

WASHINGTON THE **WOMAN**

Women's Networks:

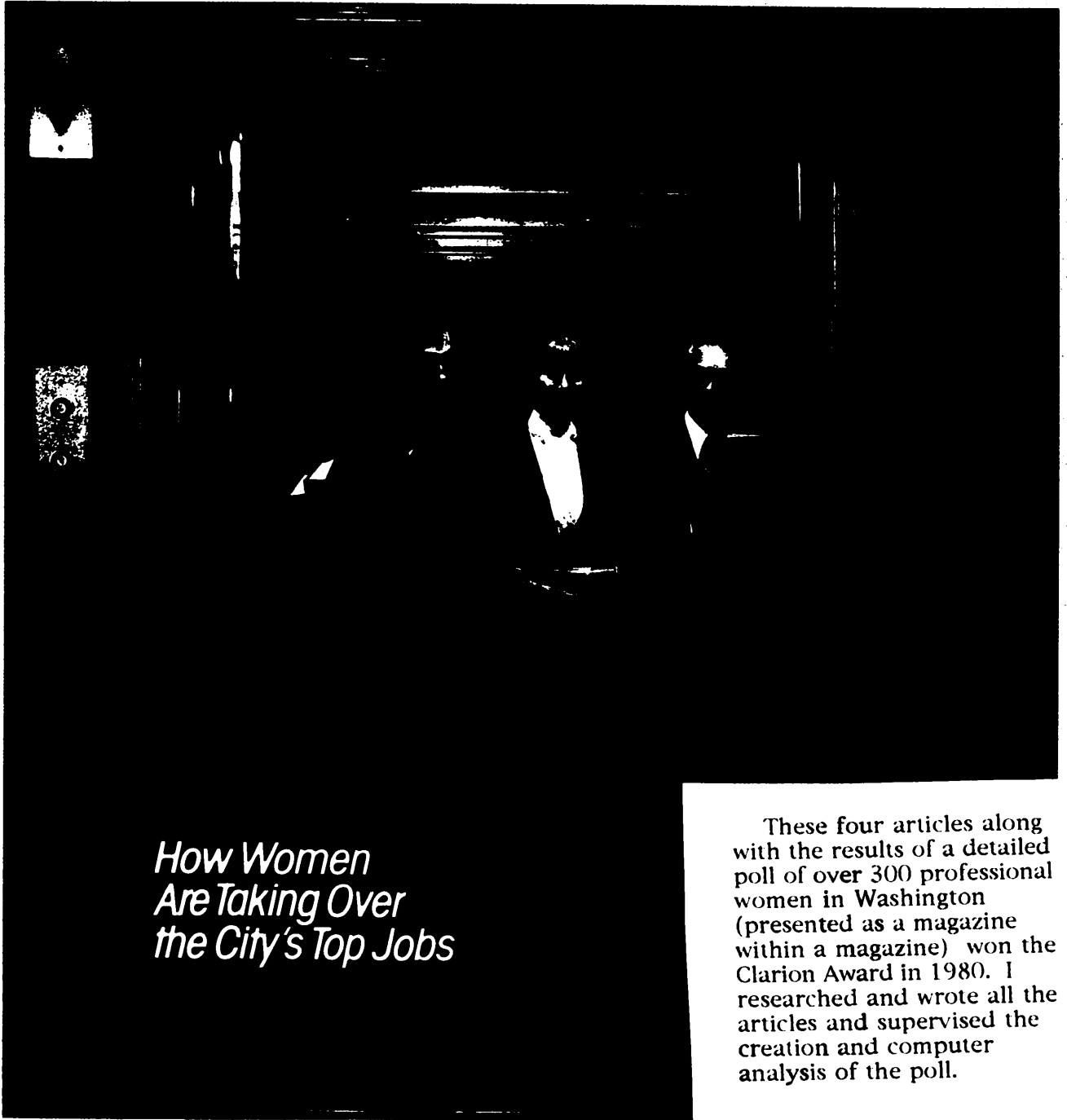
A New Path to Power

Stress and Success:

Is It Harder on Women?

