

Houston
Breakthrough
Where Women Are News

Vol. III, No. 6

JULY - AUGUST 1978



STRAIGHT TALK ON POLITICS



Houston Breakthrough

Where Women Are News

Dear *Breakthrough* Subscribers:

Today commentator Tom Brokaw was talking about the New York newspaper strike the other morning. It seems other cities have been flying in their newspapers for residents to read but it's just not the same thing, Brokaw said, for New Yorkers to be getting their news from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Especially news about New York.

We can really understand where New Yorkers are coming from. With *Breakthrough* in a period of suspended publication, we're back to depending on the city's dailies to cover women's news. But it's just not the same thing to be getting our news from the *Post* and *Chronicle*. Especially news about women.

If it sounds like we are getting anxious to get back into publication, we are. And we will this fall. We are encouraged by the first signs of support the paper has received. We are convinced *Breakthrough* will make it.

Our summer has been one of weekly meetings and daily activities with one goal in mind; to raise money for the paper's survival and growth. For a group whose imaginations are more expansive than their finances, it has been a unique experience thinking just as creatively about money as about the layout design of the next issue. It has been a unique experience having business luncheons with women in marketing and advertising. At one point this summer consultant Mary Drouin held workshops for us in business management. Mary brought Tutta Barton to one session to discuss her experience in the newspaper publishing business. She has owned six Texas newspapers, most recently acquiring the *River City Sun*, formerly the *Austin Sun*. Her best business advice to us was to go after advertising. "You can't make it without advertising."

Soon after that Paula Leone, who works in advertising sales for *City* magazine, offered to help us restructure our advertising program. She and marketing consultant Hazel Broughton are forming a steering committee to bring women with expertise in this area to help *Breakthrough* develop a strong advertising department. If you are willing to serve on this committee, please leave a message for Paula or Hazel at *Breakthrough*.

Charter subscriber CPA Jody Blazek attends all of our business meetings. She has helped us develop a more professional attitude about the business side of the paper. She and her husband, David Crossley, managing editor of *City* magazine, have encouraged us to develop a business prospectus to seek financial backing. Several women and men have told us that they would consider either a loan or donation to *Breakthrough* after they review such a prospectus. So, that is our top priority. We are still working on it and if you have expertise in developing one, please leave a message at our office for Marianne Kostakis. This money will allow us to immediately hire our first full-time staff members—an editor and a circulation director. We'll resume publication at that point.

We received a tremendous response to the "Each One... Reach One" campaign. One person sent us three-year renewals for herself and her three daughters and enclosed a check for \$250. So many of you sent in *four more* subscriptions. We were overwhelmed. Many of you shared a unique way of reaching new subscribers. We think realtor Ann Palony has a fine idea. She gives gift subscriptions to all of her new home buyers, many of whom are new to Houston. Jeanne Salatan from Bay Area NOW writes personal letters to women whose support she wants to encourage and her NOW chapter has formed a *Breakthrough* task force to encourage 100% subscription support from its membership. Evie Whitsett and Dorothy Howard are coordinating this project.

Together with the new subscription drive is our new telephone committee. Patsy Dozier is setting it up to remind *Breakthrough* subscribers about their upcoming or expired renewals. Almost 200 names come up for renewal each month. So you can see why we can't lose anyone. Help us by renewing early. Look at your mailing label. If it says 9-78—that means your subscription will expire in September. This committee will be ongoing throughout the year. Please call us if you can help.

Before we close, we'd like to share two *Breakthrough* records with you. Barbara Karkabi holds the new subscriber record with 14 new readers. And, Dr. Nanette Bruckner holds the renewal record. Her subscription expires in May 1983. We hope all our subscribers will adopt that confidence.

From the *Breakthrough* Staff



Left to right:
Anita Freeman Davidson
Wendy Haskell Meyer
Ruth Barrett

another Breakthrough

The Foundation Story

by Anita Freeman Davidson
and Marilyn Marshall Jones

"Breakthrough's sister organization, the Breakthrough Foundation, has an excellent selection of educational projects scheduled," says newly appointed director, Ruth Barrett. The *Series for Serious Writers*, currently underway, the *Seminar for Serious Voters*, beginning August 22, the *Effective Speech Communication Workshop* coming up in September, and a guide to women-owned businesses are among the first projects offered.

