

**Change, Contributions, and Colleagues**  
**A Reflection on a Thirty-three Year Career at University of California, Berkeley**

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Like many young women raised in traditional families in the 1950's, I thought I was going to work for a few years until I got married, when I would leave the work world to become a homemaker and mother—very much in the mold of my own mother. It seems so quaint now to think that was what I thought my life would be.

My life did not exactly mirror my mother's. Like my mother, I did get married, and I had a child. But when I got divorced and needed to work to support my son and myself, the similarities between my mother and I ended.

I never intended to stay employed at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) for over thirty years. I began working at UCB with a newly minted Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education in August 1970 and worked there until 1973 when I left to get married. I returned to Berkeley in 1979 and I have been at Berkeley ever since. During that time I have worked in every division of the Registrar's Office.

Now as I near the close of my career at Berkeley and in higher education, I look back and think about the wonderful experiences (well, most were wonderful) I have had, the many wonderful people I have met, and the many things I have learned.

Is there anything that can be learned from thirty years of experience that I can pass on to help others in their own careers? I think so—I hope so.

## **CHANGE**

### **From typewriters to computers**

Typewriters were the dominant desktop technology in 1970.

My first job was to process the Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) forms that undergraduate admits returned to accept admission to Berkeley. I can remember stacks of folders on secretaries' (oh dear—an outmoded and politically incorrect term) desks waiting for the SIRs to be typed one by one by one by one.

I did not get a desktop computer until the 1980's when I got a Tandem desktop computer with two external disk drives that used floppy disks. It seems so primitive when I look back on it now, but it was cutting edge technology at the time. (Those of you who remember this period and its “advanced” technology, please stop laughing.)

By the mid-1980's I was in a job that required me to do more writing of letters, memos, policy briefings and the like. The computer made it a snap to revise what you were writing--so much easier than using pencils and yellow pads of paper. I think the quality of my writing improved because it was so much easier to make revisions. You could actually make those changes *during* the writing process. (What a miracle. Good-bye white out!) Sometimes I can't imagine how we ever produced coherent documents before computers.

### **Tabulation Cards and Sorting Machines, Oh No!**

Then there were those tab cards (short for tabulation cards) we used for course enrollment when students would pick up cards for classes in one large area—it was called arena registration. Students went from table to table picking up “class cards” that would allow them to enroll in courses. It was sort of like watching students running onto the field after a big victory in a football game.

We had staff that spent their day doing nothing but punching and verifying those cards—thousands of them! It is a wonder anyone got enrolled in courses, or that staff didn't go crazy.

Of course we needed to sort and manipulate the tab cards. I remember taking piles of cards into the machine room to sort them and the frustration I felt when the card order got all messed up if I did not “program” the sorter correctly. I am so glad to be rid of those cards, machines and that whole process.

But that was cutting edge technology at the time.

### **Manual Special Event Scheduling**

Most of my career has been in the Classroom Scheduling Office. Even though I had no experience in scheduling, I was asked to try it because the unit had been decimated by a spate of staff resignations—some to recover from stress, some to go back to school, and some to just get the heck out of the unit. It should have been a sign that this would be a high stress assignment, and that I should think twice about accepting it. Nevertheless, I took the challenge and joined the Scheduling Office staff. Thirty years later, I am glad I made the change. I found that I had an affinity for scheduling and really enjoyed the challenge of the work. After all, it is just like doing a “big” puzzle.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing we did in Scheduling was process thousands of special event reservations manually—and with very few double bookings, I might add. Granted, our turn-around time then was a week if you were lucky, where the expectation is twenty-four hours now. Nevertheless we did a pretty amazing job with the primitive paper process with which we had to work.

Special event requests were taken over the telephone—not a fancy web form. Gads, that phone used to ring for what seemed like every other second until you wanted to scream. We wrote the requests on paper slips and filed them by date in the “To Do” box.

The room assignment was selected by consulting “The Board.” It looked like an old-fashioned train schedule, except instead of a chalkboard, it was covered with individual plastic strips. There was one strip for each classroom and each day of the week, including Saturday and Sunday, and the hours that were available for use. After academic room assignments were made, the “Board” was marked with grease pens to indicate when rooms were used for classes. This process usually took a couple of days to complete and was never 100% accurate.

The next step was to take a room request form and visually scan the “Board” to find an empty square that corresponded with the day and time you needed. When you found one, you wrote it on the request form and then you had to check two other documents to make sure the room you selected was really available. The first step was to go to the paper room and building list—a list of the day, time, and location of all academic classes—to make sure there were no conflicts with academic classes. Remember, the board was not always totally accurate; for instance, it might not have been corrected if an error had been previously detected. Then you had to check the ledger, a three ring binder that contained a blank page for each of the 365 days of the year. As assignments were made they were recorded in the ledger on the correct day for the event—well, you hoped it was on the right page. You had to check to make sure that the room you were hoping to assign had not been already assigned. If it was, you started all over. You repeated the process again and again if necessary until you found a classroom or determined that no room was available.

