



# BROOKLYN\_BORN

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## Has one person or event completely changed the direction of your life?

Friday, March 05, 2021

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My recent blogs about the Donna Reed Era have triggered one last memory

Where would I be if this hadn't happened?



I was almost 16 on June 2, 1963 and just finishing my Junior year of High School  
It was my 3rd high school because of an unsettled family situation.

I was invited to a party in another neighborhood at the last minute by a girlfriend who didn't want to go alone. Joe was finishing his freshman year at Brooklyn Poly Tech. I didn't know what that was. He was studying Aerospace Engineering. I didn't know what that was either.

I mentioned in my last blog that I was the first of my family to attend college. Actually, none of my friends had college in their plans. The girls were all headed to one of the thousands of office jobs in NYC. I would be one of them.

By November we were "going steady" and Joe wondered why I wasn't going to college.

My grades were great. In fact, I was editing and typing HIS term papers.

Joe: How are your SATs?

Me: What are SATs?

The only colleges I knew were those playing football on TV or sometimes basketball.

No HS counselor even mentioned college as an option, but they registered me for the December SAT

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exam as I requested.

At that time the average SAT combined Language/Math score was just above 1000. 1200s were great. Mine came back over 1400. Yes, with no test preparation courses either. Suddenly I was on the guidance counselor's radar.

Oh yes, I was college material even with my lack of AP classes. Even though I had to attend summer school before my Junior year because of different graduation requirements in my 3rd high school

It was a bit late to apply for college and unlikely my parents would have accepted sending me off somewhere to live in a dorm. You lived at home until you got married. That's how it worked.

There was an option. The 4 campuses of the City University of New York were free to NYC residents. That was good. because the only loan my frugal family took was a mortgage. Tuition loan? Not gonna happen.

The CUNY required a B+ average and some SAT number that I easily exceeded and a March application deadline. OK, I will go to college.

The AHA moments we write about here usually involve changing our health direction, but I bet there are many who have experienced other similar life changing events as I did. Some for the better and some not so good.

If you have a similar story in one context or another, I am interested in hearing about it.

Throughout my life I have maintained an awareness of how many children never realized their potential because of their life circumstances. My son, who was aware of my story, sponsored a scholarship in my name (matched by his company) for girls of working class parents who wanted to study math or the sciences.

"A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste" is not just a phrase, but absolutely true.

I understand that times were different back when I came of age.  
I am describing a time before many Sparkers here were even born.  
My part time job at Woolworth's paid for my books and other expenses.  
In the 90s we could send 3 kids to college for 5K each per year.  
Now my granddaughter is paying 25K per year at the same state university.

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**GIMMESPARK**

A great example of how pushing down one domino can change the rest of your life, bit by bit. Terrific metaphor for our individual and collective journeys to better health. Thanks for sharing. Best to you!  
78 days ago



**NANCYPAULINE**

Wonderful story. Neither of my parents were able to finish high school because of conditions in the 1930s. But both knew the value of education. I can still remember going to the local social security office at the age of 10 to get my SSN, so that we could then go to the savings and loan and open a savings account in my very own name. They did the same for my older brother, too.

My parents deposited \$10,000 in that account, a huge amount in 1968! We all knew it was for college only. I was so proud of that passbook! And I went to college, earning two degrees.

How could they deposit that much in 1968? Well, my mom grew our food, canned it, sewed our clothes, and helped my dad on the farm. We never went on a vacation, rarely ate in restaurants, we had one car, a 21-inch black and white TV, and on weekends we went to church or to visit nearby family for entertainment. I remember being embarrassed that my mom "patched" our wash clothes with flannel instead of buying new.

So I NEVER considered NOT going to college, because of their sacrifices. I have no greater heroes.



88 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/10/2021 8:29:55 PM



**MARTHA324**

The times they did change...in some ways alot and in others not so much.

Where I went to HS it was just expected we'd all go to college. But in 1968 it wasn't expected that girls (we weren't called women then) were really looking for the M.R.S. degree. Figured I'd get my teaching credentials, get married, teach for a while and then have kids and stay home. the phrase "if god forbid I had to go back to work, teaching would allow me be home with the kids."