Making an Impression:

Looking Like a President



*How Women
Are Taking Over
the City's Top Jobs*

These four articles along with the results of a detailed poll of over 300 professional women in Washington (presented as a magazine within a magazine) won the Clarion Award in 1980. I researched and wrote all the articles and supervised the creation and computer analysis of the poll.

Going Up

Stories by Susan Seliger
Photographs by Rhoda Baer

Things have never been better for professional women in Washington, but the blessings can be mixed.

Lynne Finney proved she could beat them first; then she joined them. She won a landmark legal case against the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, so they decided they'd better get her on their side. The offer had to be good—the first, the only female director at the Bank Board.

For Finney, the job seemed right on the money—she'd already worked for two law firms, taught law, and served as counsel to a senator on the Hill, so the federal government seemed the only sector left. Only a decade ago she was graduating from Loyola University Law School in Los Angeles. Of four women in the class, she and two others were at the top.

Finney moves comfortably at the top, with poise but without pretension. It wasn't always easy. Married for nine years, she is now divorced. She wouldn't mind marrying again, if she could only find the time to meet someone. She doesn't even have enough time to buy her business suits; a Garfinckel's buyer brings samples to her office for her.

She is not only a part of the emerging women's network in town; she started one group herself. She does not believe that women should struggle up the ladder alone—she has felt discrimination, sexual harassment, and loneliness and she wants to give other women a hand.

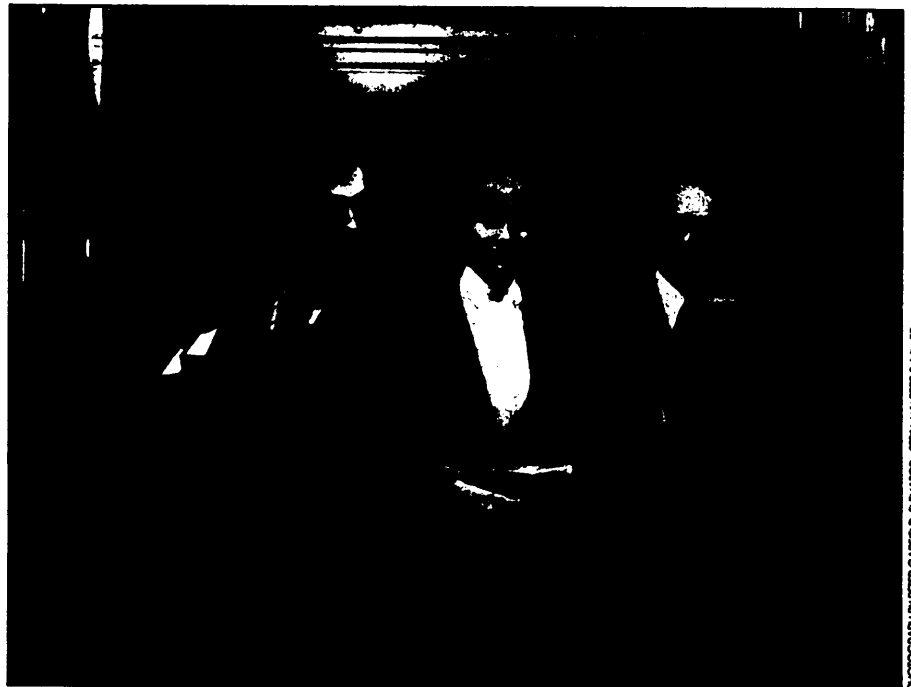
Lynne Finney is a classic new Washington professional woman.

"There's an old Chinese curse . . ." says psychologist Lynn Kahn, pausing and poising one finger in the air. "'May you live in exciting times.' These are exciting times for professional women in Washington."

The blessings may be mixed, but we might as well count them.

