

Veteran Feminists of America[®]

Volume 1 Number 4

510 W. Mariposa St. Phoenix, AZ 85013

Winter 1993

FLO KENNEDY

Excerpts from an interview

Civil Rights attorney/activist, writer, speaker, television host (her own show;) inspirator, nurturer, fearless defender of human rights; selfless, outspoken, outrageous, controversial and completely lovable human being.

Born Kansas City, February, 1916 the second of four daughters she was raised by loving parents, a mother who instilled pride and ambition, a father who gave them a sense of humor and spoiled them a bit.

"My father had his own two taxi cabs, but we were poor. My mother sewed and made us cute dresses. She thought we were the greatest. We lived in a 'po white trash' neighborhood; the kids would chase us and call us nigger. Once, in a moment of rashness, I turned around and chased them, and did they run! I was never afraid of white people after that. My whole theory is, anytime anyone is after you, turn and chase them. There's something vulnerable about everyone."

In her early twenties she moved to Sugar Hill, (Harlem) and attended Columbia Law School on a grant given because of her handicap, a progressive congenital back disability which has her today confined to a wheelchair. I asked why had she gone into law? *"Why not? I always aimed for the top. They tried to discourage me; said I was 'puny,' the law books were too heavy. I said a baby is heavier."*

Women lawyers were expected to be legal secretaries in those days, but Flo was lucky. She says of the firm that hired her, *"The guys liked me and let me do some legal work. There was one*

Greetings and happy holidays to all !

A year is ending, another about to begin. And just as years ago we created a movement out of a passionate commitment to change society, we are now creating our "fountain of age" by a continuing involvement in life.

Two weeks ago when I was considering a small holiday celebration with New York-area veterans I thought why waste time? Let's celebrate Flo now, right in her own backyard. True, such a quickly planned party will not have all the pomp she deserves, but it will have the pleasure. Flo'll be happy as long as she's with us. Let's go with it.'

So we're on. Bring your family, your friends, or come by yourself. Celebrate the season, enjoy Flo and rejoice in each other.

But if you can't make *this* event, read on about next May in Washington. There's plenty of time to make plans to be *there*.

Here's my end-of-one-year, beginning-of-next thanks. For your beautiful and moving letters, for your trust, and for your moral and financial support of the VFA. One of my wishes for '94—in addition to health, happiness, and fulfillment for us all—is that we find those ten thousand or so lost veterans so we can accomplish our goals as we enjoy our age of peace and wisdom together.

Jacqui

women lawyer in the firm, She taught me a lot. So soon I opened my own office."

Rap Brown, Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday were clients.

Once a judge told me, "Next time you come to court, dress like a lawyer". Your honor, I answered, if you'll be dressed like a man, I'll dress like a woman. Any time you see a man in a woman's garb, run like a turkey, cause baby they're in a sexist profession!

Flo was at the founding meeting of New York NOW at a millionaire's mansion on the upper east side. She shook things up when she talked about boycotts. *"I told them they should attack the advertizing industry and the media for their degrading depiction of women. We formed the first Image Committee."*

I could understand feminism because the patterns were so similar to discrimination against blacks—almost parallel—so it was easy to get the psychology and know the techniques to fight them. All I had to do was transfer the thinking

from the black community to women, and you have the same thing.

In the seventies Flo did the talk circuit with Gloria Steinem, cracking everyone up while instilling them with courage. Among her books, *"The Abortion Rap"*, written with Diane Schuller Abrams and *"Color Me Flo"*.

Flo's melieu was demonstrations, confrontations. I remember her especially at The New York Times demo in '67. (to stop the sexi-grated help-wanted ads). One cop was very hostile. Flo strode up to him authoratively, looked him in the eye and asked, *"What's the trouble, officer? I'm an attorney"*. He blanched and retreated and soon he was protecting us from hostile passersby.