"Breakthrough Foundation is committed to helping women become active participants in their society—with special emphasis on equipping women with better tools for earning a living," says Barrett who brings to the foundation impressive skills developed throughout her 18 years of business experience.

"In high school I edited an award-winning AAAA newspaper and won first place in feature writing in Texas Interscholastic League Feature Writing," says Barrett, "but like many women of my generation, I didn't take my talents seriously—because no one else did. No one ever said to me 'you're a terrific writer and you really ought to do something serious with it'—so when I got to college I majored in speech and drama because I thought it would be fun.

"Eventually, after producing four babies in five and a half years, I went to

work as a copywriter. Later, I was a partner in an art studio and editor of an industrial tabloid. In the late sixties I became assistant to the marketing director for a major bank holding company, and it was then that I really got serious about my career."

Since the *Galveston News* paid the fee for two of their reporters to attend the *Series for Serious Writers*, Barrett hopes other women will be able to persuade their firms to pay the fee for the speech workshop. "But even if a woman has to pay out of her own pocket, the cost will not be prohibitive and she will know she is getting training of the highest quality."

The workshop will be conducted by Marjorie M. Best, Carolyn A. Peeler, and Evelyn J. Cox, principals of Creative Speech Interests, Inc., a consultant firm dedicated to developing and broadening skills in personal and public speech communication.

The 1979 *Breakthrough Guide to Woman-Owned Businesses, Services, and Organizations* is a valuable and far-reaching project now in the works. Its purpose is to provide women with a practical network of communication, information, and referral. According to the National Association of Women Business Owners, women owners earn only 30 cents for every dollar earned by men owners. "The *Breakthrough Guide* will identify women-owned businesses in our area and will generate referrals for them," says Barrett. "We also expect the guide to be used by government contractors."

Juanita Krepps, Secretary of Commerce, has stated that in 1975 "woman-owned businesses, together with those owned by . . . minorities, were receiving less than one per cent of the more than \$130 billion spent by federal, state and local governments for procurement of goods and services." Barrett hopes the *Guide*, together with business skills workshops, will help change these percentages in Houston.

Barrett began to get serious about women's rights about that time, too. She worked as a volunteer for the Dallas women's newspaper, *Equal Times*. "I've been a feminist since I was seven years old—maybe younger," says Barrett, "but there wasn't a word for it then. I can remember hearing one of my mother's friends ask her 'how long did it take you to make that dress?' My mother answered 'Oh, I don't know, but it doesn't matter—my time isn't worth anything anyway.' A bell went off in my head and I thought, *that's not right*."

"In 1970 when Germaine Greer wrote *The Female Eunuch* and Helen Reddy was singing *I Am Woman*, and so much awareness was being generated, some of my friends started calling me *Libby*—for liberated—and I took it as a compliment."

For the past three years Barrett has been a partner in Barrett Associates, a Houston-based firm providing communications consultation and creative services to ad agencies and design studios. "Now I am putting my business skills and my experience in the women's movement to

work for the Breakthrough Foundation."

Barrett is particularly enthusiastic about the *Effective Speech Communication Workshop*. "The instructors for this workshop usually conduct the program for large corporations, and they tell me there are *never* any women in the classes. Men in management level positions are selected for this training—the women are back in the offices answering the phones. Most women simply never have an opportunity to learn how to present their ideas clearly, forcefully, assertively, and in a business-like manner. This workshop is designed to give working women the skills and poise necessary to move up in their jobs. Many firms pay as much as \$350 per employee for this training—but the foundation will offer it for only \$55."

The foundation is a non-profit organization. At this time, income is derived from the fees charged for workshops and seminars. "We're in the process of applying for tax-exempt status," says Barrett, "and are fortunate to have the expertise of CPA Jody Blazek and attorney Harriet Hubacher in preparing our application. Jody is a tax specialist who has helped numerous foundations and non-profit organizations solve difficult tax problems. Harriet has an impressive legal background and is helping us draft corporation bylaws."

Once tax exempt status is obtained, the foundation will seek large-scale contributions and grants which will become the primary sources of funding for future women's projects.

