



Women’s Work Reimagined: The 1960s in Vermont, A Decade of Change

In the 1960s and ’70s, Vermont became one of the pioneers in extending legal rights and services to women and children while transforming its physical and mental health service programs. Much of this work was brought about not through government intervention but through individual and group efforts by members of the counterculture generation working with other, often older Vermonters with that rare combination of possessing ground-breaking goals and the ability to make them happen.

BY YVONNE DALEY

“Happiness is a baby’s laugh or the novelty of a domestic chore as simple as mending ... How come a nice girl like you isn’t married? ... A divorcee doesn’t belong with married or single people. She’s nowhere ... No employer welcomes the girl who majors in English, history, political science, art or philosophy—the liberal arts.” These are among the sentences found in the January 11, 1966, issue of *Look* magazine with its entire fifty-page issue dedicated to “The American Woman.”¹ While the magazine’s content is in-

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dicative of the prevalent mindset, elsewhere in the country in 1966, Ken Kesey was hosting acid test parties,² Muhammad Ali refused to go to war,³ and Betty Friedan, Shirley Chisholm, and Muriel Fox founded the National Organization for Women.⁴ The world was changing, with or without the permission of the psychologists, doctors, mothers, and writers who penned the magazine's articles or supported its attitudes. Four years previously, President John F. Kennedy had challenged every state to create a Governor's Commission on the Status of Women; Vermont's had been among the first, established in 1964 by Governor Phil Hoff.⁵ In the next few decades, Vermont would become one of the pioneers in extending legal rights and services to women and children while transforming its physical and mental health service programs. Much of this work was brought about not through government intervention but through individual and group efforts by members of the counterculture generation working with other, often older Vermonters with that rare combination of possessing ground-breaking goals and the ability to make them happen.

History books and literature are replete with stories of Vermont women left behind to manage the farm, the business, or the family while husbands went to war, to wander, or to find and secure a new and perhaps more promising place to live and prosper. As with those women, a substantial number of hippie women living in Vermont in the late 1960s and 1970s became single parents after first marriages fell apart and, through need and nature, networked with other women and men to make new lives. Reality can be sobering. Commitment in unity with others was empowering, however, and in the 1970s these young women, often working with older mentors like Sister Elizabeth Candon, the president of Trinity College,⁶ or Sallie Soule, a feminist from Charlotte, transformed procedures used in childbirth, joined forces to secure women's reproductive rights,⁷ organized to open up male-dominated trades to women, and transformed family court to make it more responsive to the needs of the whole family. And then, over the course of the intervening decades, some of these former hippies and activists used what they'd learned to help families as far away as Serbia, Mongolia, and Africa.

This is the broad and optimistic view. The corollary is that, while women have owned small businesses throughout Vermont's history, not enough women have found their way to top leadership roles in politics, banking, and business, despite the efforts begun in the 1970s. And while Vermont women have been increasingly well represented in the state legislature since 1930, Madeleine Kunin remains Vermont's only female governor. Vermont is one of only two states—Mississippi is the other—that has never elected a woman to the US Congress.⁸ Change the Story-

VT, a consortium of the Women’s Fund, the Vermont Commission on Women, and Vermont Works for Women, presented the conflicting picture of gender equity in its 2017 reports.⁹ They found that the view of Vermont since the late 1960s as a national pacesetter in the area of women’s leadership masks dramatic failures. For example, while 60 percent of the state Supreme Court justices and 50 percent of public university and college presidents were women in 2017, of the 296 people ever elected to statewide office, only 11 were women and only 8 percent of its highest-grossing companies were woman-led.¹⁰ More alarming, Vermont women were much more likely to live in poverty than Vermont men, especially if they were heads of households with children.¹¹ One question the consortium will explore as they work to “change the story” is why the movement toward equality so evident from the late 1960s until well into the 1980s lost its steam, leading to what they view as stagnation in leadership, pay equity, and other areas in which women’s progress is measured.¹²

With those disparities in mind, one answer might be that the counter-culture women and men who came to and stayed in Vermont were more interested in holistic careers and helping others than in promoting themselves as entrepreneurs. 1966 was a pivotal year in the lives of Sas Carey, Maureen Dwyer and Patricia Whalen, Emma Ottolenghi, Peggy Luhrs, Richard Bernstein, Charlie and Diane Gottlieb, Sister Candon, and others. That year Carey and her first husband moved to the Northeast Kingdom town of Newark, where the locals thought they were beatniks; Dwyer began wearing an Afro and decided to become an Army nurse; and Ottolenghi began planning her move to Vermont. It was the year Candon became president of Trinity College while Whalen, Bernstein, and the Gottliebs were students at colleges far removed from Vermont. Thanks to those liberal arts degrees the *Look* magazine writers had dismissed, and armed with the ability to think for themselves, the skills to communicate effectively, and the capacity for lifelong learning, their contributions have been remarkable. Each was motivated by a desire to do good work in the world rather than become rich or powerful. Those were the goals of the era—not competing for wealth—and they thought they were Vermont goals as well.

HEALTH CARE

In 1970, political activists from the Red Clover Collective in Putney and members of Earthworks, a farm-based commune in Franklin, were instrumental in creating a loose federation of hippies called Free Vermont to work together for social change. In a retrospective about the Free Vermont movement, Robert Houriet, a founder of Frog Run Com-

mune and author of *Getting Back Together*,¹³ a book about America's commune movement, described their first gathering in 1970:

The morning of the first day they harvested by hand a field of oats. Then they hunkered in small circles on a meadow high above the complex of farm buildings. Each group sketched a part of the new society: a cooperative system for buying food, primarily grains such as brown rice; a separate children's collective; a medical clinic which would ride circuit between communes to assist at homebirths and treat all the chronic illnesses and infections; a traveling caravan of People's music and theater; a people's bank endowed with \$5,000 from Red Clover; a short wave hook-up for communication and defense alert; a car pool of '62 Fords for standardized exchange of parts and mechanic's knowledge.¹⁴

The concept of providing free health care and changing the way in which babies came into the world were among the activists' first accomplishments. After residents from Red Clover and Earthworks relocated to Chittenden County, working with members of the Mount Philo commune located in Charlotte and with Burlington's large youth population, they opened the People's Free Clinic in August 1971 in Burlington's Old North End.¹⁵ It was an immediate success, providing exams and treatment for minor illnesses and injuries, tests for sexually transmitted diseases, and gynecological services. Donations were accepted but never required.



Barbara Nolfi at the Earthworks commune. (Photo courtesy of Dylan Nolfi)

But never required.

From today's vantage point, where rules and regulations, certifications, lawsuits, and insurance payments are part and parcel of the "health care industry," it seems astounding that in 1971 a group of radicals and hippies with limited financial resources and a volunteer medical staff could establish such a health clinic. By the end of its first year, the People's Free Clinic was serving roughly fifty people a week.¹⁶

Barbara Nolfi helped organize the clinic, reveling in the opportunity to see something tangible come about after the frustrations she experienced when the Earth-

works commune she had helped found disbanded.¹⁷ “It was exhilarating, exciting, rewarding,” she said. “Even before we had a location, a few professionals offered their time and trained the volunteers. They donated equipment and supported the clinic financially.” Eventually, the clinic made enough money to pay a few staff members; she was one of the first.