Her flat was ever open to us, a haven and a school, where we could help ourselves to a plate of soul food always cooking on the stove, and get a "Flo Fix"—a mixture of courage, inspiration, ideas, Floisms, and bask in the warmth of her unconditional love.

VETERAN FEMINISTS IN DALLAS REUNITE

Inspired by an article about VFA and "Mothers of the Movement" of Dallas in the *Dallas Morning News* last May forty or so veterans in that city have reunited and will meet quarterly, with no formal structure. Virginia Whitehill and Bonnie Wheeler who are coordinating, say the group feels their most important goal is to write their history. Some of the members: Hermine Tobolowsky, one of VFA's '94 honorees, Greta Ostott, Louise Raggio, Doris Middleton, Gertrude Miller, Ruth Morgan, Diana Hickman, Diane Watts, Elaine Sehnert, Bonnie Wheeler. Shirley Broughton Miller, one of the *News*' "mothers" of the Dallas movement, led me to Maura McNeil, "the real mother of the movement here". Maura now lives in California.

Books

So many to review and recommend— Anyone for this? Betty's book *Fountain of Age* is getting great reviews, and she's drawing crowds on her book tour. Looks like it will do for the older generation what *Feminine Mystique* did for us. I highly recommend Gerta Lerner's *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, Kathleen Barry's *Susan B. Anthony*. Just finished Gloria Steinem's *A Journal of Self Esteem*, and found it to be much more than that, and an inspiration for our personal development. Toni Carabillo's and Judith Meuli's history of the movement is out. Write for a copy, 1126 Hipoint St. Los Angeles, CA 90035

Welcome back Suzanne Benton from your world tour. We loved your letters from India to Ireland, Germany to Kenya. (Suzanne, of Ridgefield, CT is a sculptor, performer, writer and founder of Connecticut NOW and the artist of the beautiful bronze statue of Susan B. that travelled around with us from conference to conference for years.)

Reunion in Washington, DC May 1994

On May 12 with the National Women's Party we'll honor Betty Friedan at the herstoric Sewall-Belmont house on Constitution Avenue. The next evening, at a location as yet unknown, Betty will present the VFA Medal of Honor for service above and beyond to: Gene Boyer, Kay Clarenbach of Wisconsin; Dorothy Haener, Virginia Allan, of Michigan; Evelyn Cunningham, New York City; Phineas Indritz of Maryland, Toni Carabillo of Los Angeles, CA; Marjory Stoneman Douglas of Miami, Florida; and Hermine Tobolowsky of Dallas, Texas. On May 14 we'll attend to business to insure continuation of VFA. I'm happy to say that the VFA has grown beyond my ability to handle alone.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Constance Cook, Ithaca, NY; Dr. Kathryn Bemmann of Waukesha, Wi., Dr. Shep Aronson, of New York, Eunice Holland, Columbia, S.C.; Adeline Diamond, NYC; Lee Kefauver, Falmouth, Ma., Jane Einbender, NYC; Patricia Simon, Suffern, NY; Victoria Vidal, Glendale, Ca.; Elizabeth Shanklin, Riverdale, NY; Anne Florant, NYC; Daisy Fields, Silver Springs, MD.; Eileen Kelly, Albany, NY; Isabella Lee, NYC; all the Dallas women; Jane Elioseff of Houston; Jane Mansbridge, Chicago; Joanne Parrent, Beverly Hills, Ca.; Mary DeAbreu, San Jose, Ca.; Penny Bertucelli, Plantation, Fl; Newcomb College Center for Research on women -(Beth Willinger, director, Susan Tucker, librarian New Orleans, La.; Irene Herman, Sarasota, Fl.; Laura X of Berkeley, Ca.; Diane Post of Phoenix, Az. — and many whose letters are excerpted here. (There hasn't been a membership campaign, we have no membership committee, so this is mostly word -of-mouth. Please pass the word on!)

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Unsolved Mystery

Where are those 10,000 or so early feminist activists? Help us find them. Please send copies of enclosed flyer to everyone whose address you have.

