

## 5 things women couldn't do in the 1960s

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*It wasn't long ago that a wife was considered her husband's "helpmate" first and foremost. But the rules changed. The 1960s is known for the major moments that shaped history -- civil rights, Vietnam, the assassinations of Kennedy and King. But the decade was also full of smaller events that also indicated change was in the wind. Remember Liz 'n Dick? Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor's tempestuous marriage(s) gave us celebrity media coverage on steroids -- and we're still living with the aftermath (Think Kim and Kanye or Brad and Angie). Click through the gallery for lesser known '60s moments that still resonate today: The United Nations has often been criticized as ineffectual, but Dag Hammarskjold, its second secretary-general, was determined to change that. "(The major powers) thought they had got a safe, bureaucratic civil servant, nonpolitical, and they got Hammarskjold. It will never happen again," an aide once said. Hammarskjold died in a plane crash on September 18, 1961, while trying to settle conflict in the Congo. He was the first person posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. On August 1, 1966, Charles Whitman -- who had already killed his wife and mother -- went to the top of the University of Texas Tower and shot 46 people, killing 16. In the '60s, such a mass shooting was almost unthinkable. In recent years, we've experienced them more often. On March 13, 1964, Catherine "Kitty" Genovese was stabbed by a 29-year-old stranger, Winston Moseley. Two weeks later, The New York Times ran a story that said 38 people had heard her cries, but nobody rushed to help, not wanting to "get involved," said one. Though the details turned out to be overstated or inaccurate, the depiction of uncaring city dwellers has haunted society ever since. At the time it occurred in early 1969, the Santa Barbara oil spill, caused by a blow-out at a platform off the California coast, was the worst in American history. (It has since been succeeded by the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster.) The scope of the spill, which polluted waters and killed sea life, was key to creating environmental protection laws and the Environmental Protection Agency. The death-row debate remains a prominent one in American culture. The man who helped put it there, Caryl Chessman, was a small-time hoodlum who was given the death penalty after being convicted of robbery, kidnapping and rape. In prison, Chessman wrote a memoir -- "Cell 2455, Death Row" -- and energized the anti-capital punishment movement. He was put to death on May 2, 1960. The debate continues. On March 27, 1964 -- Good Friday -- the area around Anchorage, Alaska, was shaken by a magnitude 9.2 earthquake, the*

**(CNN)** -- Can you imagine pregnancy being a fireable offense? How about job security hinging on your weight or the softness of your hands? What if you couldn't open a bank account or establish a line of credit unless you had a husband to cosign for you? What if you had the grades to attend a school like Princeton, but your gender kept you on the other side of those hallowed, ivy-covered halls?

It was not so long ago that this was the reality for women. If you're 45 or older, you were born into this world.

When President John F. Kennedy established the Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, he appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as chairwoman. In a televised 1962 discussion with Roosevelt, Kennedy stated, "We want to be sure that women are used as effectively as they can to provide a better life for our people, in addition to meeting their primary responsibility, which is in the home."

This was a mixed message, effectively telling women, "Go! Learn! Flourish! Do! ... but also, have babies and put your husband's needs before your own."

most powerful earthquake in U.S. history. An estimated 139 people died, most due to tsunamis in Alaska and down North America's West Coast. It made the front page, but a similar event today, thanks to news-gathering technology, would likely be even more heavily covered. At least scientists learned a lot. You don't hear much about "society" anymore, but it still mattered in the '60s when Truman Capote (center) mixed socialites and celebrities with his 1966 Black and White Ball. Held in honor of the Washington Post's Katharine Graham -- pictured on the far left -- it was more of an excuse for a Capote party. The 500 attendees included Frank Sinatra, CBS founder William Paley, Lauren Bacall -- pictured on the far right dancing with choreographer Jerome Robbins -- three presidential daughters and Capote's elevator man. It was both a throwback to the swell soirees of the past and a precursor to the media-mad, celebrity-studded bashes of today. For 114 days in the winter of 1962-63, a strike shut down New York's daily newspapers. Publishing resumed in March 1963, but things had changed: in short order, the city went from seven newspapers to three, and TV and radio news became more important. The strike symbolized how easily people's news media preferences can shift -- something quite familiar in the internet age. The death of Aldous Huxley, the famed author of "Brave New World," was little noted at the time -- not because he was a minor figure, but because he happened to die on November 22, 1963. Yes, the same day John F. Kennedy was shot. (C.S. Lewis also died that day.) It's an indicator that media coverage of one death can overwhelm all other news. Farrah Fawcett, who died the same day as Michael Jackson, could probably relate. HIDE