Charlotte physician Richard Bernstein volunteered his services. He was attracted to the idea of health care provided “in a non-hierarchical environment. Now you see how forward-thinking it was to imagine you could care for your own with knowledge and proper training, not complex medical stuff, of course, but as a way for people to make health care more affordable, to acknowledge that it is a universal right.”¹⁸

“Things seemed more possible then,” Nolfi said, a hint of nostalgia or resignation in her voice. “We served a young population, nothing life-threatening. If someone was really sick, we referred that person to the hospital or another doctor.”¹⁹

Free Vermont also worked with health professionals who were concerned about residents living on Vermont communes and in primitive conditions. Working with UVM doctors and interns and the Burlington Ecumenical Council, they produced the *Home Health Handbook*,²⁰ which was distributed to communes statewide. Nolfi said it placed an emphasis on sanitation, eating fresh vegetables, and other preventatives. She and others received training and traveled throughout Vermont to provide basic health care. “After considerable training, some of us became paramedics and the paramedics got more experience and trained others and the docs became good friends,” Nolfi explained. “Folks thought we weren’t practical. That was one of the assumptions back then about us, but we were very practical.”²¹

The clinic evolved over the decades, eventually becoming the Community Health Centers of Burlington, which today provides a full range of health and dental care on a sliding payment scale. It is the only Vermont organization that offers free and comprehensive health care for homeless people and, in cooperation with other civic organizations, housing and access to mental health and addiction services. By 2017, its clinics and outreach programs were serving more than 34,000 people in the region.²²

Not long after the free clinic was established, Nolfi and other women became interested in becoming trained as midwives. To that end, they arranged for “a gynecologist from central Vermont, Thurmond Knight, to do training with us on how to feel the uterus, how to tell how pregnant someone was, teaching us about pregnancy and

birth. Knight was very experienced and generous with his time. I learned a lot from him.”²³

Knight was an unusual doctor by any standard. In the early 1970s he was one of few family practitioners who would do home deliveries. Between 1973, when he began accompanying midwives on complicated deliveries, and his retirement in 1988, his efforts helped transform the way babies were born in Vermont. He and pediatrician Lou Dinicola opened the first birthing room in New England at Gifford Medical Center in Randolph—complete with rocking chair, birthing stool, comfortable bed, and shower. They encouraged healthy women to prepare for natural childbirth through classes attended by fathers. They offered workshops and discussed their practices at other area hospitals. By the time Knight retired, Gifford had five birthing rooms and was nationally recognized for its approach to birthing, along with the successful rate of breastfeeding among the mothers who delivered their babies there.²⁴

Raven Lang, whose 1972 *Birth Book*²⁵ became a primer for midwives of the era, also provided the Vermont women with training, traveling from California to “give us a crash course on birthing, five of us: four women and a man. From then on, I started working with births. Doctors and nurses let me into birthing rooms to observe and a lot of people on the communes started asking me to help with their births,” Nolfi said. She estimated that she had participated in up to 100 births between 1973 and 1990, when she retired.²⁶

“It was such an empowering time. Women were taking over birth. It was ours. It belonged to us, not the doctors. It changed the way that births happened. Midwives work in hospitals now and it’s more common for women to choose to have a natural birth and for the fathers to be part of the birthing. That all came from that meeting we had on the hill,” Nolfi said. “Imagine that, mostly young people from all over the United States coming here to Vermont, sharing a goal to make a change in the culture, in the way that babies came into the world, not in some sterile environment with strangers all around, but with your loved ones, your family there. Today, that’s not considered unnatural. It’s how births are done routinely, whether in birthing centers or at home.”²⁷

Vermont now has as many as twenty licensed home birth midwives. In 2015, roughly 24 percent of Vermont births were attended by a midwife, primarily in hospitals outfitted with birthing rooms inspired by Gifford.²⁸ Many have tubs for water deliveries, while others have an extra bed for a spouse or partner, meals delivered, and rocking chairs.

As for Knight, the demands of delivering babies at all hours of day and night took their toll. He retired from medicine in 1988 to work as a

sculptor of beautiful violins, violas, and cellos made from wood harvested from his own property.²⁹

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

While some women were demanding greater freedom in bringing newborns into the world, others wanted greater reproductive freedom. Few Vermonters know that Vermont legalized abortion prior to the Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade* or that a Catholic nun helped a group of counterculture activists create the state's first women's health care center where early abortions were performed.³⁰ The center resulted from a 1972 court case, *Beecham v. Leahy*³¹, in which a welfare recipient, Jacqueline R., sought an abortion from Dr. Jackson Beecham of St. Johnsbury. Beecham had become increasingly distressed by the number of women who sustained injuries and worse from botched abortions. He agreed that it would be in his patient's physical and mental welfare to abort the fetus. However, her pregnancy did not present a life-threatening condition, the only situation under which a Vermont doctor could legally perform an abortion. At that time, non-life-threatening abortions were legal only in Hawaii and New York. The Vermont woman could not afford to travel. Curiously, Vermont's law had no provision banning a woman from having the procedure while a doctor faced ten to twenty years imprisonment for performing an abortion. Beecham suggested that his patient sue him in order to test the law.³²

Patrick Leahy, then a state's attorney, was obliged to defend the law when it came before the high court. After examining the law, the court ruled that if there were no legal restrictions against a patient receiving a particular medical procedure, the legislature could not deny her the right to that procedure. In this backward way, the ruling, issued a year before *Roe v. Wade*, made Vermont the third state to remove all restrictions against access to an abortion.³³

While some people thought the ruling would lead to doctors providing abortions relatively quickly, or that the legislature would address the issue by making abortion illegal for the woman as well as the doctor, neither event happened until activist women like Nolfi, Roz Payne, and a Catholic nun joined forces. At the time, as president of Trinity College, a Catholic school, Sister Elizabeth Candon and other clergy members had been meeting to discuss the conflicting issues surrounding women's reproductive rights and the moral issues abortion posed.³⁴ Candon had grown up on a dairy farm in Pittsford and was especially sympathetic to issues of poverty and the financial and physical burden that unwanted children placed on women and families with meager financial means. When she stepped down from the presidency of Trinity



*Sr. Elizabeth Candon,
n.d. (VHS)*

in 1976, Governor Richard Snelling named her Secretary of Human Services.³⁵ In all these roles she often championed progressive ideas, pointing out that her vow as a Sister of Mercy obliged her to “serve the poor, the sick and the uneducated.”³⁶ As a result, she became a proponent of family planning while she also realized that many women became pregnant despite planning and contraceptives, which were not sanctioned by the Catholic Church. When the US Supreme Court later ruled that states were not required to provide Medicaid payments for elective abortions, Candon, as Human Services secretary, ruled that Vermont would continue to fund the procedures.³⁷ Of course, this brought her considerable criticism, but Candon was not a stereotypical nun. One of her favorite memories was white-water rafting through the Grand Canyon at age 76.³⁸ A scholar of medieval English language and literature, she taught at least one literature course at Trinity for fifty years, even while serving as college president and DHS secretary. A friend of Goddard College founder Tim Pitkin, Candon’s ideas about education had been influenced by a trip she took with him and his wife in the late 1960s to Scandinavia to study non-traditional-age learners. She introduced these ideas to Vermont as she helped transform the state’s education system to enable older Vermonters to return to college. In 1977, she founded Vermont Women in Higher Education to enhance opportunities for women leaders in Vermont.³⁹

At first, Peggy Luhrs of Burlington was surprised by Candon’s involvement in these rather controversial issues, but she soon came to see her as a powerful champion of women’s rights and humanitarian goals.⁴⁰ Luhrs had become aware of her own feminist instincts the day a junior high classmate informed her that only boys could be class president, a sentiment that blossomed into outrage when her gynecologist, a right-to-life proponent, refused to give her birth control as if he knew what was best for her. She began to ask herself, “whose body is this?” Then, when she decided to have a child, she worried that her mother’s milk would be full of DDT. For her, these were not abstract questions about the role of women or the safety of food, but real-life concerns about her own body, personal freedom, and the health of the next generation. She began to educate herself about anti-war, environmental, and women’s issues, seeing them as connected.