Staff

Paid—Does not apply

Unpaid—Donna Adair, Jody Blazek, Janice Blue, Gail Brady, David Crossley, Anita Freeman Davidson, Patsy Dozier, Marilyn Marshall Jones, Barbara Karkabi, Marianne Warfield Kostakis, Virginia Meyers, Lynne Mutchler, Gary Allison Morey, Sharman Petri, Candace Richter, Janice Rubin, Kathleen Williamson

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"A reporter's responsibility is to the reader. The reader is my client and my purpose is to keep the reader informed."

—Susan Wright



Marilyn Marshall Jones

up, the newspapers and radio were a bore. There were no women reporters or announcers. The people who did those things were men. So I read a lot of magazines because I noticed that this was something women did, women wrote stories that were published in magazines."

Wright's family was very supportive when at a very young age she began writing poetry and "boring everyone who came to our house by reading it to them."

After graduate school at Columbia, she went job-hunting in New York. It was a harrowing experience. The *New York Herald-Tribune* had just folded and every job opening in town had a dozen *Herald-Tribune* reporters standing in line with 10 to 15 years experience.

She finally did land what she calls a "stroke-of-luck" job, however, working on a documentary for WOR-TV.

Wright developed an interest in consumer topics when she moved to Austin. She wrote consumer protection and investigative pieces for the *Texas Observer*. In 1972 she came to Houston as the consumer reporter for KPRC-TV, later switching to hard news. She now writes a monthly column, "Image," for *Houston Business Journal*, and teaches a course for news reporters at the University of Houston.

"The public's right to know is more important than a person's right not to be libeled," Wright told participants at the second lecture.

"The Supreme Court, however, is taking a more and more narrow view of

can't believe art is that complicated."

Asked how she went about viewing a painting in an exhibit, Moser said, "First I analyze it on a purely retinal basis, scanning for information like color, texture, structure. Then I just look and let it work on me. Either it grabs me or it doesn't. Art is something of the soul, and for me it has to be responded to that way."

"You have to see a work of art objectively, assimilate it personally and then put it in historical perspective."

"Artists are dependent upon critics to get their point across. An artist's reputation will be affected by a critic's misinterpretation. It's a tremendous responsibility. A critic must be prepared to say that an artist's work is mediocre, or good, or phony. You have the responsibility to art and to your readers to say this. You have to be prepared not to be loved. Criticism is not the field to go into if you are looking for strokes. You won't find many."

In the opinion of many news professionals, Thelma Schoettker is the best interviewer in town. She shares her skills in the fourth lecture of the series.

Schoettker's first job was writing television promotion. "I went to an employment agency and told them I didn't know what I wanted to be, but I wanted to be something."

Schoettker came to Houston 15 years ago to do a talk show on KTRH. She had a mid-day show on KPRC-TV for a while, and then moved to KEYH as Program Director.

Jim Asker is a Rice graduate who began his career as a reporter writing a political column for the *Rice Thresher*. "I approached writing as though it were a science that I would master to convey complex ideas and make people understand what I was thinking. The poetry of putting words together came later."

Asker started out at the *Houston Post* four years ago on the suburban desk—sometimes known as the "Boondocks"—covering everything from hurricanes to rodeos to the Ft. Bend County Commissioners meetings. Later he was a one-man Baytown Bureau. Then he went to the city desk where he covered education.

"Now I am in the happy position of being free from the responsibility of a daily department," says Asker. As a general assignment reporter, he does some daily work when a department is particularly heavy, but most of his assignments are for features and special projects, which means he usually has at least a couple of days to work on a story.

In the fifth lecture of the series, Asker will talk about getting the words on paper, rewriting, and judging when the copy is ready for an editor. He will also critique the work of participants.

Neal Barrett, Jr. has been a writer most of his life. He even has a degree in writing

Writers on writing

by Anita Freeman Davidson

"Freelance writing is very lonely work. I came here to meet other writers."

"People always tell me I write great letters. Well, I want to find out if I can do anything else."

"I get paid to write and I don't know how to do it."

—participants

Series for Serious Writers sponsored by Breakthrough Foundation

"Community response to our writer's seminar was tremendous," said Ruth Barrett, the new executive director of the Breakthrough Foundation.

"The class is filled to capacity and it is clear we answered an important community need."

