Madame Chair

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Published by Utah State University Press

Westwood, Richard.
Madame Chair: A Political Autobiography of an Unintentional Pioneer.
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In about 1990 we took on an abnormal lifestyle—very few commitments of a political, business or social nature. I guess for most people, one could say we began a normal life. Dick finished his book. I kept on at Pinewood but never had my old zip. In 1991 an MRI cat scan showed my tumor, which I thought was gone, had started to grow again, so I had to stay in Phoenix most of the summer and have radiation every day. Then I was hit with lots of pain in my upper ribs, which turned out to be a gallbladder infection so they operated and removed that. I felt like a guinea pig, but I would never give in. I still support and work in women’s causes and state campaigns. I had to cut down to nine holes of golf and then last year I got so I could not even walk that far. I have something called steroid myelopathy which means one loses muscle strength because of taking too many steroids. But the doctors say I must take steroids, thyroid, a drug called calan which balances my heart and blood pressure, sinemet (a variation of eldopa), and hormones—all because I have no pituitary gland anymore. I am doing an exercise regime to help regain some muscle strength or at least not lose any more. But my brain and mind are as good as they ever were.

Dick and I started going to church again and I found I could reconcile my women’s beliefs with the current attitudes of the Mormon church. We took instructions and for our fiftieth anniversary we were remarried in the Salt Lake City Mormon temple. I have had a wonderful life with a man who allowed me to be a complete woman in days when men did not do that, and I loved him enough to want to be with him forever, as he did me.

After Bill Clinton was elected president we were invited to all the inaugural events but did not go. I have not been asked to do anything for Clinton and do not expect to. Bruce Babbitt is now secretary of the interior and I still write him letters telling him what I think is wrong or right.

I am no longer a pioneer, but instead a settler—one of those like I knew as a child who had come into Utah in the early days but were now
just a respected part of the landscape. I go back to those sessions with my dear friend Dr. O’Connell, and I can see in my life the nurturing traits she said I had. I love all my large family, husband, two children, fifteen grandchildren and all their husbands and wives and seventeen great-grandchildren and I can see that they love me as deeply.

But I have also had the independence of thought, the questioning and rebellion against settled ways that I thought needed changing. Undoubtedly the conflicts between the two led to many of the physical problems I have had.

But I wouldn’t change my life. I was a pioneer, even if it was accidental much of the time. I did help change the world for women and often make it better politically for everyone.

Let me conclude with a fervent wish: I hope that some of you, my readers, whether male or female, will in either small or great ways become the pioneers we still need in our ever changing world.