■ Washington has the highest per-

Susan Seliger has been a female for as long as she can remember, probably longer. She was active in the women's movement in Chicago in the late 1960s and early '70s. She was editor of a magazine in London for two years, worked at the *Baltimore News American*, and was a staff writer at the *National Observer* until 1977.



As the only female director at the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Lynne Finney moves comfortably at the top—but it wasn't always easy.

centage of women in professional jobs of any of the ten largest metropolitan areas in the country, according to the Center for Municipal and Metropolitan Research in June 1979.

■ The median income of professional women in Washington is 35 percent higher than that of professional women nationally, according to a 1976 Census Bureau survey of income and education.

■ In 1977, the Commerce Department reported that 7.4 percent of American women earn over \$15,000 a year. In a 1979 *Washingtonian* survey of professional women in this area, 42 percent earned over \$25,000; 25 percent earned over \$30,000.

Women are making inroads at the top. Between 1976 and 1978, the government cut out 2,000 full-time positions while adding 22,000 women to full-time jobs. During that same period, men have been declining as a percentage of every grade level in the government. The biggest percentage increases for women over these

two years have come at the top: There are 38.6 percent more women in levels GS 16-18; 14.5 percent more women in GS 13-15; and 13 percent more in GS 9-12.

Washington was not always a great town for women. "Washington has changed," says Esther Peterson, who has not. She has remained the legend with a braid on top through the last four decades, rolling like a pioneer's wagon from the bumpy terrain of the Hill as the first female labor lobbyist, to presidential adviser, over to Giant Food, and back to the White House as special assistant to the President on consumer affairs.

"When we first organized the President's Commission on the Status of Women under Kennedy, there were a lot of women in the government, but we didn't know where," Peterson says. "So we asked the Civil Service Commission to do a study of the grade structure.

"The man came back with his chart and showed me one very thin little line way up in the upper brackets. 'Esther,

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER GARFIELD. BEHAVIOR: STEEN HAUPERF & WALLER

"Washington has changed."

Esther Peterson ▸
special assistant
to the President
on consumer affairs

that's you,' he said." She roars with delight.

"Now it's completely different," Peterson says, equally pleased.

But not everyone agrees things are all that different. Let's take another look at those percentage increases in the government; it's useful to bear in mind that when you go from having one woman in a group to two, it is a 100-percent increase. A similar mathematical process is operating in the government statistics.

There was indeed a big jump in women in the GS 16-18 level, but women still are only 3.6 percent of that group. In GS 13-15, women fill only 6.3 percent of the jobs. And in the lower managerial levels of GS 9-12, women make up 24 percent of the total. The vast majority of women are where they've always been—in GS 1-8, which is 69 percent women.

What about the private sector?

Women are entering professional schools in unprecedented numbers. Enrollments of women in medical, business, and law schools in the Washington area and across the country have ballooned. In local business schools, this year women make up from 35 percent (Georgetown University) to 50 percent (Catholic University and University of Maryland) of the total enrollment. In law schools, women account for 33 percent (Georgetown University) to 44 percent (Howard University) of the students. And in medical schools, women comprise from 20 percent (Georgetown University and Johns Hopkins University) to 36 percent (Howard University) of the total enrollment.

Women are also getting more PhDs than ever. In 1960, 10 percent of the PhDs were women; in 1977, the number jumped to 25 percent.

But what happens after school—in real life?

"Women's salaries are lower than those of men with comparable training and experience at every age, every degree level, in every field, and with every type of employer," says the American Association for the Advancement of Science in its 1978 report on "Professional Women and Minorities."

"Unemployment rates for professional women are two to five times higher than for men in the same field with the same level of training, and the gap increases at higher degree levels," con-



tinues the report.