CAPTION

But you can thank the nation's real-life Peggy Olsons for beginning to roar at this time. Have a look back at five surprising things women could not do in the 1960s:

**1. Get a credit card:** In the 1960s, a bank could refuse to issue a credit card to an unmarried woman; even if she was married, her husband was required to cosign. As recently as the 1970s, credit cards in many cases were issued with only a husband's signature. It was not until the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974 that it became illegal

to refuse a credit card to a woman based on her gender.

**2. Serve on a jury:** It varied by state (Utah deemed women fit for jury duty way back in 1879), but the main reason women were kept out of jury pools was that they were considered the center of the home, which was their primary responsibility as caregivers. They were also thought to be too fragile to hear the grisly details of crimes and too sympathetic by nature to be able to remain objective about those accused of offenses. In 1961, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a Florida law that exempted women from serving on juries. It wasn't until 1973 that women could serve on juries in all 50 states.

Longing for the carefree parenting style of yesterday?



The Sixties: Changin' Times Trailer



The films that shocked people in the '60s

**3. Go on the birth control pill:** Issues like

reproductive freedom and a woman's right to decide when and whether to have children were only just beginning to be openly discussed in the 1960s. In 1957, the FDA approved of the birth control pill but only for "severe menstrual distress." In 1960, the pill was approved for use as a contraceptive. Even so, the pill was illegal in some states and could be prescribed only to married

women for purposes of family planning, and not all pharmacies stocked it. Some of those opposed said oral contraceptives were immoral, promoted prostitution and were tantamount to abortion. It wasn't until several years later that birth control was approved for use by all women, regardless of marital status. In short, birth control meant a woman could complete her education, enter the work force and plan her own life.

What 'The Pill' did

#### **4. Get an Ivy League education:**

Yale and Princeton didn't accept female students until 1969. Harvard didn't admit women until 1977 (when it merged with the all-female Radcliffe College). With the exception of the University of Pennsylvania, which began accepting women on a case-by-case basis in 1876, and Cornell, which admitted its first female student in 1870 (also offering admission under special circumstances), women couldn't attend Ivy League schools until 1969 at the earliest. Brown (which merged with women's college Pembroke), Dartmouth and Columbia did not offer admission to women until 1971, 1972 and 1981, respectively. Other case-specific instances allowed some women to take certain classes at Ivy League institutions (such as Barnard women taking classes at Columbia), but by and large, women in the '60s who harbored Ivy League dreams had to put them on hold.

**5. Experience equality in the workplace:** Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women produced a report in 1963 that revealed, among other things, that women earned 59 cents for every dollar that men earned and were kept out of the more lucrative professional positions. When the 1964 Civil Rights Act was going through Congress, an amendment made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender as well as race. When the amendment was not taken seriously regarding women in the workplace, the National Organization of Women was founded to enforce full equality for women in truly equal partnership with men.

For example, NOW challenged several of the now-defunct airline Pan Am's rules, including the following: Stewardesses had to meet a certain height requirement, maintain a set weight, resign if they got married, maintain soft hands and face mandatory retirement at age 32. That all ended when Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited such instances of discrimination.

It wasn't just NOW fighting for women's rights.

When journalist and activist Gloria Steinem went undercover as a Playboy Bunny one year before the Civil Rights Act, she exposed the exploitative environment for women at the Playboy Club. Steinem reported their wages and detailed the sexual demands of the male clientele. When Steinem's expose was published, Playboy founder Hugh Hefner changed the working conditions of those women for the better.

**BONUS: Talk openly about sex:** Helen Gurley Brown's "Sex and the Single Girl" presented the notion that it was OK -- even enjoyable -- for a woman to live on her own, have her own money,

have sexual relationships before marriage or even -- wait for it -- never marry at all!

It wasn't until publication of Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" that women's dissatisfaction with life and frustration over lack of opportunities came to light.

"A woman today has been made to feel freakish and alone and guilty if, simply, she wants to be more than her husband's wife," said Friedan.

Today, far fewer people give credence to the notion of a woman existing for the sole purpose of being the husband's helpmate.

Just this week, sales soared when LEGO released a playset featuring three female scientists.

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