Turns out my life took a 180 degree turn...didn't get married, didn't get a teaching job...ended up with a career in Human Resources, have been with my partner for 33 years, never had kids and never ever regretted getting the college degree. Still learning and loving it!

the paths women can take now are just amazing.

89 days ago



**COOKIE\_AT\_51**



Great Story ...

Also, it's fun to read everyone else's stories...this being International Women's Day (March 8th) your story is a good example of a women's achievement.

Thanks for sharing ~ Hugs, Cookie

90 days ago



**NOSEYME**

Gettysburg College in Pa. is now \$80,000 per yr. Now, trade school may be a good alternative..Education is good..just needs to fit the person.

90 days ago



**LGRIF22**

Great story! :You've done well...and lucky you had brains! I grew up expecting to go to college. Our N.J. High School was geared that way. I did get my BA in music, after getting married and a week after having our first child. I'm happy I finished school, but have never needed that degree for what I did. I taught voice, for which the degree helped, but wasn't required. I became an elementary librarian, but that didn't require a degree either. 2 of our children have college degrees and 3 took quite a bit of college classes, but never quite finished. Luckily, they have all done well.

It's interesting to hear from people who grew up different than me. I came from an upper middle class family with my mother having graduated from Mount Holyoke and my father, never quite finished his degree, but went for several years to Purdue. They were successful, but never wealthy. I had a great childhood and am so thankful for good parents and training!

91 days ago



**ANNIEMAROO**

Very inspiring story!



91 days ago



**JPPERSELL**

My mom or grandparents didn't go to college. My brother and I were the first kids to go. I enjoyed it. I liked writing the essays. I think what turned my life around was that I was a medical support assistant at a Veterans Hospital and I wanted to do more. I wanted to go somewhere and not just be sitting in the same job for twenty years. Unfortunately life got in the way and my medical problem caused me to retire but I am still proud of myself that I finished college. It was life changing and I had to really deal with the fact that I could no longer work but I am leading a fulfilling life now.

91 days ago



**BONIFIANT**

Times and opportunities have changed - some for the good and some not so good.



I am grateful that Sparkpeople is one of the good things available today.

91 days ago



**UPTOIT59**

I am glad you met Joe and found your true path. College tuitions are ridiculous and scary for some.

91 days ago



**FRITZYS\_MAMA**

I went to college right away and avoided many marriages.

91 days ago



**ALIHIKES**

I loved reading this story of how your life changed with encouragement from Joe. And I really loved the photo of the two of you, so young and happy.  
92 days ago

**JUNEPA**

Wow, you and Joe at the beach look Hollywood gorgeous and so happy.



What a great story, I wonder if your parents initially were a bit not happy that you as a high school student were dating a college age boy. What an awesome help mate he was, recognizing your ability and encouraging you. What a great happily ever after you are enjoying !!

I love life journey stories, and enjoyed reading through the comments.

In my own case, I grew up on a farm and wanted to go to university, and what I was most interested in was agriculture. Most of my peers in that era were children of immigrants, mostly Dutch, whose parents came to Canada after the war as newly weds with less than \$50 in their pockets. They were good people, hard workers, successful farmers, and their kids were encouraged to leave school as soon as possible and work. When my good friend's brother John found out I wanted to go to university to study agriculture ( I did get Bachelor of Science in Agriculture), he thought that was hilarious - I grew up on a farm, why would I have to go to university to learn about agriculture. When he and the rest of my peers had families, they encouraged them all to finish high school and John had a very bright daughter who also wanted to study agriculture ( she did and works as a professional agrologist) and he encouraged her and was so proud of her. How times changed, in a good way. Anyway, back to my story. My dad came from a middle class family, he was an engineer, one of his sisters was a journalist and one was a medical doctor (born in 1916, went to med school in the '30s, one of 20 women in a class of 200). My dad's family always encouraged their women and believed they had equal potential to men. My dad didn't like the middle class rat race and left Italy to become a farmer in Canada, to a more wholesome life in his opinion. Among my cousins and my family, all were expected to go to university and most rebelled against that notion. Among my 10 cousins and sibs, 4 finished university and they all could have gone if they wanted to. Their parents were disappointed. Lots of careers, for example, businessmen and trades men ( and women) are not lacking anything in not having a university degree. Personally, I think working at what you love and earning enough to be self-sufficient is more important than having a university degree. Knowing how to learn, having a life you enjoy, earning enough to be self-sufficient, having good family relationships, giving back to your community are what I value. For sure having an university degree can be a good thing, but it isn't everything or the only good thing.