How do law firms fare in hiring women in what is fondly called this lawyer's town? The chart shows five prestigious local firms:

Law Firm	Partners:		Associates:	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Arent, Fox, Kintner, Plotkin & Kahn	59	1	61	5
Arnold & Porter	56	2	70	13
Covington & Burling	72	2	103	20
Hogan & Hartson	59	2	48	7
Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering	50	1	54	17

Having said all that, it is only fair to say things have never been better in Washington for professional women. President Carter has appointed nearly twice the percentage of top-level women as Gerald Ford. Affirmative-action projects are taking root, channeling women upward. In fact, the management of these Equal Employment Opportunity programs themselves has become the golden route by which many women enter management slots, gather management experience, and move on to other positions. Failure to enact EEO hiring plans can cost companies millions of dollars in discrimination lawsuits. AT&T settled a discrimination suit for \$40 million; General Electric had to dish out \$32 million; even the federal government has been caught—professional women successfully sued the Department of Energy, which will have to pay out several million dollars in back salaries.

The presence of the government here has spawned a fast-growing group of private firms that live off government contracts; the *National Journal* reports that these firms employ about three times as many people as the entire federal government. Many of these consulting companies are women-owned businesses.

The National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) estimates that there are about 1,200 women-owned businesses in the Baltimore-Washington area—the Washington chapter of NAWBO is the largest in the nation.

The opportunities for professional women in Washington seem the best in the country. Who are these women moving up the ladder? What are their lives like? What do they have to sacrifice to get where they want to go? How do their careers fit into their total lives?

The women will speak for themselves. They usually do.

Staying Single

"I Need Independence and Privacy"

Dona O'Bannon crosses her long legs, looking relaxed while not ruffling one blond hair or wrinkling her buff-white skirt or soft tan blouse, tied in a bow at the neck. At 36, she is co-founder of a consulting firm that employs ten people. And she is single—for now and forever.

"I plan not to get married," O'Bannon says. "It takes time, effort, caring, and sacrificing. I don't want to enter into something and fail."

So far, that has not been even a remote possibility. She is president of the National Association of Women Business Owners and was named Top Woman Entrepreneur of 1977 by NAWBO's Washington chapter. Still, business is not the same as one's private life.

"I won't live with someone either," she continues. "I need independence and privacy. He can have his house; I can have mine," she chuckles, pleased with the prosperity implied by such an arrangement. And that's the way matters stand with a New Yorker she is dating.

"I'm not gay," O'Bannon offers simply. It's a question any woman faces if she declares she's not the marrying kind. After all, what kind is she then?

O'Bannon didn't always know she would choose a career instead of marriage. "I wanted six children when I started out," after graduating from Washington-Lee High School in Arlington and then Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. But her next step turned out to be an 1 1/2-year stint on the Hill, starting as a \$6,000-a-year file clerk and ending as an executive assistant for Representative Sam Gibbons of Florida at \$25,000. And that led her to start her own firm in 1974, which in turn led to hard work, long hours, and a life so full that marriage got squeezed right out of the picture.

"I'm very happy with that decision. I

"You can't do everything in this society and be married."

Dona O'Bannon
co-founder of Alcalde,
Henderson, O'Bannon & Bracy

don't know if my mother is," she adds, laughing. "You just can't do it all," she shrugs, gazing around her large, elegant Virginia office that suggests that she has at least done it all in her business life. "You read about those wonderful role models—mostly male. And they make a lot of money, have a family, a sailboat; they're smiling happily," she says, mimicking the Cheshire Cat's grin of success. "They lie. I learned that in my thirties.

"You can't do everything in this society and be married," she says, walking to her desk to answer the telephone. The picture on the wall behind her is not the usual office decor—it's something she picked herself, showing an open window in the foreground with a lacy curtain billowing in the breeze and a lone set of railroad tracks winding their way into the countryside. The track has no train; the



house has no people—but the mood is serene, not sinister.

Sarah Weddington is divorced, with little time or privacy for dating. Another marriage seems out of the question at this point. She's busy moving up out of the basement that was Midge Costanza's legacy, and closer to the President as the second woman he has appointed as assistant.

"I have decided for now and the next, say, ten years that I would rather not have the conflict of trying to do both a good job and a good marriage. I'm concen-

trating on the job now, marriage later."