Luhrs had come to Vermont “purely by accident” in 1969 when she

and her former husband were living in New York City with their small infant. There had been a record number of murders in the city that year, 600 perhaps, and the couple wanted to move to the country. They considered upstate New York but the decision was made for them when her husband, who worked for IBM, got transferred to Vermont. Luhrs felt a bit lost in Burlington, a rather drab and struggling city in 1969, until she “made friends among other young people, met the anti-war people, the folks working to create a food co-op and the feminists.” The new friends included Sallie Soule, who had moved back to Vermont the previous year. Soule, a Michigan native, was older than the counterculture youth in Chittenden County. She had earned her MA in history at the University of Vermont before moving to New York, where she worked for Macmillan Publishing and Eastman Kodak. In 1968, she and her husband opened Horsford Nursery in Charlotte and she later served as Vermont Commissioner of Employment and Training under Governor Madeleine Kunin, as well as a state legislator and senator. A feminist, Soule quickly became a role model for the younger women, creating what she dubbed “the old-girls network,” to show ordinary people that wives and mothers from an older generation supported the younger people in their desire to have control over their bodies.⁴¹

Meanwhile, Luhrs had joined the Vermont chapter of the Women’s Political Caucus. Because the national caucus did not allow members to talk about abortion, the Vermont group changed its name to the Women’s Political Lobby and talked about what they darned well pleased. Luhrs joined Soule and others at a planning meeting at Trinity College organized by Candon and others to respond to the *Beecham* ruling. “That was where we plotted how to legalize abortion in Vermont,” she recalled, describing how activist women came to the conclusion that they would have to open a clinic themselves where women could have a safe abortion rather than wait for the establishment to do so. At a subsequent meeting held in a basement on Bank Street in Burlington and attended by bankers, doctors, nurses, and lawyers, the president of Chittenden Bank offered the group a small loan and Candon offered to find appropriate personnel.⁴² They chose a location in Colchester.

Just as quickly as the supporters had organized, so too did opponents. Luhrs recalled a well-attended meeting on reproductive rights with Vermont legislators at which one lawmaker asked, “How do we know there will be enough men for the next war?” if abortion became legal. While the legislator couldn’t stop the clinic from opening, voters in Colchester could, as the clinic needed their approval. Colchester had a strong Catholic presence and local priests urged parishioners to defeat the measure; but the center’s supporters “were well organized, had many coffee dates

with women in Colchester. Remarkably, they were open to discussion of all the issues and we won the vote,” Luhrs recalled.⁴³ The Vermont Women’s Health Center opened in 1972.

Roz Payne, a Red Clover member, Black Panther archivist, and filmmaker living in Richmond, was deeply involved in the center’s organization.⁴⁴ As supporters worked on final preparations, she worried that something would happen at the last moment to keep it from opening. Payne came up with the idea of volunteering to be “treated” with a blood test on the Sunday evening before opening day. “We had this completely irrational belief that if we had already started providing services, they couldn’t close us down,” she said, considering her blood test “a talisman” that led to the center’s continued existence. Like the People’s Clinic, the Women’s Health Center was successful; within a year, it outgrew its location in Colchester and relocated to a larger building on North Avenue in Burlington.⁴⁵

At the Vermont Women’s Health Center’s fifteenth anniversary in 1987, Governor Kunin acknowledged the work of dozens of women who had helped the center grow and prosper while reminding the audience that self-determination was an essential element of a successful society. As she put it, “To truly be in charge of one’s life is a healthy act, mentally, physically—and poetically. . . . You cannot be an equal self-sustaining human being unless you understand yourself and have some control over your destiny and over the destiny of others in a real way and not have others set barriers that limit you in any way.”⁴⁶

Among the people recognized that day for their contributions were two women doctors who performed abortions at the clinic, Judy Tyson and Emma Ottolenghi. The two had met when Ottolenghi was teaching anatomy and women’s health at the University of Vermont’s medical college and Tyson was a student. As a person whose Italian-Jewish family had escaped Turin as Mussolini began deporting Jews to Nazi death camps, Ottolenghi had an instinctual grasp of the small moments that make a difference in a person’s life.⁴⁷ In a most direct way, she said she felt no contradiction in her celebration of and commitment to life and the living and her dedication to women’s reproductive rights.⁴⁸

Ottolenghi came to Vermont in 1972 when her husband was offered a job as a cardiologist at the medical center, a position that kept him from being drafted. The two strongly opposed the Vietnam War. She had received an undergraduate degree and medical education at McGill University. Three months after the *Beecham* ruling, she was treating women at the Vermont Women’s Health Center, where she continued to practice until 1976, when she opened a private practice. For Ottolenghi, who had seen women in crisis after illegal abortions, the

issue was always about free will and safety, causes that led her after her retirement to Bolivia, India, Kazakhstan, and Africa to volunteer as a women's health care provider and researcher.⁴⁹

Doctor Bernstein also worked at the Women's Health Center, the only male on the staff. "They put up with me," he joked. Along with treating patients, he trained paraprofessionals in medical procedures, preparing them to take over some tasks when he and other doctors moved on. As a result, the Vermont Women's Health Center became one of the first clinics to employ nurse practitioners, the category of nurses who receive advanced training that prepares them to diagnose and treat conditions normally handled only by medical doctors.

"Both clinics worked to empower people, not just in terms of medical training but also in decision making," Bernstein said. "They were run collectively; decisions were made by the whole group on a consensus basis. Both in their goals and the way in which they put their goals into action, they were admirable organizations."⁵⁰

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Along with expanding reproductive rights, many of these counterculture activists were interested in improving women's economic opportunities. The two goals—reproductive freedom and economic stability—were entwined. Luhrs was among city residents who lobbied Burlington Mayor Bernie Sanders to establish a women's council, becoming its longtime director in 1985. The Sanders years were busy as he, other activist, and members of the women's council initiated programs to support and expand the arts, increase affordable housing, and address other progressive goals. As head of the Burlington Women's Council, Luhrs joined forces with Ginny Winn, an activist and proud lesbian who had been one of the cottage parents at Spring Lake Ranch, a mental health treatment center in Shrewsbury, before moving to Burlington.⁵¹ There, she was the outspoken director of Chittenden County Community Action, created to address chronic unemployment and under-employment in the city. Winn had compiled what she dubbed the "Boom Pie Report," a study that identified what jobs were coming into Burlington, who was getting them, and who was being left out of the city's economic growth. Her study showed a need for trade laborers, particularly carpenters, and also that single mothers were receiving the smallest slice of the economic pie. Luhrs, whose many skills included carpentry, knew that women could be trained in that trade but that stereotypes blocked their entry into the field. She created a job bank that put women with trade skills together with a list of jobs that needed employ-

ees. Eventually, more than sixty women with trade skills were listed in the job bank through these joint efforts.

