now I had to face the question of what I was going to do with my life.

I had thought about the question all year, though it had been clouded by the traditional ideas of marriage (a wife is, after all, a *wife*. . .and would not a nice Jewish boy support me? Momentarily, I liked the idea of being supported.)

When I had thought about the question of the future, I found myself answering in general terms: I wanted a *small context* in which to work—family-sized. I wanted opportunity to have *direct personal influence* on others. And I wanted to work *with someone*. . .a team effort. Of course, all of this pointed to having a family, as far as I could tell. And yet, I knew it could apply to a career as well, as, of course, it eventually did. . .in the founding of the Urban Life Center.

The Three Experiments—Awaiting the Next Entrepreneurial Venture

1. I took a job in the summer of 1969, after completing work on the research I had been doing as a graduate assistant. I was hired to be a **conference coordinator at Urban Research Corporation.**

It is important here to distinguish the two kinds of research. At the University, I had been doing the traditional scholarly research under Peter Blau, an eminent sociologist. I found this to be generally distasteful and I didn’t understand the empirical dimension of it well. The conceptual part I enjoyed, but I was “lightweight” scholastically. I lacked the tenacity and discipline to pursue rigorous analysis of data. I kept being sidetracked by

ideas, hunches, preliminary conclusions. This lay behind my decision to discontinue my PhD program. I could not picture myself doing this sort of research the rest of my life. Urban Research Corporation, where I accepted a position, was another story. This was a young virile organization dealing with secondary source contemporary news data. It sought societal impact and change, and it was a for-profit organization seeking to make big money fast. The director was impulsive, bright, flamboyant, hip—and really bad at managing money.

I worked as assistant to an extremely capable conference director. Our job was to put together a conference division and run about 12-20 conferences a year—making big money fast.

We lasted five months. Or, I should say, the money lasted that long. The whole idea was a disaster. The director of the organization had planned poorly, and where it counted, the conference director and I did not have fiscal control.

I already I had the necessary conference planning skills (though I am sure I sharpened them during those months). What I gained was some skill in *working with famous people* (that is all we ever had speak at our conferences—the Director was name-crazy, though we in the Conference Division were not), and skill in *very quickly researching out a field about which I knew virtually nothing*. When I had been at Urban Research Corporation less than a month, I had to write the condensed blurb about a conference on Preventive Detention for the promotional flyer we used. I learned fast! And when the final speaker got up to speak at the conference, obviously poorly prepared for his task, he used my blurb as the basis for his information about the subject. (That was Dick Gregory, who at one point had talked about campaigning to be President.)

My job at Urban Research petered out gradually. I worked part-time in February and March, finishing up with one last conference on Industry Sponsored Day Care. It turned out to be an enormous success, the only conference over which our Division had gained rather complete control.

2. A friend recommended me to two places where lucrative jobs were available. This was a classic case of job-hunting the wrong way. I had no clear idea of where I wanted to go with my life at this point. I was happily busy being married and that absorbed much of my attention. The money in these jobs looked attractive—but abstract from the reality I was used to since the pay scale was more than I had ever made in my life. I started out at the **American Hospital Association (AHA) as Curriculum Developer**.

I lasted two weeks. The whole experience was ghastly. AHA is extremely bureaucratic and conservative: bosses and secretaries ate in separate cafeterias. I was reprimanded for wearing a pants suit (this was 1970). The politics were intricate and especially for female executives. I didn't like what I had to do. And most important, I didn't believe in

the AHA as it was being conducted. In fact, I questioned the ethics of much of its activity. So much money is made by hospitals and hospital-related industries off of sick people and their problems.

One day I called Don from work, distraught. He said, "Why don't you leave?" The idea appealed. I walked out at 2:30 in the afternoon. The next day I came back to resign. Boy! Did that ever feel good! Free at last, and unemployed.

3. Over the next couple of years, I made my living off of **freelance and temporary part-time jobs**. Also, during this time, an important development was taking place. :

Birthing the Urban Life Center with Others

Throughout our first years of marriage, Don and I joined in informal conversations with peers concerned about the broiling issues of the Sixties that were directly impacting the south side of Chicago where we lived. Concerned young college students sometimes came to sit in our living rooms and voice their concerns and an eagerness to take part in some helpful way in addressing needs.

We began floating ideas about starting an urban center for college students. In addition to addressing social and political concerns by living right in the city, Don brought in the importance and relevance of emphasizing the arts and culture—something integral to his Jewish upbringing and experience and also something for which Chicago has a well-deserved reputation. Sometimes the Christian colleges we knew had been intentionally located in rural areas of privacy and safety, and thus lacked visceral engagement with city life. This was a time when the college student population was restive about our society and its direction.

As we talked with these friends, the germ idea took seed, and in late spring of 1970, came to fruition with a decision to start something we named the Urban Life Center. It was located on the south side of Chicago where many of us lived and housed in a vacant church building that would accommodate 15-20 college age young people for a semester or a year. A young married couple in the founding group was on the verge of leaving their present positions and would become core staff at the Center.

We were late-blooming children of the 60s—many of us. We had *no* moneyed people in our group. Many were themselves still in grad school. We were full of dreams and visions and plans.