"In the past we thought you could be everything. But you have to make choices. I was a family law specialist and I handled many divorces. I know that people who are married can be more lonely than I am. . . .

"Sometimes I worry that I'll wake up when I'm 65 and think, 'Gosh, it's cold at night—why did I make that choice?'" But for now, at age 34, Weddington just beams and says, "It's nice to be alone. I have a marvelous job and a marvelous life. For a preacher's kid raised in west Texas, a White House office with two

Who Is the New Washington Woman?

The Washington woman is about 34 years old. She is married, and quite possibly childless—though someone just like her next door may have two children. Her father was a professional man—an engineer, perhaps, or dentist or school administrator—while her mother stayed home to take care of the house and kids.

Staying home with the children is not in this woman's plans, however. After attending a state university or a second-rung private college, she went to graduate school, earning maybe an MBA. Now she has her own small consulting firm, or a mid-level government job. She works almost fifty hours a week, at a salary of about \$24,000.

Like most of her female colleagues, she feels she'd be farther along in her career if she were a man. And in fact her husband does make more money than she does—he's close to \$30,000. He also doesn't help all that much around the house, pitching in for one third of the chores at most. She would—reluc-

tantly—be willing to move if her husband had a good offer in another city, and she'd like to think he'd do the same for her, but she's not so sure.

She would prefer a female supervisor to a male if forced to choose, but overall she has no preference. She thinks Washington's successful women are likely to be helpful to younger female colleagues, but again she's not quite sure. Still, she does belong to a women's caucus at work, or perhaps an outside group like the Washington Women's Network. She's learning.

This is a statistical portrait of the professional woman in Washington, based on data gathered in an exclusive *Washingtonian* poll. We distributed questionnaires at meetings of professional women's groups, and at a seminar for career women. More than 300 replies were received, of which 284 were usable. This seems an adequate sample for a group as narrowly defined as this one

was—employed professional and managerial women in one city. Gail Wisan, an associate professor of sociology at George Washington University, supervised the data processing.

Generally, there were few big surprises. As expected, professional women here tend to be younger than the female population at large—almost half are clustered in the 30-39 age bracket, and another fourth are in their twenties. This is almost certainly a reflection of the widening of opportunities for women over the last decade. The tendency of professional women to come from professional or managerial family backgrounds was also predictable.

However, our sample did contain a higher proportion of single women than a national cross-section of women would—46 percent, compared to a national total of about 16 percent. Similarly, there were also more divorcées—13 percent, which is double the national average for all women. Another

windows isn't bad."

Olga Grkavac isn't married either, but less out of conviction than circumstance. As legislative director for Representative Edward Markey of Massachusetts, and former head of the Capitol Hill Women's Political Caucus and still an active member, she rarely finds time or energy at the end of a long day to make new friends.

"You meet men in politics," she explains over a carafe of wine in a Capitol Hill bar. "But politics doesn't draw the most secure kind of men. And a career woman needs a secure man.

"Most of my friends are not married. They're not all aggressive, catty women; they're not man haters. I think they'd really like to be married and have a family." But it's hard, Grkavac says, to find a man willing to share the responsibilities of a two-career couple.

"It's not that I'm not willing to make trade-offs. I just don't want to make *all* the sacrifices. And that's what the typical Washington marriage is—the woman giving things up."

Among friends who are getting married and seem happy, Grkavac says she sees an emerging pattern.

"Professional women are starting to marry men who are not as ambitious. They are starting to realize that if they want to be successful, they may not be able to marry a man who wants to be."

6 percent were separated.

The level of childlessness was also high—58 percent of the women had no children, including 35 percent of the married women and 47 percent of the divorcées. Moreover, 24 percent said they intended to remain childless, and another 16 percent were still undecided. Nationally, at any given moment only 20 percent of the women who are or ever have been married are without children.

