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FRIEDAN

She helped launch the women's movement, and now Betty Friedan wants a 'values revolution'.

By ALEX WITCHET.

"W"hen I was a child, adults never asked girls what they wanted to be when they grew up," said Betty Friedan, 79.

"Only boys. With girls they would say, 'You're such a pretty little girl -- you'll grow up, get married and have children just like your mommy.' Well, I sure as hell didn't want to be a mommy like my mommy. On the other hand, I wanted to be a mother and wife and have a family and do it better than she did -- have it warmer, more real. My mother was sort of hypocritical. She would say, 'Oh, darling,' on the phone to her friends, then hang up and make bitchy comments. As a result, I err in the other direction. I'm too brutally frank."

She smiled. "I think I don't have enough hypocritical graces," she said.

That's for sure. In 1963, Friedan, the combative writer and activist, inspired a social revolution for women with "The Feminine Mystique," in which she debunked the myth of the postwar woman, that docile soul who tended home and hearth while happily forgoing her own ambitions and interests. It sold more than 3 million copies.

In her sixth book and first memoir, "Life So Far" (Simon & Schuster, $26), she recounts a turbulent personal history in which she accuses her former husband, Carl Friedan, an advertising executive, of physical abuse during their 22-year marriage.

A founding mother of the women's movement getting black eyes from her husband?

Friedan grimaced and waved her hand dismissively, perched on an overstuffed chair in her home in Washington, D.C. "Well, don't make too much of that," she said. "He was no wife beater, and I was no passive victim. We were both hot-tempered people. Her voice grew louder as she continued, establishing her pattern of speaking in italics. "Unfortunately, he was bigger than me," she said. "So even if I started it, I ended up with the bruises. My daughter the doctor does not think I should make statements on domestic violence because I don't know the literature, but in my instance, it's all wrong."

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I still sit away to secret.

BETTY'S BOOKS

"The Feminine Mystique," 1963
"The Second Stage," 1981
"The Fountain of Age," 1994
"It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement," 1998
"Life So Far," 2000

'SEVEN EMBRACE THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THEN AND NOW: Betty Friedan, 79, has just released her memoir. She was instrumental in the women's movement in the 60's, left.

The Associated Press
FRIEDAN: Founder of feminist movement remains close to her
gone.

IN GOOD COMPANY: Betty Friedan, left, says the most difficult thing she's gone through was her divorce. Below, Friedan chats with Peter Jennings, left, and Julianna Schnebel after receiving honors from the Academy of the Arts in New York in 1998.

The Associated Press

STUART RANSOM The Associated Press

Going to law school: 'I'm not a feminist, but I'll get married when I choose, if I choose.' She smiled wryly. "She's not a feminist, but choice, autonomy, ambition and opportunity are her subject." Where Friedan always split from more radical members of the movement was in her insistence that women not isolate themselves from men, that women's liberation and men's liberation were inter- twined. Of her study for Cor- nell, she said, "We need a val- ues revolution in this culture. We need quality of life to be more important than the bot- tom line. We need a new defini- tion of the bottom line, a pur- pose larger than the self. For me, the women's movement provided such a purpose. To re- alize you were making a differ- ence, that was exciting. Fi- nally, "I said quietly. "She really said that, it's not just a tee.

I started to write a letter to the editor of the New York Times, to try to get something going. If you don't get something going, you're not doing anything."

She seems to have made a personal decision, as Betty Goldstein, 1921, she, Harry, and her three children, are going to live in the city of New York.

She went to the university at Berkeley in the 1970s, and became a part of the sit-in movement.

She grew up in a family where she was expected to go to law school, but she decided not to.

Friedan was 70 years old and had just retired as a professor of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is survived by her husband, Carl Friedan, and their children.

The Associated Press

I like color. So that was the end of the decorator.

For all her feistiness, Fried- dan seemed a bit frail. She was sometimes hard of hearing, and her breathing was labored when she walked. A lifelong tennis player, she claims not to have had an attack since she had a heart valve replaced - twice - seven years ago.

Her trademark voice, au- thoritative and strong, seems to be her motor. Speaking one on one doesn't energize or reas- sure her as much as when she projects, as it to an audience. Her concentration was spry; sometimes she spoke in full, eloquent paragraphs, some- times she repeated things she had just said. She recovered one of two ways: either goofily shouting "What?" which seems to her time-honored way of mak- ing timid souls jump, or by con- tinuing a thought she had left off previously, completing sen- tences with an acuity that would make a copy editor cheer.

Women today have lots of opportunities. This is why she began. "If I was young today I might become an anthropologist, or a law school and aim for the Supreme Court."

"Young women today take for granted opportunities that my generation never dreamed of," she went on. "I hear them say, 'I'm not a feminist, but I'm