The person who changed the direction of my life is my husband. Getting married and having a family was not a main ambition for me. I liked working and pursuing my own interests. But I am very happy to have met him and to be sharing a life and family with him. It is fortunate when we find a partner that dovetails our interests and values. I did not expect to find that, we found each other, its all (well mostly all, can't completely claim perfection) so good.  
92 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/7/2021 7:24:49 AM

**WHILLSW**

Things were different in our younger day....college wasn't an option for me. I was ok with it...have made some interesting life steps that I never could have dreamed of happening while in



school. I encourage education as much as I can but not all take heed.  
92 days ago

**THINCPL2004**

I too was in the similar boat, I had to go into the Army to be able to go to college. Thank God for the GI Bill. Great story!  
92 days ago

**JAMER123**

Neither my mom or dad had any education above high school. Dad was kept on the farm to work in the fields with his dad. Mom's dad refused to send her to any schooling as she would just get married and was also needed to work on the farm. Mom wanted to be a nurse. And like all little girls, that was a profession that was a little different from a secretary or teacher. As I got older, I changed my mind and wanted training in music. I was singing for weddings and funeral, played the organ and piano semi amateur and self trained in all. But I ended up going to RN training and then was asked to sing with the Coachmen. It wasn't allowed. My DH and I both have college degrees and all of our kids do as well. Our kids are flourishing in their chosen professions and enjoy them. Times have definitely changed over the years.  
92 days ago

**LILLYLEFEY**

I wish I knew how to follow this blog, your blog is great  
92 days ago

**GETULLY**

That is an amazing story! I think my 'aha' moment came when I realized I did not have to live the way others did - I did not have to be married. It was very freeing and left me open to



adventures, including meeting an amazing gentleman.  
92 days ago



**RACHNACH**

**KEEP  
SPARK  
ING!**

92 days ago



**2DAWN4**

Thank you so much for sharing this story. I have a younger sister and an older sister and a baby brother. College was never brought up as an option for us girls. However, from almost the moment my brother was born, it was understood that he would go to school. He is a college graduate but like so many others, is not working in his degree field.

92 days ago



**AZMOMXTWO**

I was never going to go to college but then I only wanted to go to work and get away from home I did go to college but I never finished because I did not like it and I wanted to move out of state

92 days ago



**JANROLG**

**I LIKE  
IT!**

92 days ago



**MORTICIAADDAMS**

I have had many events that profoundly changed my life. For one, I was very sickly as a child and I didn't have a nurturing home life. My parents divorce also was a life changing event and the subsequent move to another town due to that. My dad and mom both remarried and mom's later divorces and marriages were life changing. Being the only female in my college physic classes was life changing. My first marriage and divorce. My marriage to my current husband. The birth of my son. The deaths of almost all of my family in a period of 3 years. My second husband is the one person who has changed my life the most.

92 days ago



**THOMS1**

Wow, I love this story!! I was not college material but a lot of my classmates went to college and did very well. But Eileen, I love to hear the stories about your life, marriage and all of your

travels. Thanks for sharing!

92 days ago



Comment edited on: 3/6/2021 2:43:03 PM



**JWINKSLLC**

I love your story! What wonderful memories, that made you who you are now!

92 days ago



**MAHOLMAN1**

With all the schools with STEM programs girls can find out about career options and their interests when they are younger. When I was very young I knew I would go to college so I planned for it financially and academically.

92 days ago



**USAF-RETIRED**

Happy for you. My parents and I had no way to pay for "college". Took out student loans, which got paid off (back pay) when I had to go on disability .