The foundation office received over 200 calls and accepted 50 participants for its six week *Series for Serious Writers* which began on July 22 and continues through August 26.

Barrett attributes the success of the seminar to the strong interest of writers who want to improve their marketable skills and to the high caliber of professionals who agreed to share their experience with the group.

"We came up with a program that we thought was first-rate and then we invited first-rate speakers. Once we decided we wanted a session on the art of interviewing, for instance, we invited expert interviewer Thelma Schoettker. Everyone on our list accepted enthusiastically. We were delighted."

In addition to Thelma Schoettker, other speakers are Wendy Haskell Meyer, associate editor of *Houston Home & Garden*; former news reporter, Susan Wright, now a University of Houston journalism instructor; Jim Asker, a reporter with the *Houston Post*; Charlotte Moser, art critic, *Houston Chronicle*; and Neal Barrett, author and communications consultant.

Wendy Haskell Meyer offered a great number of practical suggestions to participants at the opening lecture.

"Type your manuscripts in large type so they will be easier for editors to read."

She also gave valuable advice about gathering information and conducting interviews. "Listen, and people will write your stories for you. Even if you don't agree, keep it to yourself and the person will keep talking."

A self-taught writer, Meyer did her first writing in a private journal which she started at the age of 42. "I enjoyed writing and decided that if I was going to expend my energies, I might as well try to sell something."

She attended writers' workshops and clinics, read writers' magazines and started submitting her work.

"The first ten things I sent out came back. But I always had at least five things out and when something would come back, I would just rewrite it and send it out again."

"I really began to feel like a pro when I became the Houston correspondent for the *National Observer*," Meyer had a story in the first issue of *Texas Monthly*, and when *Houston Home & Garden* began, she went to them and said, "Look, I have 10 ideas for stories. Can I submit them on approval?" They didn't buy all the stories, but it was the beginning of a very profitable relationship. When the magazine underwent a reorganization two years ago, Meyer became an associate editor.

"Every job I've had, I got because I was very aggressive," says Meyer. Her editing post leaves no time for freelancing, but she hasn't given up writing. In her spare time, she is collaborating with a gynecologist on a self-help book about women's genital infections. It will be published by Putnam.

Susan Wright, speaker for the second lecture of the series, calls herself a "reformed magazine junkie."

"In Oak Clair, Wisconsin, where I grew

the public's right to know." She noted the recent Supreme Court ruling that police officers were acting properly in their 1971 surprise search of the offices of *The Stanford Daily*, Stanford University's campus newspaper.

Other recent Supreme Court decisions in libel law also narrow the press's franchise. "A reporter must know enough about the law, as based on major rulings, to know when to call in an attorney," said Wright.

Asked what reporters could do about the narrowing of press freedoms, Wright urged reporters to insist upon their rights under the First Amendment, but to be fully prepared to meet police and/or judicial retaliation.

"A reporter's responsibility is to the reader. The reader is my client and my

"Listen, and people will write your stories for you."

purpose is to give information and keep my client informed."

The third lecture of the series was by art critic Charlotte Moser. "I like the idea of criticism as documentation. I am documenting art."

Moser took a degree in studio painting from the University of Texas, but chose to be a writer and taught herself the craft. "I wanted to help people make decisions about art." She began by writing art criticism for the *Daily Texan* while still in graduate school.

Moser freelanced for several publications including the *Houston Post* back in the days when they published art features on Sunday only. In 1974 she moved into her present position as art critic for the *Houston Chronicle*.

"A more relaxed, humanist style of writing is coming into fashion," Moser said. "Formal criticism is boring, it's too cold for me. As one artist I know said, I

—not journalism—from Oklahoma University, one of the few schools in the country that grant a degree in writing. He can often be found back at OU during the summer, teaching short writers' courses.

In fact, OU turns out a high proportion of successful writers, and Barrett is one of them. Science fiction is his specialty: he has published 10 novels and about 350 short stories.

Barrett's first job was editor of a house organ for an Oklahoma City daily paper. He has held numerous corporate positions, including Director of Promotion for Braniff International. He and his wife, Ruth Barrett, own a communications consulting firm, providing services to ad agencies.

As the final speaker of the series, Barrett will focus on editing skills, and from his own experience, will offer the views from both the writer's and the editor's sides of the desk.