Sanders had also created the Community and Economic Development Office with a broad range of goals that included making employment opportunities more equitable. To that end, the city hired Martha Whitney, a young woman who had been doing work not ordinarily open to women—house painting, landscaping, and roofing—while also serving as an advocate for people with handicaps. Whitney designed a training program, the Women’s Equal Opportunity Program, in which women were trained as carpenters, tile setters, electricians, and in other skilled trades.⁵² To further the entrance of women into this growing field of employment, the city passed an ordinance that required 10 percent of all city-funded construction jobs to be filled by women.⁵³ That program eventually merged with Step Up, another program instigated by a woman who had balked at the idea that there was women’s work and men’s work. For Ronnie Sandler, it had started in seventh grade when she was told she had to take home economics rather than workshop simply because she was a girl. Sandler learned carpentry on the job and eventually became the first woman to join a Michigan trades union.⁵⁴ After moving to Vermont, in the mid-1980s she created Step Up to help train women in the trades. Over the decades, Step Up evolved into Vermont Works for Women, a statewide job-training program aimed at giving women a wide range of tools for economic independence.

These programs all worked together to create opportunities for women in the trades and in leadership, especially in Chittenden County. Luhrs maintained that they have contributed to the area’s economic growth, far outpacing other regions of Vermont.

“From the perspective of then to now, so much has happened and women work in every field imaginable,” Luhrs said, while observing that “much, much more needs to be done,” particularly in the fields of pay equity, woman business ownership, and the poverty rate for families. “There are always threats to progress. Essential to remember and never forget is that reproductive freedom is central to women’s progress. A society is not truly productive and equitable unless all its members have equal opportunity to pursue their dreams and that is not possible unless all its members have the right to decisions about their bodies.”⁵⁵

To that end, while remaining active in political and social issues affecting women, Luhrs has also long campaigned for LGBTQ rights. “Looking back, I’ve always been counterculture,” she said, while arguing that the values of the counterculture are ones that benefit the whole culture.

UNPREDICTABLE PATHS

In 1973, the year after the Women's Health Center was established in Burlington, a group of seven women living in Rutland County began creating a similar organization. Among them were Gail Johnson, a VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer; Anne Sarcka, whose parents had established Spring Lake Ranch in 1932 and ran it for thirty years; the artist Susan Farrow; and Chris Anderson, who had helped organize the Whipple Hollow Canning Center and the Rutland County Farmers' Market. Although she never worked at the health center, the second to open in Vermont, it was Anderson who signed the mortgage for the building the group purchased at 187 North Main Street. Perhaps Anderson expressed best the fervor and confidence of the time, a self-assurance that led people to take such risks: "We had an idea and we just did it."⁵⁶

The Southern Vermont Women's Health Center operated until 1988, when private doctors and Planned Parenthood took over its services. As with Burlington's center, it faced financing challenges and animosity from opponents of abortion, but it also received support from unlikely



The organizers of Vermont's second Women's Health Center in Rutland. Top row, left to right: unidentified, Susan Katz, Patty Garber, Dawn Morse, Susan Farrow, Sas Carey, and unidentified. Bottom row: Evelyn Westebee, unidentified, Chris Anderson, Maureen (Mo) Dwyer, Gail Holmes. (Photo courtesy of Maureen Dwyer).

sources, such as two wealthy women who anonymously gave sizeable donations.

The stories of two women hired to work there, Maureen “Mo” Dwyer and Sas Carey, illustrate the breadth and depth of commitment the movement inspired as well as the unpredictable ways in which careers evolve. Both women operate from a spiritual place. Dwyer still embraces much of her Catholic heritage but has also studied world religions, respects messages brought through dreams and visions, and accepts the idea of past lives and that people from our pasts interact with us whether we acknowledge it or not. Carey, a Quaker, speaks of the religion’s basic premise that every person is loved and guided by God and called to a special purpose or a “leading.” Much as Buddhists meditate, Quakers listen. They believe that God communicates through a stirring in one’s heart, and even through dreams.

In many ways, these beliefs are interwoven in the ways that Dwyer and Carey have served others in Vermont and as far away as Vietnam and Mongolia.

Dwyer has a favorite saying, “Patients teach you a lot; the healing goes both ways.” It’s the lesson she learned from forty years working as an Army nurse in Vietnam, in the emergency room at Rutland Hospital, as a nurse in Rutland’s Women’s Health Center, at the Veterans Administration Center in White River Junction, and as a nurse practitioner caring for cardiology patients at the University of Vermont Medical Center.⁵⁷

Perhaps it began with another woman, a nurse who had comforted Dwyer when, as a junior in high school, she suffered a ruptured appendix and a dangerous infection. “I was a very spiritual child even though the nuns were all about sin and you’re going to hell. I was frightened before my surgery, and my mother was no nonsense, with guarded emotions. That nurse took charge and made me feel safe. We said the Hail Mary together. That’s when I decided I would become a nurse. That recovery was a major life event that had something to do with my destiny. My family wanted me to be a teacher but I was impressed with the compassion that nurse showed me; she didn’t judge me.”⁵⁸

While Dwyer doesn’t pray with her patients, she may pray for them. More to the point, she understood that it was alright to connect with patients rather than stay aloof from their hopes and fears, because healing has three parts: body, mind, and spirit. In nursing school at St. Joseph’s College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, the Daughters of Charity nuns were her professors, while the black patients, nurses, and nurses’ aides she worked alongside taught other lessons, about life and death, pain

and suffering, and the reality of life in America's capital city. Dwyer had grown up a dreamy child in a white community, the daughter of an Irish cop and an Italian mother, with two protective big brothers in a close community. At school, she sometimes was taunted for her thick, curly hair and above-average height. It wasn't until the late-1960s that that hair of hers became stylish and Dwyer could sport her riotous Afro. In college, too, she became convinced that the Vietnam War was wrong-headed and could not understand why Americans were fighting the Vietnamese people.

Why then, during her junior year in college, did she sign up to be an Army nurse, taking the chance that she might be sent to Vietnam? A small reason was the financial help the Army gave her toward tuition.



*Maureen (Mo) Dwyer in Vietnam.
(Photo, courtesy Maureen Dwyer)*

The more important reason involved her growing understanding of the struggles that most people faced and her recognition that she had been immune from such suffering growing up. "Others were joining VISTA and the Peace Corps. I, too, wanted to be of service. All the guys I knew were being drafted. I thought, I'm a well-trained nurse. Why not? I can help people while these guys have no choice."⁵⁹

In November 1968, she reported to Fort Sam Houston in Texas for basic training, then to Fort Knox, Kentucky, where she cleaned and packed the "dirty" wounds that returning GIs came home with. There, she became a first lieutenant and learned to push away concerns about being sent to Vietnam by hanging out at the pool, dating, and attending the

"Hairy Buffalo Parties" that the medics and pilots threw where a concoction of grain alcohol and juice was so strong everyone passed out on the floor to Iron Butterfly's "In a Gadda Da Vida."

War called in mid-1969. At home, as Dwyer prepared to ship overseas, a neighborhood friend who had become a priest offered to say Mass for her safety. She recalled his words spoken with her family gath-

ered around days before she flew to Vietnam: “Maureen is going to witness suffering in a way many people don’t get to see. It will make her stronger and though difficult, it will be life-changing.”⁶⁰

She soon learned what truth that was. Every day, there was death and patching up, evacuating soldiers back home only to see them sent back to war. There was caring for patients at a leprosarium near the base, for children burned by napalm, for grandmothers with eye infections. There was deciding that it wasn’t her job to judge who had shot whom but to try to keep people alive. A year is a long time in war. It took Dwyer three months back home, much of it spent sleeping, before she began to return to a semblance to normalcy. After a trip cross-country, driving her new, red 240Z, she settled into San Francisco, where she worked for a year at San Francisco General Hospital. There, she saw how the wartime lessons about how treatment within “the golden hour,” the time immediately after an injury, were being applied to civilians. A year later, she finally got to experience what so many other college kids had, a backpack trip through Europe, sporting her big Afro. She meant to return to San Francisco, but without any plan, the wandering brought her to a ski lodge operated by friends in Stockbridge, Vermont, and, finally, the full embrace of the counterculture.