I completed what proudly 20 years in the United States Air Force, at a time when only 2,000 females were allowed to enlist.

92 days ago



**KITTYHAWK1949**

I never watched 'Donna Reed' much but did watch and was influenced by 'Father Knows Best' and 'Leave It To Beaver'. From those shows, I thought all parents wanted and expected their kids to go to college. My parents didn't really think about it, I later realized. So all though high school I planned to go to college although I was just an average student in high school and planned to be a middle school math teacher (which is another story). That is until my high school math teacher didn't invite me to go to a math contest. I totally gave up my plans for college deciding I must not have what it takes if my math teacher seemed to have no faith in my abilities. It was only then I realized that my parents had never planned on me going to college. So got a job in a garment factory after high school but it didn't take long before I realized I didn't want to do that the rest of my life and went back to my plan of college. Saved enough money after a year in factory to pay for my freshman year of junior college. My dad stood up for me and told my mom that they would pay for the rest of my college. Luckily for me and them, my Aunt let me live with her for free as transferred to State University and got my BSE.



Your blogs usually bring up memories.



92 days ago



#### RHOOK20047

Great story. Glad they discovered your potential! I was not able to go to college as my parents didn't have the money, and my perception of money, left me in a lurch. I was considering going to St. Louis College of Pharmacy and the tuition of \$800 per semester seemed astronomical. Could have had a different life, but I am content in my life. I educated myself in the I/T field and did fairly well.

92 days ago



#### SHAKERATTLEROLL

"Greatness is sifted through the grind, therefore don't despise the hard work now for surely it will be worth it in the end."— Sanjo Jendayi

"When you are inspired in your work, everything seems to fall into place."— Wayne Dyer

"Success only comes to those who dare to attempt."— Mallika Tripathi

"Positive thinking is like fuel to the car. It will keep you energized throughout your work."— Abder-Rahman Ali

"You will never plow a field if you only turn it over in your mind." – Irish Proverb

92 days ago



#### PATRICIAAK

Doors opened and you said 'yes' to walking through!  
I have a similar story about not knowing about MCAT (Medical College Admission Test)

92 days ago



#### HOLDINGMYOWN

My Mom graduated school at age 17 from Grade 11 ( there was no grade 12's back then ) She had been dating my Dad for almost 4 years by this time. And she then got pregnant with me ( 6 more kids were to follow me )

My Dad only finished grade 8 in school then had to get work because his family needed income. He was self educated as we kids grew up. He read ALL the encyclopedia Britannicas from A to Z from cover to cover! And he read dictionaries! He loved crossword puzzles! This man knew more things than you could shake a stick at! He was working in a local grocery store when I was born and the meat cutter taught him the art of meat cutting. That enabled him to be hired as a civilian at the Air Force Base where we lived.  
Dad never finished school but he was determined that his 7 children would! AND we all did!

When I applied to an RN hospital nursing course....the first thing that happened was one mark from school came back not high enough for me to gain entrance ( history! oh how I hated history) My Dad who was usually a shy man...checked out some things....came home one day and told me I was going to call this local Senator who was on the hospital board & I was going to tell him how much I wanted to be a nurse & why I was not able to go to take the course ( that miserable history mark! LOL )

At 17 I tried backing out of making that call but my Dad dialed the number & stood there till I spoke to this Senator.

Several days later I got an envelope with \*revised\* government exam marks....All my marks were the same except my history now had the 5 points added that I needed to get into my nursing course!

Three years later I graduated a full fledged nurse! That phone call and my Dad were the turning points in my life! I nursed almost 40 years before retiring!

92 days ago



#### SAMMILESSACH

My folks did not go to college. My older sister didn't I wanted to go, I took the advanced classes in high school, had part time job had my eye on a career. Well graduation came , my father's job relocated, there were never plans for me to go to school except my dreams. I got a job in my new town where I knew no one that I walked to. 11 months after graduation I was able to finance a car a year later get a better job, I still wanted to go to school, I enrolled paid registration. There was no way I could afford it, I loved the job and embraced the job. The job was there over 20 years. My job was sold overseas, I then went to school, Dec 2020 finished up my courses, I now am having a hard time getting a job, since the virus , jobs closed up now they are opening up but wages are laughable. I am not sure when I'll have to accept a low wage but it is soon, savings are dwindling. I didn't go to school to end making the same money! Pretty frustrated I wanted to be employed this month.