WE WANT EVERY VETERAN, SO PLEASE DON'T DEPRIVE US OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Average dues are \$30.00— but PAY WHAT YOU CAN, zero to whatever, but join us!

SEND check made to VFA. INCLUDE YOUR BIO!!! YOUR PART IN OUR HERSTORY IS IMPORTANT!

A SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE WHO'VE PAID \$50, \$75, \$100 and more! It's your contributions that allow us to accept non-paying members and accomplish our goals.

Editorial Box

VETERAN FEMINISTS OF AMERICA NEWSLETTERS c 1993

Jacqui Ceballos, *Founder/Director*
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Co-founders: Suzanne Benton, Noreen Connell, Jane Everhart, Janice LaRouche, Joan Michel, Inna Newmark, Mary Orovan, Barbara Rubin, Barbara Seaman, Elayne Snyder, Mary Jean Tully, Scotty Welch, Dell Williams, Mary Vastiliades, Sandra Zwerling

Committee '94: Nikki Bear, Antonia Blackmon, Ivy Bottini, Gene Boyer, Toni Carabillo, Margot Champagne, Virginia Corsi, Catherine East, Mary Eastwood, Sonia Fuentes, Elaine Gordon, Dorothy Haener, Cindy Judd Hill, Joan Michel, Judith Meuli, Inna Newmark, Dorothy Senerchia, Mary Jean Tully, Bede Ulrich

Editor/Publisher: Jacqui Ceballos
You may reproduce this publication. All omissions and errors are mine. JC

SCARF WITH YOUR SIGNA- TURES READY!

Your signature (or printed name) has been recorded for posterity on a beautiful polyester pongee scarf, navy on light grey background. Navy border has date and occasion. It can be worn around your neck, as a blouse, on your head, wherever; or it can be framed. Price is \$35.00. In a few years it'll be worth — who knows what! Without a downpayment, there'll be no scarf, so you must order now! Checks will not be deposited unless and until all is received. Make check for \$35.00 (covers mailing) to VFA — and mail c/o Irma Newmark, 395 South End Avenue, 21-D; NY, NY 10280.

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE THE VFA DO

"Keep alive the history and memory all the women who gave their lives to creating a better world for all by opposing the degradation of women, and to commemorate their strength, courage and determination in the face of overwhelming adversity. ...To keep our work from being trivialized and nullified by those who would erase or rewrite our history.

Betsy Warrior

812 Memorial Dr, #A902 Cambridge, Ma 02139
BW wrote (for) *Journal of Female Liberation*, started a woman's library, an organizer of the early Battered Woman's Shelter Movement, wrote *Int. Battered Woman's Directory and House-workers Handbook*. For past 17 years she's worked on women's human rights vs pornography.

ANTHOLOGY:

Antonia Blackmon has extended the deadline. Your story is vitally important for our herstory. Please, please, send an essay, a poem, article, whatever; 500 to 1000 words, and your brief bio ASAP to 17 Fifth Avenue, Pelham, NY 10803. Minimal editing. You have final approval. For more info call 212/421-4322, or eves 914/738-8144.

✉ MAILBOX

The other night over dinner with my son, I apologized for going on and on, regaling him with tales of early feminist battles. His comment, "Well, you better start telling us about it sometime, mom", brought me up short. Just because our children sat in the middle of our battles doesn't mean they remember what we did, why we did it - or that grown women used to have to have their father's co-sign car notes — herstory about to be lost again!

Elaine LaTourelle

*Elaine Day LaTourelle & Assoc., P.S.,
13525 32nd N.E. Suite D,*

Elaine was a NOW Legislative VP in the '70's.

When I marched down 5th Avenue in 1970, I'd just found out I was a feminist. It felt like I was joining the army.