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We'd like you to know that your application fee of \$25 for your business, service, resource or organization is also helping to provide the salary for the woman coordinator of this project. Women are also doing the typesetting, layout, graphic design and printing. The printing costs of House of Coleman, owned by Marion Coleman, will be met by display advertising.

Listings are now being accepted. If you would like to be included, or if you know someone who should be, please fill out the application below.

Name of woman/women _____
Name of business _____
Address of business _____
Business phone _____
Job Description (25 words or less) _____

To qualify for a business listing your business must be at least 50% owned by women.

Application deadline: October 15, 1978
Publication deadline: December 15, 1978
Send your application to:

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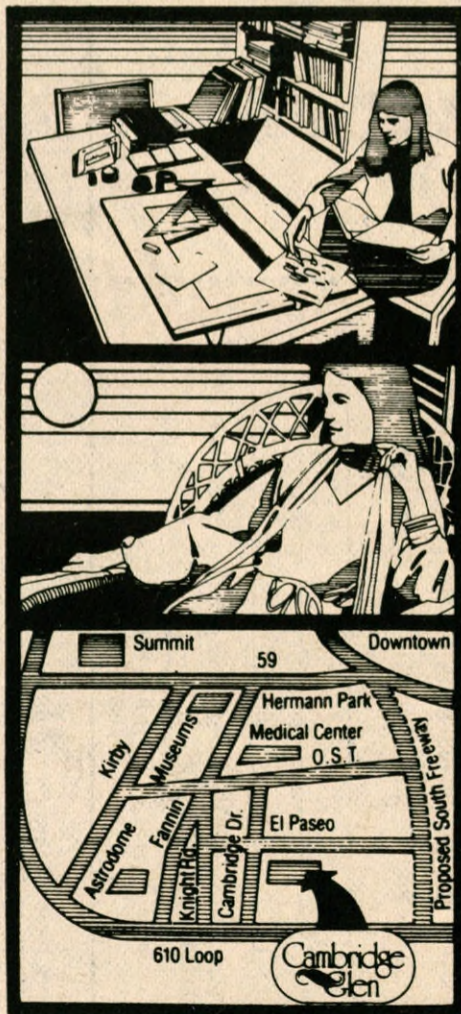
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Galleria area, and Greenway Plaza. And just minutes from the Medical Center and Rice University.

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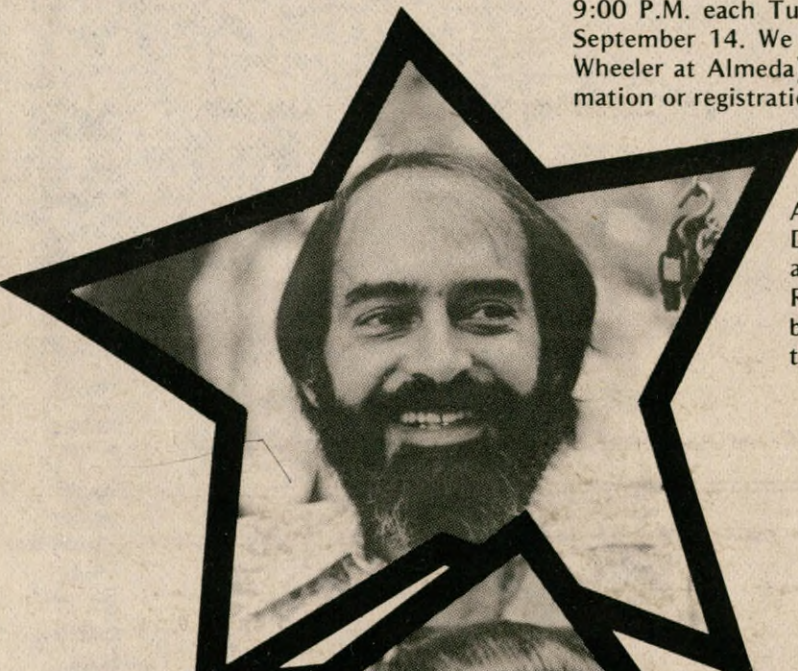
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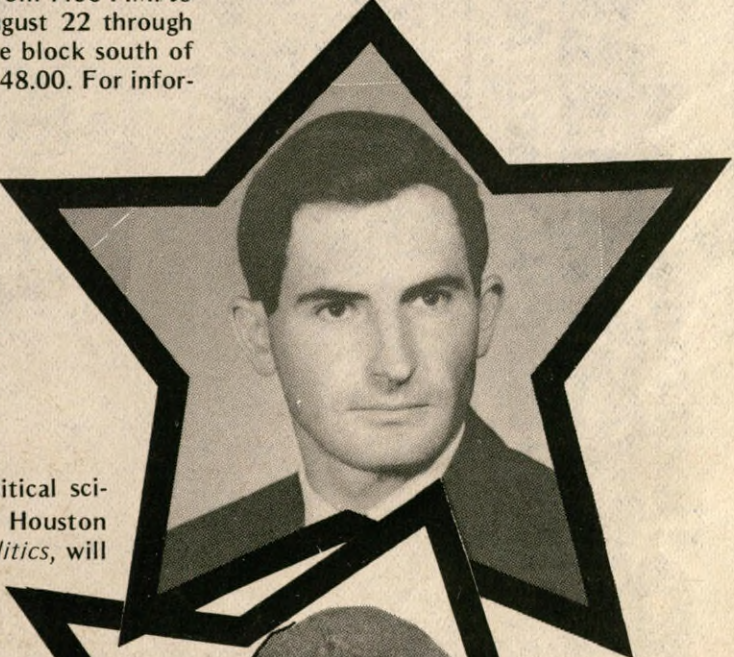
Breakthrough Foundation, Inc. presents