The Story of the Center

The story of the Center and its growth is a fascinating one in itself, but it is told elsewhere, and I will not repeat it here except for the developments that directly affected me.

A Promising Start: Our first academic liaison was with Roosevelt University downtown that granted credit to students enrolled in our Center for 9 hours of our “experiential learning”—a kind of educational philosophy we believed in as core to our Center’s *raison d’être*. Several of us became, thereby, part-time adjunct Roosevelt University instructors—something I continued to be for several years.

During the first two years of the Center, I was a board member and taught one six-hour Sociology course. Being a board member involved a lot of “shit work” first of all—painting, scrubbing, mopping, and cleaning. And a variety of entrepreneurial tasks—fund raising, scrounging equipment from all kinds of sources, and getting set up.

The most difficult job was that of interpersonal survival as it turned out—getting the group of students set free from the constraints of campus rules to function well together in this new setting in the midst of some fuzziness about the ends and means of the organization at this embryonic stage, and just sheer physical and economic survival. I discovered what the lack of money could do to people, to fine people, and to valued personal friendships.

Failure to Thrive: By late winter that first year, we were out of money, and the director was overwhelmed by worry, frustration, and an unclear notion of how to proceed. I volunteered to help with secretarial duties in my spare time, and began to spend quite a bit of time at the Center. From this non-threatening position, however, I began to have an influence over what was to be done in the organization.

By April, the director resigned, effective in June. We had a huge debt to him in unpaid salary (we had vastly overestimated what we could pay, and his ability), and the prospect for fall was only so-so.

Still, we took courage and continued on, reluctant to let a good idea die. About six of the first year group moved out *en masse* in June and formed a commune. The Center had never been able to meet their expectations of community, and it was years before it approached that level of functioning.

Falling Apart: During the second year of operation, things almost totally fell apart. By now Don and I were spending the better portion of our time at the Center. On the side, I was still freelancing occasionally. The main activities I involved myself in were planning and running two national conferences (on Day Care, Tenants’ Rights) and teaching part-time (Sociology).

Then Don and I began visiting college campuses in the Midwest, seeking to establish enough of an official connection to guarantee us a continuing flow of students to the Center each term. We were not at that point asking for much money in return. We wanted to prove ourselves in terms of results.

But of course, we were suspect. We were “radicals” and very threatening to the more conservative establishment in some Christian colleges. Thus far, we tended to draw the students already on the margins of the institutions, or ready to drop out.

By the spring of 1972, I was ready to call it quits. I didn’t want to, but it seemed the only sensible course of action. We had lost our second residential coordinator. A board member moved in to the Center to try to stabilize things there.

We took a summer to make a decision about the future of the Urban Life Center. The quality of life at the residence itself had deteriorated badly. Our spirits were very low. And we were \$5,000 in debt. All of us on the board had already cashed in life insurance, sold stocks, loaned money, taken extra jobs to hold the Center afloat.

Getting Our Second Wind: We needed to move. The church was being sold, and it was a monkey on our banks. Fuel costs, e.g., were horrendous. It cost \$1,000 a month to maintain and pay rent. We looked at a variety of sites.

At that moment, a house appeared, at a low price. One of our board members secretly borrowed the down payment, and signed the deed. The Urban Life Center would pay the mortgage as rent—\$250 a month. The building was much more conducive to community living—roomy and homey, not institutional, and with a cozy kitchen.

With the help of a couple of rummage sales, and a much cheaper location, by December, we paid off our debt, and in January of 1973, Don and I became regular employees along with a third staff person. We were each to be paid \$250 a month.

This job continued for Don and me until 1979 when we left. We supplemented our income by working some jobs outside (like teaching at Roosevelt), but the Urban Life Center was the primary focus for us both.

As director, I was responsible for the over-all thrust of the program, working cooperatively with the Board. We recruited students, taught courses—I in Sociology and Don in the Arts. I planned special programs, raised money, wrote newsletters, and we both counseled students and trained the staff. All of the skills developed over the years were being used in this job.

One skill has emerged from the requirements of this job itself—the ability to *ferret out resources*, to track down information—a kind of “practical research” skill. It was this skill that I wished to develop further in the field of career planning.

Also, my skills in *counseling individuals* and *working with groups*—my therapeutic skills, if you will—were developed tremendously. I took a year’s Facilitator Training at the

Oasis Growth Center. My therapy (first in 1967, and other short periods from 1970-1975) contributed to the development of counseling skills—skills useful in the field of career counseling.

Prospects for the Future Look Sound Setting Us Free: In 1978, the door to the future stood open. Two new staff persons joined the Center that fall, indicating a possibility for expansion. I hungered for a new challenge, and was ready to think carefully about making it one that would fit me well. At the time I wrote that I wanted to develop some sort of program whereby I could help other persons go through a life-planning and life assessment process. I knew that would use my skills with both individuals and groups, as well as my teaching and counseling skills—and that essential ability to ferret out resources!

When I wrote this in 1977, I had a dream—but no idea as to how it would come alive. Writing it again today—in 2018—I am amazed at how accurately I saw the precise future I needed to participate in and find or create with others—Life/Work Direction, based on so much of what I had imagined forty years ago, and actually drilling down even deeper than I had conceived.