Dwyer fell in love with life on Killington Peak, where she skied all day and worked as a waitress at the Summit Lodge at night. The friends she made then are the friends she has today, a family who worked and played together, danced and listened to music, made macramé hangers, smoked pot, and ate granola. “It was a magical, carefree time,” she recalled.

In 1973, when the Southern Vermont Women’s Health Center opened, Dwyer answered the call for a nurse to help with examinations and abortions. There, Dr. Robert Andrews, who “really stuck his neck out for women and women’s rights,” was a mentor.⁶¹ At the same time, she was doing duty in Rutland Hospital’s emergency room. In 1974, grant money became available for Vermont’s first nurse practitioner certification program. While juggling two jobs, Dwyer earned her certificate in 1975 and a master of science degree from UVM in 1998, the year the Women’s Center closed.

As with Vietnam, she was deeply affected by the experience of being with so many women through their abortions. “My mother taught me there’s nothing I couldn’t do just because I was a woman—but not all women feel empowered,” she said.⁶² Remembering that nurse who helped her through a scary time in her own life when she had her operation, Dwyer determined to find time to listen to each patient, allowing each to express her concerns in a safe environment—an approach she

subsequently found useful working with other war veterans at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction from 1988 to 1992.

Dwyer had the opportunity in 1992 to work as the first in-patient nurse practitioner for cardiology at what is now the University of Vermont Medical Center and moved to Burlington. There, she brought the same approach to patients facing life-threatening conditions. She found time to listen. That time of listening was what she missed most after retiring in 2014, the way a simple word spoken softly and calmly could bring deep comfort to a patient.

Thinking back to the moment that put her on the path to service for others, Dwyer said, “We’re never really alone. Our ancestors, our spirits are cheering us on, and the people you get exposed to when you need them the most.”⁶³

Sas Carey believes there has been a remarkable symmetry to her life, beginning with her first years in Vermont as a young hippie mother, potter, and teacher, to working at Vermont’s second women’s health center, to her training as a physical and spiritual healer, to her award-winning work as a documentarian and caregiver to some of the planet’s last migratory people, the herdsman and women of Mongolia. As one experience led to the next, she recognized that her ability to sleep on the ground and travel with the Mongolian people through rough, harsh terrain and weather in her seventies would not have been possible without her early experiences as a nineteen-year-old homesteader in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom.

Carey grew up in Connecticut, where her father headed the Congregational Church’s world service committee. In high school, she was an exchange student in Denmark through the American Field Service. The summer after graduation, her family traveled across the United States to visit a Lakota reservation at Standing Rock. There, she met a young weaver from New Hampshire named Ken Mayberger, who was part of a four-man work crew building a recreation center for Lakota teenagers. Mayberger, too, had been raised a Congregationalist but had become disillusioned because of the war and was interested in becoming a Quaker.

That fall, when Carey went off to Western Connecticut State College, she and Mayberger made plans to meet at an American Friends Service work camp in Roxbury, Massachusetts. They were there when President Kennedy was assassinated, a shared experience that made them close. They became Quakers and married soon afterwards. Carey was just nineteen. She joined Mayberger briefly at Keene State College where he was a student, and in May 1966 they moved together to Newark, Vermont, to land given to them by a couple they’d met at a Quaker meeting.

Mayberger took an old warehouse apart and made them a home. He had gone to Peru a few years earlier, where he learned traditional Quechua weaving using a backstrap loom, the oldest form of loom in the world, constructed of wood, bone, and strings, entirely non-mechanized and portable. In Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, he wove fabric using the ancient Peruvian loom while Carey sewed pillows and other items for sale. Their son Kai was born at home. "Ken knew how to build a house. I knew nothing. Essentially, I went camping. We were fortunate in that our neighbors were friendly and helpful because so many people had left during the Depression. They were glad to have young people around even if they didn't appreciate the way we looked. Ken had a beard and long hair. They saw that we worked really hard, though. We built amazing gardens there," she recalled.⁶⁴

In 1968, they learned of a house for sale in Cornwall for \$2,956, and bought and fixed it up. Carey taught second grade at the Weybridge School, worked as a potter, and took time to study weaving at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine, where she met the artist Susan Farrow, also a student there. Carey and her husband adopted their daughter Jasmine Heidi, took part in a parent's cooperative school, and pursued their crafts.

The marriage didn't last, however. Carey moved to Middlebury with the children, went to nursing school, and simultaneously began pursuing her interest in psychic healing. For her, due to her Quaker beliefs and personal experiences, mind and body were inseparable. In the summer of 1973, Carey went to the women's health center in Rutland for an exam only to discover Farrow working there. As it turned out, the center desperately needed a counselor and Carey needed a job. Farrow suggested that Carey apply. She did and was hired. None of this was planned, but in the process of counseling women in difficult times, Carey came to realize she had a gift for helping people heal after trauma.

In 1985, Carey decided to devote herself to energy healing, underwent extensive training, and opened a private practice as a holistic nurse. Through all this, she felt her openness to the Quaker idea of listening for a "leading" had been essential, especially the day a client told Carey about David Eisenberg's *Encounters with Qi*, a book that explores Chinese medicine.⁶⁵ The client had a strong feeling that Carey should go to Mongolia. Mongolia was not on Carey's radar, although she had received invitations to travel there with the American Holistic Nursing Association. That client was convinced that Carey was meant to do this and offered to pay \$500 for the trip in return for seven years of energy treatments.

"My feet touched the ground and I felt some incredible energy. I had

no clue what it was about but definitely it was big. I knew it right away,” Carey recalled about her first trip in 1994 to Mongolia. At the Institute of Traditional Medicine in Mongolia’s capital Ulaanbaatar, she met a doctor who practiced traditional Mongolian and European medicine “and my heart started beating like crazy. Without knowing I would say the words, I said, ‘Would you take an American disciple?’ This is not my way but there I was and it happened.”⁶⁶

Carey began her internship in 1995, which led to a job with the United Nations Development Program as a health educator working with the migratory people of Mongolia. There, she became interested in the nomadic herders living a traditional lifestyle in the Gobi Desert and subsequently studied their health practices for the United Nations. Recognizing that poor dental hygiene led to other health issues, she raised money for toothbrushes and taught the herdsman how to use them. She also met Gobi women who impressed her with their ability to live on seven liters of water a day. Learning a new skill—that of documentarian—she produced several award-winning films, including *Gobi Women’s Song*⁶⁷ and *Dukha Reindeer Herders Moving*, the story of nomadic herders in northern Mongolia whose way of life is endangered.



Sas Carey, founder of Nomadicare, pictured in Mongolia where she has been learning traditional Mongolian medicine and providing medical education to the itinerant herdsman. (Photo courtesy of Sas Carey).

