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Imagine not being able to wear what you want, not being able to learn what you want, or not being thought of as intellectually equal. This was the reality of not only the women in *Code Girls*, but also every woman trying to get an education or be in the workforce in the mid-1900s. Ann White from *Code Girls* faced societal pressures based on gender-role stereotypes, as did my Great-grandmother Barb (Age 92) and my Grammy Terri (Age 70). However, even though they had to overcome these problems, all three of them took risks, persevered and inspired me greatly.

Ann White was asked only two questions when she was interviewed to be a code-breaker. Those two questions were, “Do you like to solve crossword puzzles?” and “Are you engaged to be married?”¹ The first question seems reasonable to ask a prospective code-breaker; after all, she must be good at puzzles. Yet, when I read the second question, I was perplexed. I was appalled that men would not let their wives receive this amazing job opportunity. However, I soon found out that was a common attitude for men to have about their wives’ jobs. My Grandma Barb told me that, “Men told women that they were simply not mentally equal to women because of their emotions, and women believed it.” She also said “Many men thought it was silly and wasteful to educate women because then they would just go get married and have children.”

¹ Page 4, Young Readers Edition

In 1944, my Grandma Barb quit college after only one year due to these societal pressures, and instead, enrolled at a school that taught typing, bookkeeping, and housewifery skills such as cooking and sewing. After she had made this decision, she was devastated about the education she had given up, but found no way to reverse it. Once her children had grown up and had careers of their own, she finally had the courage to go back to college. By the time Grandma Barb went back to school, it was the 1970s, and although societal pressures about gender had softened, she was nervous about being in classes with 18 year olds as a 50 year old. She was scared but determined to finish her education. Society had stopped her once, and it wouldn't stop her again. After decades of telling her own children about the importance of education, she proudly earned a degree in Sociology. This situation is similar to what happened to Ann White, also in 1944. Ann "had to seek a discharge because her husband came home in bad shape" and later said that she "made the wrong decision," and got a Ph.D. before joining the Peace Corps, fulfilling both of her dreams of education and serving her country.² Both my Grandma Barb and Ann White quit what they loved because of what was expected of them by society at the time. Both changed their minds years later and returned to what they loved after realizing that what they knew was right was more important than what the majority of society still thought.

Even once women attained an education, there were still many obstacles they had to face in their daily lives. For example, there were many clothing requirements put in place because society thought that was how women had to act

² Epilogue, Adult Edition

and dress to be a “proper lady”. Ann White had to wear certain things in her WAVES training that were not practical, as did my Grammy Terri in her first job as a teacher in the 1970s. In Ann’s case, it was one-inch heels, which during Navy training caused blisters and bumps; when they “were marching back and forth, sometimes the women would fall back on their rears.”³ In my Grammy Terri’s case, women had to wear dresses no matter what, even in the freezing cold. She remembers, “envying the men, who always wore warm pants.” Well into her teaching career when she finally started to wear pants to work, many of the older teachers frowned upon it as “shameful” and “risqué” and thought my Grammy Terri was “too radical.” Even though her clothes may have not always fit the situation, and she faced many greater societal pressures, that didn’t stop my Grammy Terri from exceling in her work. She was Teacher Of The Year for Arizona in 1986, and she published over 20 books for kids and teens.

My grandmothers’ stories have inspired me to be a better person. Like Ann White, despite societal pressures to conform to gender stereotypes, they always fought hard to achieve their goals. When I was in elementary school, I loved going to science workshops. No one ever told me I shouldn’t be there, but I could always see the other kids wondering why I was the only girl. However, because of the lessons my grandmothers taught me, I never questioned my right to be there, and I still have a strong passion for science today. I am grateful to my grandmothers, Ann White, the other code-breakers, and all of the other women of the mid-1900s for paving the way for women’s rights and setting an example for how women can be successful.

³ Page 76, Young Readers Edition