And what a ride it has been! I've never really *not* been active since that day. Do you remember the kick-off for Brooklyn NOW with you and Shirley Chisholm? I moved back to this area for a post-Doc in health psychology. My work centers on women's health, particularly breast cancer. I set up my own research firm. ...helped start Women Harnessing Independent Political Power. This whole period has been dominated by the abortion struggle... ..but oh, I am so tired of it! And, just as I am bored, just as I think I have lived through too much, just as I wonder if the movement is over for me, your letter comes and talks about peace and wisdom. The timing was perfect! Count me in.

Kathy Grady

Ma Inst. of Behaviorial Medicine 180 Denslow Rd., E Longmeadow, Ma. 01028

I join happily, but my daughter reminds me to say I've retired. Actually, I'll never retire. I still have stamina, intense

interest, good health and hope to live a couple more decades and watch it all unfold... Everything I've worked for seems so sweetly reasonable it's hard to see why it's taking so long.

Best wishes,

Maura McNeil

706 Borello Way Mt. View, Ca. 94041

A founder of the Women's Center (and much else!) Maura started the Women Helping Women Awards, now called the "Maura Awards", DALLAS, TX.

I felt a bit hesitant because the VFA seems to be heavily East Coast-based... I am conscious of much East Coast-oriented bias in recent books on feminism.

Ann Forfreedom

Publisher of THE WISE WOMAN, a journal of feminist issues and spirituality. For info: WiseWoman 2441 Cordova St., Oakland, Ca. 94602

A main goal of VFA is to write our herstory, and that includes every veteran in every area.

Jacqui

The news of the death of Jane Field hurt a lot. She was all your obituary says. This is an organization to which I am very happy to belong.

Catharine Stimpson

An early NOW activist, is a professor at Rutgers U. 172 College Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

I am so war weary these days that I forget we've survived wars upon wars already, ... I want to be among you and with you in any way I can.

Kathy Barry

Kathleen Barry, author of wonderful book on the great Susan B. Anthony teaches at State College, PA. 323 East Park Ave., State College, Pa. 16803

THE BIAS-FREE WORDFINDER

A Dictionary of Nondiscriminatory Language by Rosalie Maggio

history -nonsexist; this word comes from Greek roots for such concepts as inquiring, knowing, learning. Women have pointed out the irony that history as we know it has told only one side of the story, "his story," and have coined the tongue-in-cheek "herstory" (a word not recognized by any standard dictionaries) to "emphasize that women's lives, deeds, and participation in human affairs have been neglected or undervalued in standard histories". (Miller & Swift 1976, p.121).
What do you think?

DECEMBER 15
 Park Avenue at 67 Street Armory
 Cash bar at SIX
 At seven we'll dine
 For \$35 where else can you find
 a five-course dinner with two cups of
 wine!
 We'll accept contributions to help with
 the fest
 To assure our Flo Kennedy will have
 only the best
 It's late to be planning, and perhaps
 we'll be
 just a few kindred sisters,
 but "honey" you'll see
 That many or few, the joy is the same
 We're together again
 with our own Auntie Mame
 The Flo-w of the movement who stirred
 us "right on"
 Whose NYC flat was always our home
 From her wheelchair she nourishes us
 still
 And as long as she's (and we're) here,
 She always will!

For reservations: Send check to
 VFA, Care of Irma Newark, 395
 South End Avenue, 21-D, NY, NY
 10280

**VETERAN FEMINISTS
 OF AMERICA
 Invites you to
 Another opening
 Another show
 This time we're honoring
 FLO**

*She's been honored before,
 So why all the fuss?
 Well, she's never been honored by US
 To do the honors besides thee and me?
 gloria steinem
 When and where will this be?*

Veteran Feminists of America

Veteran Feminists of America
 510 W Mariposa St,
 Phoenix, Az 85013

The VFA is a network of women and men who actively participated in the women's movement from 1960 to 1975, to rekindle the spark and spirit of the feminist revolution, through reunions and newsletters, to document and preserve our accomplishments, to honor our heroes, and to act as "keeper of the flame" so that our original commitment to the ideals of feminism continues to reverberate and influence others.