Carey became convinced that the West had much to learn from Eastern medicine, became one of the first Americans to receive a Physician of Traditional Mongolian Medicine certificate, and created a school to bring that teaching to Americans, headquartered in Middlebury. She also founded Nomadicare in 2003, a nonprofit program supporting two centers where doctors from rural hospitals are trained in traditional Mongolian medicine, practices they hadn't been allowed to follow under Soviet rule.⁶⁸

All this has been no easy task. Mongolia is bordered by the Gobi Desert in the south and Siberia in the north. Its nomadic people use horses for transportation and live on a diet consisting primarily of meat and dairy products. Carey must ride a horse for eight hours to get to the herdsmen's summer settlement after a long, arduous plane and truck ride. A lactose-intolerant vegetarian, she is also terrified of horses. While with the herdsmen, she lives in a yurt and sleeps on the ground.

"It's because of Vermont that I can do this," she said, not just referring to the physical challenges. "Simplicity is accepted in Vermont. You can live simply here without being judged. That's enough and that's a Quaker tenet. That Vermont acceptance allowed me to work in Mongolia. They're about the same. I'm just a little older than I was when I was a hippie living in the Northeast Kingdom." Then, referring to the Quaker idea of a "leading," she said, "You're on a path and then you're shown the way. It's up to you whether you take it or not."⁶⁹

Patricia Whalen's path has been equally unpredictable. How do you go from living in a succession of communes in Vermont to serving as an international judge in the War Crimes Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina and helping a worn-torn country develop its own legal system?⁷⁰ Whalen would also say it began with one woman, in her case a pregnant neighbor whose beating at the hands of her husband and the subsequent miscarriage of her fetus introduced Whalen to the realities of domestic violence in Vermont. She discovered a legal system ill-equipped to deal with the problems of homegrown aggression or to support a young mother fleeing an abusive spouse. From that moment as a young mother herself, Whalen developed the skills needed to change Vermont's family court, create protections for victims of domestic abuse, and then bring what she learned in the Green Mountains to places where a fragile legal system had to be revived and strengthened.

Whalen grew up in Pennsylvania, where her grandfather and father were coalminers until her father at age twenty-four decided to go to college, instilling in her an appreciation of education. After graduating in 1970 from Misericordia University, a women's college run by the Sisters

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of Mercy, she went to Temple University for graduate school. She became involved in street theater with black kids in North Philadelphia until the Black Panthers “came and said ‘you can’t work here anymore; you’re white.’”⁷¹ Discouraged about starting over, as that work had been the basis of her graduate thesis, Whalen left graduate school, got married, got pregnant, and decided to leave the city to “go back to the land.” She’d been to the Woodstock festival and enjoyed the pleasures of the



Patti Whalen in Vermont, summer 1970, with Larry Dooley (deceased.) (Photo, courtesy of Judge Patricia Whalen)

time, but “respected my parents too much to just live with” her boyfriend. She had a church wedding with all the required pageantry.

Her husband had planned to go to Goddard but the couple “got as far as Putney, found a place to live on a beautiful stream and that was it.”⁷² She was friends with the activists at Red Clover and the communards at Total Loss Farm and eventually moved with her husband and daughter to a collective called Cold River in Walpole, New Hampshire, then to a communal house in Jamaica, Vermont. There, she and a girlfriend who also had college degrees realized, “We were just going through this life, bored out of our minds. We wanted to *do* something. She wanted to be a doctor. I didn’t know what I wanted to do. We were hippies. We had no money. I waitressed at the Jamaica House and Brookside Steak House and seemed to be drifting. Then my neighbor came asking for help. After she miscarried, he was remorseful, tried to

kill himself by shooting himself in the foot. Her life seemed so dangerous, so tenuous. I instinctively looked for a woman lawyer to help her but I couldn’t find one.”⁷³

Whalen had found her purpose: She would become a woman lawyer, choosing to attend the newly formed Vermont Law School, from which she graduated in 1979.

Simultaneously, others were working to improve safety for women. Toward the end of the 1960s, several women from the Brattleboro area had gathered at the Common Ground restaurant to discuss creating a women's center in rooms they rented above downtown stores. They were concerned especially about the number of rapes reported in the area and began to educate themselves on the issue and ways to respond. From these efforts, the Rape Crisis Center was founded. As it became clear that many of the women had nowhere to go if the abuser was a husband or father of their child, the center's supporters began sheltering women in their own homes as they researched how to establish a safe domestic environment. In 1974, a federal grant funded the first shelter for victims of domestic violence, the Women's Crisis Center in Brattleboro,⁷⁴ and Burlington also opened a shelter, followed by other shelters and programs statewide. The Brattleboro shelter had been spearheaded by Julie Peterson, who later served in the Vermont House of Representatives between 1982 and 1990, and then as legislative liaison and chief of staff for Governor Howard Dean. Two years later, the Vermont Coalition Against Domestic Violence and a statewide Battered Women's Network were established.

Throughout this time, beginning while still in law school, Whalen worked at the Brattleboro shelter, now called the Women's Freedom Center. "No one was talking about the issue in the mid-1970s when my neighbor was in a horrible situation; then overnight everyone was talking about it. Working at the shelter really colored my law school experience," she observed. "I was very practical, disinterested in philosophical discussions. I wanted to know the rules of access, how to get help for people. I was not interested in corporations or taxes, and graduated from law school without taking those subjects. I knew I was never going to use them."⁷⁵

Meanwhile, working with others who were responding to the need for protective legislation, Whalen helped write clear, statewide protocols for police and hospital personnel involved in rape cases, as well as relief-from-abuse order legislation, all passed by the Vermont legislature to replace what she characterized as "an antiquated process that just didn't work."

Only a few other states had [relief-from-abuse orders] before Vermont. Now it's a quick *ex-parte* process, then a hearing within ten days. Prior to 1980, you could get a restraining order, but it was a long and complicated process and essentially the doors were closed to battered and low-income women. We had to create a process, educate judges, lawyers, and police. It was very difficult because they were so discouraged; they would do their jobs and the abuse would

happen over and over. We had to convince police it was their job to protect not to prosecute, and then we worked to create a process for prosecution to be more effective.⁷⁶

After law school, Whalen received a paid fellowship through a program administered by the historically black Howard University to provide legal services to Vermont Legal Aid clients. She remembered a black attorney coming from Washington, D.C. to interview her: “He was like, ‘What is this place?’ I spent the whole time talking to him about poverty.” She told him what she’d discovered: “We don’t have diversity [in Vermont] but we have bone-chilling poverty; you just don’t see it.” She worked as a lawyer for Legal Aid for eleven years, from 1979 to 1990. “Working in legal services you come to realize how important the legal system is to each family. I enjoyed working with people and helping them get heard, helping them to see how they could survive a divorce. You spend a lot of time in court, but there’s also talking about how to make spaghetti, how to buy a board game and have fun with your kids.”⁷⁷

In 1990, Governor Kunin began appointing more women to the bench. When her chief of staff, Liz Bankowski, asked Whalen to consider applying for a judgeship in the family court, she noted that Whalen was the first person to say she wasn’t qualified to be a judge. Bankowski considered her more than qualified, noting that Whalen had helped untangle the full array of legal conundrums involving families while working for Legal Aid. They needed *her*, she said, and told Whalen all the men she’d contacted thought *they* were qualified.⁷⁸

At the time, Vermont’s Family Court system was undergoing a major reorganization.⁷⁹ “I was really interested in being part of that. I understood that child support could make or break a family. Before family court, the most important thing the judge did was the house, the divorce, the kids; child support came last and it was usually \$50 a month,” Whalen recalled.⁸⁰ Again, she helped to create legal protocols, for issues from monetary support to custody, working closely with other woman justices who were passionate about the need for guidelines, including Family Court Judges Shelley Gartner of Rutland, Trina Beck of Hartland and Burlington, who went on to found the Vermont Parent Representation Center, and Amy Davenport, who became Vermont’s chief administrative judge.