SEMINARS FOR SERIOUS VOTERS


The Breakthrough Foundation presents a four-week series of lectures designed to develop voter awareness. Eight well-known political authorities will share their knowledge and expertise with us from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. each Tuesday and Thursday beginning August 22 through September 14. We will meet at 1708 Rosewood (one block south of Wheeler at Alameda). The fee for all eight lectures is \$48.00. For information or registration, call 526-6686.




AUGUST 22:
DR. CHANDLER DAVIDSON,
associate professor of sociology at
Rice University and author of the
book *Bi-Racial Politics*, will trace
the history of state politics in Texas.




AUGUST 24:
DR. RICHARD MURRY,
associate professor of political sci-
ence at the University of Houston
and co-author of *Texas Politics*, will
talk about city politics.




AUGUST 29:
MR. TOM BASS,
County Commissioner, Precinct 1,
will talk about county politics.




AUGUST 31:
MR. VAREE SHIELDS,
editor of *The Forward Times*, will
talk about black politics.




SEPTEMBER 5:
DR. NIKKI VAN HIGHTOWER,
former Women's Advocate for the
City of Houston, former professor
at the University of Houston and
KTRH radio commentator, will talk
about feminist politics.



SEPTEMBER 7:
MS. OLGA SOLIZ,
chair of the Chicana Caucus, Harris
County Women's Political Caucus,
will talk about Mexican-American
politics.



SEPTEMBER 12:
MS. ANNE GREENE,
chair of the Harris County Demo-
cratic Party, will talk about precinct
politics, citizen involvement and
the inner workings of local parties.



SEPTEMBER 14:
MS. ANN LOWER,
administrative assistant to Congress-
man Bob Eckhardt, will talk about
national issues, such as energy, nat-
ural gas de-regulation, consumer
affairs and taxes.

What Kind of Person Reads Breakthrough?



Nanette Bruckner

Residence: Dickinson

Profession: psychologist, Associate Professor at the University of Houston at Clear Lake City, private practice in Dickinson

Interests and Activities: I play with ideas and philosophies, learn and teach women's studies and rational emotive therapy, do self-analysis, impact the community, watch news and documentaries on television, travel around the world (especially to primitive cultures and ancient archeological sites), fish and laugh

Persons Most Admired: Nanette Bruckner, Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan, Barbara Jordan, Gertrude Stein, Sojourner Truth, and Edith Bunker

Fantasies: I want to be a sex object, write a best seller book, be self-actualized, make significant changes in our society as a respected leader in the women's revolution, become a therapists's therapist with a 99% success rate, to celebrate the passing of the ERA, to see *Breakthrough* successfully compete with the *New York Times*. Lastly, I want to see world peace in my lifetime.