

After 50 Years Women Still 'Have A Long Way To Go' For Rights

By Gay Pauley

NEW YORK (UPI) — "You've come a long way, baby," not only is the refrain of a popular commercial but is also a commentary on the transformation of the American woman that has taken place in the last 50 years.

It should be added, however, "You still have a long way to go." Today marks the 50th anniversary of woman suffrage in the United States, the date on which the Senate enacted

the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. (It was Aug. 28, 1920, however, before the required three-fourths of the state ratified it).

Some of the early suffragettes were convinced that with women's vote, women could change the world.

Did they?

Well, at least they haven't blown it off the map as some of the militant anti-suffragettes direly predicted.

And they have accomplished

much in these 50 years, although there still is much to be done. So shows a sampling of opinions from the women who led the suffragette movement to the modern day females like Betty Friedan who are starting "The Second Wave" of woman's campaign for equality.

One of these women "doers" is Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, R-Maine. Today, she says, "Women have made encouraging progress . . . but not nearly enough. If the rate of progress is unsatisfactory, then we can blame only ourselves for lack of initiative."

Mrs. Smith is the only woman of the nation's 100-member Senate and is the ranking Republican on the powerful Senate Armed Services and Aeronautical and Space Sciences committees.

Another powerful woman in Washington, Virginia Mae Brown, chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), agrees with Mrs. Smith. "They (the women) have been responsible for many changes,"

she says, "but much still remains to be accomplished."

"The women who have done things have had to assert themselves . . . be more aggressive," says Mrs. Bruce Benson, of Amherst, Mass., president of the powerful League of Women Voters.

"These women who thought they could change the world were pretty hard-headed about it," she said. "Failures have been those of society, not just of women. I'm tired of the segregation of women . . . they're people."

Mrs. Benson, speaking via phone from her Amherst home, said that certainly women were more active, and had more opportunity to participate in local, state and national politics. But when it comes to the matter of their serving in high public office, "Politics becomes a two-way thing. Women do marry and do raise families. I just wish everyone would get more active in politics."

One of the women leaders who thinks that what women

have accomplished is "almost unbelievable" is Mrs. Walter Varney Magee, president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), which world-wide has 11 million members.

"We supported suffrage, you know," she said in a telephone interview from Cleveland, where the federation is holding its 78th annual convention. She conceded that "women may not be in many top spots

in government," but she added, "we're active in pushing legislation . . . our women keep after officials at the local, state and national levels." To those who underestimate the power of women, Mrs. Magee points out that "we started kindergarten in this country, the U.S. Children's Bureau, our cultural impact has been immeasurable in the millions

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Pat's Remark Was Misconstrued

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House has sent word to those worried about President Nixon's attitude on women's rights that useful legislation is on the books and the main efforts should be toward "insuring compliance with existing law."

President and Mrs. Nixon were reported to be disturbed to learn that a comment by Mrs. Nixon "had been interpreted to mean that the Nixons believe no person is discriminating against women."

"This obviously was not the intent of Mrs. Nixon's comment," a presidential staff assistant informed the National Federation of Business and Professional Women.

The group's president, Mrs. Hope Roberts of Reno, Nev., sent a telegram to President Nixon early last month expressing distress at a quote attributed to Mrs. Nixon that neither she nor the President feels there is discrimination against women. She asked Nixon to reconsider his position on this

matter and make public a statement, if his wife was correctly quoted, because her organization felt current court cases and legislative activities to eliminate discriminatory measures would be in danger.

Nixon did not reply, but the BPW received a letter of reply last week from John R. Brown III, a staff assistant to presidential assistant H.R. Haldeman.

"You may be sure that the Nixons have a keen appreciation of the long and valiant struggle for women's rights in this country and elsewhere," Brown wrote. "This struggle has culminated in a number of legislative and judicial triumphs for all those who have fought for equal rights for women."

"Mrs. Nixon's statement was intended neither to minimize the importance of these achievements nor to suggest that no further progress is possible."

Mrs. Roberts' wire to the President had pointed out that men and women of both parties in Congress "have long sponsored the equal rights amendment to the Constitution on grounds that discrimination against women does indeed exist." No such amendment has yet been passed.

But Brown concluded his letter to the organization this way: "I think you will agree, however, that the major legislation necessary to facilitate the enjoyment of equal rights by women already is on the books and that our main effort must now be directed to insuring compliance with existing law and to adapting these laws to the changing requirements of the times."

Asked for comment on the White House reply, Mrs. Rob-



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Rights: 'A Whole New Game'

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we've raised in scholarships alone. . .

"We were campaigning for conservation as early as 1898. Of course, now, it's a red hot issue in Washington."

Mrs. Magee holds that feminine progress has been phenomenal, whether you're talking in terms of the millions of hours women give these days as volunteers for assorted causes or to the fact that 28 million of them work outside the home—"business and industry could not exist without them."

Betty Friedan is far less enthusiastic. The author, who set off a world of debate on women's role with her "The Feminine Mystique" in 1963, currently heads an activist group called the National Organization for Women (NOW).

One of its objectives is to "outlaw" any discrimination in any way against women.

NOW has picketed to get rid of what Miss Friedan calls "the silken curtain" society has drawn around women, the "for men only" approach.

"We're just beginning to move forward again after 50 years," said the head of NOW, which has chapters in 45 states. "This is a whole new ball game. We've got to reconstruct society so that mom is no longer the woman-at-home symbol."

She contends that women "have not used their legal rights." And society, she adds, must cease to denigrate women and "women are going to have to quit swallowing this denigration by society."

This is the time of the freedom now thing for everyone, she adds.

Part of the reason for this "second wave" of the fight for equality comes from the fact women are working outside the home, "are taking a place in society, but still are finding they run into the second class status," she says.

What do the women who helped with the suffragette

movement "way back when" think the right of women to vote has wrought?

"Well, we've managed to change a lot of laws that needed changing," says Elise Hill, of South Norwalk, Conn.

"But you know," thud this woman, a lively 85-year-old, "the suffrage amendment doesn't even mention wom-



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en." (It reads: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.")

Miss Hill holds that women still do not have equality and argues that just a few little words in the Constitution would take care of the matter—"equality of rights under law shall not be abridged by any of the states or nation."

The one-time suffragette belongs to the Lucy Stone Organization, named for one of the first leaders of the suffrage movement in the United States. Traditional of its members, Miss Hill has retained use of her maiden name. She is a

member of a prominent New England family (her ancestors migrated in the early 1600s and her father was a congressman for 22 years) and is the widow of Albert Leavitt, a lawyer.

Miss Hill has astonishing recall of the suffrage fight. I asked her whether she ever was arrested — "Oh, mercy yes," she said. "Once in Washington five times in one afternoon."

Recently, President Nixon told the League of Women Voters that the day would come, and perhaps not so far off, when a woman would be president. The projection brought skepticism from Miss Hill, a self-styled "Yankee Republican" who reminded that there is no woman on the U.S. Supreme Court bench — "and there should be and there are women capable"—nor in the Cabinet.

But Rep. Charlotte T. Reid, R-Ill., one of two women on the House Appropriations Committee, said that "women have been able to prove that they can serve in office and make their contribution in public service as well as man . . . today women can be found in each of some 480 occupations listed by the U.S. Census Bureau."

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...Margaret Merrill.