In 2002, Superior Court Judge Shireen Fisher, the second woman to be appointed to the Vermont judiciary and a longtime mentor to Whalen, was asked to help the International Court of Justice based in The Hague develop treaties for international child custody, support, and abduction cases. These treaties would establish laws that would apply to

families in The Hague's ninety member countries. At the time, diplomats normally wrote treaties, a situation that often resulted in vague language that led to litigation where the specifics would be ironed out, thus clarifying the law. The Hague decided to take a new tack. Realizing that vague language could cause difficulties for families, The Hague hired judges to help the diplomats draft the appropriate language. Fisher was appointed to represent the International Association of Women Justices on the committee and brought Whalen with her.⁸¹ The two worked for five years on the international treaties now used in cases involving divorced parents living in separate countries. "To be there in that world was amazing to me: Two Vermont lawyers working together on international treaties to help families with these difficult issues, a very heady experience," Whalen recalled.⁸²

She and Fisher were effective because "Vermont judges, we're work-horses; we have the tiniest judiciary in the United States. Even as a magistrate, you have to do lots of little things. When someone needed to be arraigned, if you were there, you had to step forward; sometimes it was up to you to fix the lights or shut the windows. Vermont's not a place where judges get to have a big head."⁸³

Their work got noticed, and first Fisher and then Whalen were appointed to the War Crimes Chamber in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had the responsibility under the 1995 Dayton Accords to try war crimes stemming from the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Developing the War Crimes Chamber was a monumental task. In that capacity, Whalen served as an international judge presiding on trials that involved war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and gender-based violence. Additionally, she oversaw judicial education programs for the national judges and legal advisors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and subsequently served as an advisor to the court as it continued to be the busiest war crimes court in the world.

As if that wasn't enough, Whalen has helped bring Afghan women judges to Vermont for leadership and judicial training as a board member of the Rural Women's Leadership Institute of Vermont. At the time, there was no functional court system to build on in Afghanistan; the women judges needed to see a system that was relatively simple and effective to use as a model upon which to build their own. "I thought Vermont was the perfect place for these women to have their training. We don't have the crazy dockets that large cities have and federal judges are not always that accessible. We do things in a very basic way here and we're accessible. The women could observe court management and jury trials firsthand, meet defense counsels, prosecutors and witnesses," she

said, noting how cooperative Vermont lawyers and judges were. She and Peterson worked closely together again on the project, as they had at the crisis center.⁸⁴

Whalen knew the Afghan judges would be nervous coming to the United States, so she developed a program whereby the women stayed with local families in small groups; she hosted several at her house. Participants spent their days visiting courts to observe how they worked. Nightly dinners revolved around different themes—women in religion, education, or medicine, among them. More than 100 volunteers in Windham County donated meals and services to the project.

As a newcomer—flatlander, if you like, or hippie transplant—Whalen married into one of Vermont's most influential old families. Fletcher Proctor, her second husband, comes from a family that includes four governors and two Supreme Court judges, including Redfield Proctor, a Vermont governor, US senator and US secretary of war. All Republicans. The two met in law school; together they have three children. Proctor is the town moderator in Westminister, an attorney, and historian with an expertise in early Vermont history.

We really have to hand it to Vermonters because, despite our different worldviews and backgrounds, they were very welcoming to [the counterculture kids] in a Vermont kind of way. They might have judged you but certainly gave you a fair hearing. My first husband, now deceased, had hair down to his waist, but the Ballentine family we rented from were the sweetest people in the world. I remember Mrs. Ballentine always coming by, checking in, interested and curious about us. Every step along the way, all sorts of people have helped me.⁸⁵

Whalen told the story of returning from Sarajevo one February to learn that the Westminister West School Board had decided to close the little town school with no public process. Rather than go home to rest, she sat down to write a complaint against the board for violating the open meeting law and filed it in time for the next board meeting, where her complaint caused a big uproar and sent the matter to town meeting.

“The process of our town meeting was so vital,” she recalled, experiencing again the earnestness people brought to the issue. “People listened all day. People spoke in favor of the small school. People talked about closing it. People talked about changing their minds. I thought, that’s Vermont. In the end, the town voted overwhelmingly to keep the school and supported the budget.”

Coincidentally, “One of our friends’ daughter had gone to Macedonia, fallen in love and brought the Macedonian Albanian husband home. This was his first town meeting, and he started to cry” as he ob-

served Westminster's town meeting process. Recalling that moment and her journey from the commune to the world court to that small town meeting, she said emotionally, "I would give my life for this place, this Vermont."⁸⁶

Charlie and Diane Gottlieb came to Vermont in 1971 as a feminist couple, committed to sharing work and childcare.⁸⁷ There was an intentionality to their decision making that was very un-hippie even though they thought of themselves as hippies, having experimented with drugs, participated in anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, and considered moving to Canada. Yet, from an early age, their actions were quite organized and goal oriented; together, they vowed to do good work helping others in the mental health field, to have a child they would raise together as a feminist, and, wherever possible, to foment change that would lead to a kinder, more inclusive world. They attributed their longevity as partners in marriage, childcare, and professionally to the fact that they shared the same goals and values. Watching them communicate, filling in gaps in their individual and shared stories, one hears the harmony between them.

The couple met as counselors at a camp for children with disabilities while both were in high school. Charlie grew up in the Bronx in a Jewish family with strong labor connections while Diane grew up in the Queens, where her high school friends were red diaper babies, the term for children of parents who had Communist sympathies. On weekends, she frequented the Gaslight Cafe to listen to Bob Dylan and other folksingers, while Charlie wasn't so much interested in studying as in drugs, sex, and rock 'n' roll. The two dated through high school but lost contact when Diane went off to the University of Wisconsin, a bedrock of the antiwar movement, and Charlie to the University of Ohio in Toledo, where he helped set up a draft counseling center on campus. The couple didn't see each other for five years, but when they reunited, they found their lives had followed similar paths. "We've been together ever since," Diane said. They married in 1968.

Because Charlie had a low draft number, they thought of going to Canada; but Charlie got a job teaching sixth graders in Harlem, which qualified him for a deferment. Diane went to graduate school and they began to meet with other people interested in going to the country to form a commune. Charlie had vacationed in Vermont as a kid and remembered it fondly. When Diane became pregnant, however, they learned that fathers were not allowed in Vermont delivery rooms. The move could wait, as Charlie would not be kept from welcoming his child into the world. Their daughter Sasha was born at Mt. Sinai Hospital, and Charlie became the first male allowed in a delivery room. Once Sasha

was old enough to travel, and impatient with their friends' dawdling on the Vermont move, they rented a farmhouse in Lincoln, choosing the rural town because they thought it would be an easy commute to both Diane's job in Shelburne and Charlie's in Middlebury. "We were so clueless about commuting during a Vermont winter," Diane said, chuckling. "Anyone driving those roads knows how naïve we were."⁸⁸

In 1975, four years after they moved to Vermont and found work as therapists, the couple decided to leave their jobs and temporarily take welfare and food stamps so they could form a radically different model



"Diane, Sasha, and Charlie Gottlieb," Digital Vermont: A Project of the Vermont Historical Society, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.digitalvermont.org/items/show/155>.

for mental health care in Vermont. Thanks to her advanced degree, Diane had been working as a counselor at The Creamery, a private psychiatric service in Shelburne, while Charlie was an outreach worker with the Addison County Counseling Service. It was a strange situation. Diane would get up in the couple's house in the woods, put on her professional clothing, and spend the day with middle- and upper-middle-class clients and colleagues, then return home where Charlie had spent the day counseling adolescent boys living in rural Addison County.

