



On February 2, 2011, WIIT members celebrated the career of Marjory Searing -- pioneer, role model and mentor. Below are notes from her address to WIIT members and friends.

Women in International Trade 1967-2010 – My Experience and Key Learnings

- **Gotta Have a Gimmick**

Meritocracy – usually works up to a certain point. But you need a way to stand out from the crowd. Certainly when I started in the male dominated work environment – age and gender seemed to be a glass ceiling. You need to assume you have to be more qualified than your peers to compete. You may not like it but it is the reality you face. My approach was not to fight it but to prove them wrong. My gimmick was a PhD – not essential to my work but gave me stature.

In many ways the world I walked into was easier to deal with because the barriers were so much more transparent than today:

- All senior jobs were occupied by white males
- Ambition was not seen as an attractive characteristic among women (“Why promote – you just will want another one next year”)
- Certain jobs not appropriate for women (ie senior attache in Italy “women can’t work with Italian men”)
- Even in education – “why do you want a PhD – just stay in kitchen”

I learned quickly that I needed to find ways to overcome these attitudes. I started with a PhD and then worked very hard.

More subtle now – how many times have you been in a meeting and put forward an idea which was ignored until one of your male counterparts offered the same thing? And it became his great idea. It happens.

- **There is No Crying in Baseball (Tom Hanks – *League of Their Own*)**

Despite the recent acceptability of men tearing up over emotional things (like our current Speaker of the House) do not think it applies to women. Too emotional or weak can quickly become labels you cannot escape.

Proof points:

- My Treasury moment but it hasn’t changed
- Hillary on the campaign trail

- **Don’t be a victim – if you are unhappy you need a plan**

Don't stay in a job you hate. Use every tool you have to find a way out – your social network, job coaches, and trade organizations. But do not burn bridges as you leave. The longer you stay the more it will affect your morale and thus performance. How many people have you met who “used to be good”?

- **Don't forget where you came from – and its corollary --all jobs are important**

Your reputation starts with your personal assistant and those who report to you. That assistant outside the boss's office has more contact with the boss than anyone. And you never know when someone will become your boss. That intern? I've seen it happen. But more importantly – if you treat people with respect you get it back in spades!

- **Surround yourself with capable people – they will make you look very good**

Do not be threatened by outstanding subordinates. Rather, get them on your team and give them the room to thrive. And make sure you give them full credit. You will benefit from their achievements. When running an organization I would tend to focus on the areas that needed some support and allowed the good ones to thrive. If it wasn't broken I didn't try to fix it.

- **Make sure there is someone on your team who will tell you the truth.**

I always made sure I had someone on my team who I trusted and who would always tell me what was really going on and where I was screwing up.

- **EQ as important as IQ – be aware of yourself and how you impact others. Be sensitive to the attitudes of those with whom you must work.**

Turn those attitudes to your advantage. My plunge into Japan. Initial interactions – is your job always for a woman?

- **Sometimes you have to leap**

(DAS for Japan) (DG for Commercial Service) – but be careful how you start. Chances are you are more qualified for the position than you think you are but that doesn't mean you don't have a lot to learn. Even if you know there was great unhappiness with the previous leader, keep in mind that these people worked for that leader and have no doubt tried to do their best. Use terms like “building on the successes of the past” or “taking things to the next level.” Never, never openly criticize how things were done before you showed up.

- **Life is a series of choices -- you cannot have it all, i.e. what “Family Friendly” usually means.**

John Lennon – “life is what happens when you are busy making other plans.” Figure out what is most important to your happiness and pursue it. But expect consequences. If you are forced to make the choice of family over some intense all weekend crisis, don't expect that choice to be without consequence. From my experience, “family friendly” does not apply to the most senior people in an

organization, be it government or the private sector. For them, all they want is for you to be there when they need you. If you are not, you quickly become “undependable” and they rely on someone else even if they are not as good. And remember, everyone is expendable.

Throughout her career, our speaker, Marjory Searing, has been a role model for women seeking to achieve success in the field of international trade. One of the first females to have graduated from Georgetown University with a Ph.D in Economics, Searing went on to blaze trails for women at the Treasury and Commerce Departments beginning in the late 1960s. She directed the Commerce Office of Multilateral Affairs during the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations, was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Japan during the height of US-Japan trade tensions in the 1990s, and led the US & Foreign Commercial Service, with over 3,000 employees worldwide, before leaving government for the private sector. Most recently, Searing retired from Pfizer, Inc, where she headed that corporation's international government affairs function.