Then the Special Event Scheduler reviewed the room request forms with the room assignments on them and verified that there were no conflicts. Finally, a room reservation confirmation slip was typed on a carbonized multiple form using a typewriter. The forms were taken apart and sorted into various piles for distribution to the requestor, campus police, the custodial office, and a file copy. If there was a mistake, the process was repeated to find a room that was open for assignment.

It was an ordeal.

You can imagine our relief when we got a computerized system for searching for available rooms, for recording the reservation, for producing the confirmation, and for producing the reservations lists for the police and custodial office.

The most important thing I learned over the past thirty years has been to accept that methods and machines will change. Even though you think the best days are now, there are better days in the future. The critical element is what you bring to the work. If you employ your creativity, enthusiasm, and a bit of healthy skepticism you will not only get through the changes but also find personal growth, fulfillment and success along the way. One of my favorite sayings is “We are not doing brain surgery in the Scheduling Office.”

If we try something and make a mistake, or if it doesn't work out as we planned, no one will die. (A faculty member might get mad, but no one will die.)

## **GETTING INVOLVED**

It is very easy to get wrapped up in our daily work and feel like there is no time to learn about other parts of the campus, or to get to know people at different levels of the campus, and to learn about their jobs. But I think there are benefits to be gained for the campus and for the individual by getting involved on campus.

I made a conscious effort over the years to participate on committees (What is a University be without committees?), some as an assignment for my job, some for my own enrichment, and some to give back to the campus community. My experience on the Chancellor's Staff Advisory Committee stands out the most.

The Chancellor's Staff Advisory Committee (CSAC) is a group of staff members who volunteer to advise the Chancellor on a wide range of staff concerns. In my experience most campus committees make decisions on a "majority rules" basis. CSAC made decisions by group consensus. That simply meant that all members had to agree to accept the decision before action was taken. If you didn't agree with a committee decision, you had to determine if the decision was not so critical that you could not "live" with the decision. If you could not reconcile the decision with your moral limits then you had to resign from the committee. This might sound a bit harsh. But as a result I had to examine my values and clearly identify my moral limits. During my tenure on CSAC there were several occasions where I had to do some deep soul-searching and I came close to resigning. As a result of my experiences with CSAC I matured and became a better person as a result of the experience of wrestling with the values and principles that underpin my morals and ethics.

I'm sure I benefited more from the times I contributed to campus wide efforts than the campus received from my participation. For your own personal and professional growth I would encourage you to volunteer on your campus however you can.

## **COLLEAGUES**

Without a doubt what I cherish the most is the people I have known. Each person has helped to shape my life in one way or another, some through difficult circumstances and others through enjoyable circumstances. Over the years, I have had supervisors who gave me opportunities to learn new skills, and who invested time in me by mentoring me so that I would have the skills to advance. And when those opportunities for advancement came, I received their support to move up. I recognize that I did not advance from a Senior Clerk to a Principal Administrative Analyst on my own. (Thanks, supervisors—you know who you are.)

In 1991 I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy. I believe that I recovered from this experience because of the outpouring of love and support from my

colleagues at Berkeley. I received many beautiful flowers that brightened my day; others sent cards (which I still have) with encouraging words and wishes for a speedy recovery; still others were offering prayers in their private time for my recovery. Even now, eighteen years later, I am overwhelmed by the thought of the support and love that was given to me during that difficult time in my life. There is no way I can ever repay them for their kindness.

I am eternally grateful to the scheduling staff that has worked so hard over the twenty years in which I have been the Scheduling Office supervisor to accomplish so many outstanding things. We have moved from typewriters to computers, implemented many systems changes, gained and lost classrooms, printed schedules and then converted to the web. All this has happened under a great deal of pressure and scrutiny. These advancements have been made not because of me, but because of the staff's commitment to their work.

As I reach the end of my career, probably one of the hardest things about leaving will be not having the daily association with so many wonderful people. Treasure your colleagues now. Tell them today how much you appreciate them.

## **FINALE**

I love going into the older buildings on our campus. Wheeler Hall, built in 1917, is one of my favorite buildings. I never go in there without noticing the marble stairs that have grooves worn in them from the many students, faculty and staff who have walked on those stairs. Think of the people who have trod on those stairs. Some are famous; some are not. But each person who has passed through the University has been molded by the experience.

I certainly have been molded and enriched by my time at Berkeley. I hope that in the thirty plus years I have spent at Berkeley, I have given half as much as I received from that association. So what does this reminiscence mean to you? Whether you plan to be with your institution for a short time or a long time, I urge you embrace change openly and with excitement. I urge you to contribute by volunteering to serve on campus committees or in other activities that will benefit your school. You will be the better for it. And most important of all, treasure the colleagues that you work with every day. In the end it is those associations that are most precious.

As we say at Berkeley, at every available opportunity, GO BEARS!