Convinced that their studies, training, and readings into more holistic approaches to mental health were not being put to their best use, the Gottliebs joined with three other therapists in founding Networks, the first collectively run mental health care center in Vermont.⁸⁹

Networks was based on feminist ideals and the belief that a person is best made whole when his or her whole community is involved in the healing, which in turn, they believed, would improve the community's health.

Both Diane and Charlie were uncomfortable with treatment models then in vogue, ones that were based on psychodynamics with its concen-

tration on the role of unconscious forces. They believed people were more strongly influenced by their social environment, including racial and socioeconomic factors, and were interested in how those factors affected a person's ability to make decisions and move forward. In their approach to treatment, they sought to identify and address a multitude of factors that might, for example, make a child depressed or an administrator angry. At the time, both were themselves members of women's and men's consciousness-raising groups as well as a co-ed group where people challenged one another to be honest as they sought to clarify personal goals. A male consciousness group Charlie had begun in Lincoln lasted from 1971 to 1979 and spawned other men's groups. Bernie Sanders attended twice, but was more interested in economics and politics than the subject of gender roles.⁹⁰

Networks proved successful, serving an interesting array of clients from people the couple knew from the communes and other counterculture connections to professionals to low-income clients referred by social service agencies. In that, they were the beneficiaries of President Johnson's War on Poverty, which provided states with substantial grants for programs to help people in need and for training the professionals who were treating them. The Gottliebs introduced other therapists around the state to their holistic approach to counseling by creating courses and training models. They soon had contracts to train state employees working with families and, because their clinic was on a bus route, low-income clients had easy access to their services.

"Our biggest life mission has been to fight against hierarchy and dominance. That was the reason we created our own organization. We couldn't do it within a university or state mental health system," Charlie explained, acknowledging that the couple indeed worked for state agencies, but with the goal of changing their treatment approaches. They were also among the first therapists to serve gay and lesbian people as this population began coming out publicly.⁹¹

About the time they started Networks, the Gottliebs also decided to try living collectively, as they had planned when they moved to Vermont. But rather than a rural setting, their collective would be urban. To that end, they bought a house in Burlington along with a mother whose daughter was the same age as theirs and a man with two older kids. Chores were divided using a work wheel, allowing the three families to split shopping, daycare, and maintenance. The collective lasted three and a half years. While they had opportunities for shared cultural experiences, meals, and adventures, child-rearing and other differences led to the collective's breakup. "We left not because of the strife but in 1978 we

decided to take our daughter and travel around the country, go to Mexico, and live life a little differently,” Diane explained. During that year, Networks continued. “The staff were our friends and colleagues. We went to them and said, ‘We’d like to take three to six months off and pay our share to keep the office going.’ We talked to Sasha’s school and told them we would do her lessons every morning.” With those issues taken care of, off they went on their family adventure. They learned Spanish together and traveled all the way to the Baja Peninsula and back, interweaving geography, history, books, and language into daily life.⁹²

While their daughter was raised in the collective and later at home with both parents, she also spent time in playgroups and at the Ethan Allen Childcare Center, where “all gender roles were challenged, with men running the kitchen. It was a collective experience,” Charlie said. “We were one of the first people to have a child in our various social groups. We would invite people to love her and be with her, so she was a very adored child,” Diane added.⁹³

That said, they concede that their daughter wished they had been more focused on her. As Diane put it, “We were less attentive than Sasha has herself been as a mom, a deliberate decision she made as a mother based on how she felt as a child. We were, for lack of a better word, selfish. We brought her with us when we went places, to big parties, great parties, and we both were active in our own interests. She was raised by us and by our community, which is the way we wanted it.”⁹⁴

There’s no way to measure the long impact the Gottliebs have had on Vermont’s social and rehabilitative services, although in their various roles they introduced a holistic way of treating mental health to hundreds of practitioners and patients.

Diane Gottlieb said it was easy enough to see the influence Vermont has had on them: “From fifteen on, I identified as counterculture. I can pick up immediately someone who grew up in the ’60s and if they were part of the counterculture. There’s an optimism and a sense of possibility we still have. It’s why we were able to do so much, especially here in Vermont, where we had many friends whose goal was to make the world a better place. How fortunate were we.”⁹⁵

WHAT KIND OF LEGACY?

So, again to the question: With so many motivated people working to bring progressive gains for Vermont women and families throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, why haven’t more women risen to positions of political and business leadership in Vermont? Perhaps the answer lies in the changes that have occurred in the country in the intervening years. The young counterculture activists had operated from a place of optimism and

self-confidence. Indeed, there was an innocence, even a naiveté to the times, despite the Vietnam War and the anger and divisions within the country. That innocence made people both foolish and brave. They took risks because they had little to lose.

But in the mid-1970s, the economy went through dramatic changes, in part the result of a serious energy crisis. The cost of living increased substantially. Young single parents, primarily women, found themselves taking a second and even a third job to make ends meet; the focus became survival. And, as with all generations, with maturity came less desire to take chances and less economic flexibility to do so. Those with political aspirations still sought local office, asking for support from neighbors they had known for years, but it's a good deal riskier and expensive to launch a statewide campaign for governor or vie for national office. Both in Vermont and nationally, much of the energy of those who might have desired national office was spent on the ten-year battle, from 1972 to 1982, for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. With its failure, many returned to the motto, "Act locally, think globally."

But none of this explains why more women haven't achieved top positions in business, and why their pay remains dramatically below males doing the same work. Perhaps Melinda Moulton, the CEO of Burlington's Main Street Landing, expressed it best, speaking at the annual meeting of the Vermont Historical Society in the fall of 2016, which focused on its study of the counterculture's impact on Vermont. An audience member commented that, despite the efforts of that generation, there was still war and injustice and a bad election going on. Moulton was the one to respond. "I'll tell you what I tell my children," she said. "I'm sorry we didn't make it right for you. The world is coming back to a lot of things that frightened me as a young person. We tried to turn it the other way. The problem was we were just a small part of the generation. We were never the controlling group of our generation."⁹⁶

Tiffany Bluemle, director of Change the Story-VT, blames her generation, born in the 1960s. "We dropped the ball," she said, and future generations also failed to carry the work forward.⁹⁷ "We believed that, with Sandra Day O'Connor and Sally Ride's achievements," she said, referring to the appointment of the first woman to the US Supreme Court and the selection of the first American woman NASA astronaut, the glass ceiling had been shattered and women would move forward into top positions in every field. Instead, women got fashion, with big shoulder pads and permission to wear ties.

Sadly, Bluemle said, the women's movement has consistently failed to address class and racial divides, concentrating more on advances for middle- and upper-middle-class women. That choice may have inadvertently

hampered the progress toward gender equality and broader support for reforms.

Bluemle is optimistic that a new movement is afoot, one that will be more inclusive, in part because women again feel empowered to tackle gender issues and have become increasingly aware of the places where they have made gains and where they have not.⁹⁸ Time, as always, will tell.

NOTES

¹ Author's note: Much of the material for this article was garnered from in-person or telephone interviews. Where possible, the date and place of the interview are noted upon first reference. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent material originated with these interviews. This article is an excerpt from a forthcoming book, *Going Up the Country*, to be published by University Press of New England.

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