This was an educated group:

Highest Level	Percent
College graduate	19.0
Some post-graduate	21.1
Master's degree	25.8
Law degree	6.5
PhD	6.1

Four out of every five women had at least a bachelor's degree; nationally, the figure is barely more than one in five. It was a slight surprise, however, that only 6.6 percent of these women were graduates of elite colleges.

This was also a hard-working group, nearly half putting in more than fifty hours a week. Fifty-seven percent held private employment; 43 percent worked

Marriage

"You Bring Problems Home"

Working, everyone agrees, has profound effects on a marriage, but no one knows exactly what. The statistics on the new working woman are sketchy and often contradictory.

■ Working women everywhere, but especially in Washington, are marrying later and putting off having children. Nationally, 20 percent of women who are or ever were married have no children; in *The Washingtonian's* survey, 35 percent of the married professional women had no children and 47 percent of the divorcées were childless.

■ Nationwide, divorce is lower among professional women than all women: According to 1970 Census Bureau data, 5.9 percent of professional women were divorced, as against 6.8 percent of all women. But among the Washington professional women surveyed, divorce was higher—13 percent. That's high even allowing that the divorce rate has increased in the last decade.

Divorce among professional women should be lower than in the population at large because such women tend to be

more highly educated than most—and there is a dramatic drop in divorce as education increases. Nationally, 24 percent of women without a high school diploma (in 1970) were divorced, while only 8 percent of women with college degrees were divorcées. Among professional women surveyed in Washington, 80 percent graduated from college.

Part of the explanation for the high divorce rate here among professionals may be that so many have graduate degrees—divorces increase slightly as the education level goes beyond college. But it may also have to do with the hard-driving quality of professional life in Washington.

Whatever the statistics, Washington is often said to be a hard town on marriages—and marriages between two professionals pose special problems. Power, the aphrodisiac, whispers temptation into the ears of husbands and wives alike. Long work hours leave little time together. Socializing is often simply an extension of business, not a chance to relax. And there can be conflict if she seems to be making it professionally while he is not.

Jennifer Nelson, acting deputy administrator for special nutrition programs in the Department of Agriculture, believes these factors played a part in severing her marriage.

"Washington is extremely hard on

for the government. Their median annual income was between \$20,000 and \$25,000, more than twice the median income for women nationally.

Assessing their careers, almost three fourths said they'd be farther along if they were men, and about three fifths said they believed that successful Washington women are inclined to help younger women along. Forty-three percent said specific personal capabilities make the biggest difference to a woman's career prospects, but social and professional contacts ranked a close second.

Asked which they would sacrifice first—career, marriage, or staying home to care for children—if a conflict among them arose, 66 percent said they would not quit their jobs to take care of their children. Readiness to sacrifice career was noticeable only at the lower ends of the income and education scales—probably because these women were already somewhat sacrificing career.

Almost one third said they would be unwilling to move if a spouse or lover were transferred to another area, and another half said they would do so only reluctantly.

Generally, it appears that education and income are strong influences on the

degree to which a woman's values are career-oriented. The more educated and the higher her income, the more unlikely she is to be willing to make the kinds of sacrifice for husband or children that would limit career advancement.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the women who seemed most involved in their careers and the farthest advanced tended to be divorced. Sixty-three percent of divorcées worked over fifty hours a week, compared to 45 percent of married and 49 percent of single women. Divorcées were twice as likely as women in any other marital status to earn more than \$30,000 a year; 47 percent of them did so. They were also the most active in women's groups; 44 percent belonged to at least two.

Hard work and high group participation might be explained as compensation for solitude, except that women who were separated but not yet divorced were the least prone to fifty-hour weeks, the least likely by far to have higher incomes, and the least likely to belong to groups. From this it is possible to infer that networks and other kinds of women's groups are stabilizing factors in their members' emotional lives as well as their careers. □

I cannot include the rest of the article as it exceeds the Upload space on the application form. Contact me and I will email the remainder of this and the three other articles in the series. Hi@susanseliger.com