Regardless of frustration i am so glad I got the chance to go, 3.8 gpa, degree, 2 certificates.

At home doing more learning to help, once employed i will do Spanish classes again.



I love your blogs and reflections, they open my mind.

Have a great weekend.

92 days ago



**SPARKUVU**



92 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/6/2021 9:22:12 AM



**MEADSBAY**



See, this is what I love about SparkPeople!

Your incredibly lovely blog and the amazing comments below it make my heart happy.

We all have such interesting stories and don't we all just love to talk about ourselves? LOL!

Like you nobody ever really talked to me about college, although several teachers were frustrated with my underachieving.

Both my parents were seventh and eighth grade dropouts in the 30s and never suggested college to any of us. They had 14 children so probably the thought of sending them to college was just a foreign concept. We were always a very literate household however, thnx to my brilliant mom.

I met my husband when we were in high school and although we did end up 'having to' get married, as they used to say, we made it work.

My dear man is the one who always encouraged me to go for it no matter what I wanted.

He bolstered my poor self-concept and talked me through getting my GED taking, the CLEP test and then going on to college. We both chipped away at our degrees while working and raising two little boys and moving around the country often due to his 8 years in the Air Force. I took six years and he took eight but by our mid 20s we were both through it just a little behind schedule.

I had a wonderful 30 year teaching career and am so very happily retired. We will celebrate our 53 anniversary this summer...he still makes me laugh every day!

We are 69 and 71...guess we will be one of those couples you see in the local newspaper celebrating our 75th (hopefully).



92 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/6/2021 9:26:46 AM



**MSMOSTIMPROVED**



Kismet! I am a native Washingtonian and it was tough in the 90s. I attended all DC public schools, and graduated from HS when DC was known as the Murder capital. Not going to college wasn't an option but being the rebellious teen, I wasn't making choices to head that way. I was smart, but dropped out of the pre-engineering program, and just wanted to be normal after years of being labeled TAG. I only applied to one school because I almost got caught in skipping class. I ducked in the library and the recruiter was there offering free applications to my eventual college. My SAT score and grades miraculously snagged a scholarship. This changed the entire trajectory of my life because I left DC and spent 4 years in the middle of nowhere focusing on my life and education.

92 days ago



**SPARKUVU**



My parents were not college people either, & didn't encourage it. I wanted to go. My boyfriend story was opposite of yours--he & his fam, were not college people. I got married to him 6 months out of HS. But, I never gave up, after an economy turn down, I found a test in, paid for college opportunity with a stipend that would pay for a sitter, 11 years married, I started college when baby 4 was 1!! Week old, graduated with honors.

92 days ago



**SPARKUVU**



Nice story.

92 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/6/2021 9:17:27 AM



**1CRAZYDOG**



Education is something that was/is very important to me. My Dad got his BS in Chemical Engineering on the GI bill. Mom never had the opportunity, because she was the youngest girl (one younger brother) and her Mom became blind and bedridden w/arthritis and required care so her Dad could earn a living. She ended up getting her HS diploma when she was 30! So proud of her for that.

I knew I wanted to go to college, but not sure about my major. Went to a Jr. College and was just taking General Ed courses. During that time my middle brother was critically ill and I saw how well cared for he was by the nurses around the clock. That's when it clicked w/me that I wanted to become a nurse. Never looked back! Graduated w/my BSN in 1977. That same brother passed away in 1982. That prompted me to get my Masters in Public Health Administration, which I earned in 1985. I know it was him urging me to do so.

Along the way I have always aspired to find different ways to use my nursing knowledge and never regretted a minute of my experiences!

Sparking . . . well, that AHA moment was a bit more of a slap in the face. I was 56 when I was diagnosed w/hypertension and type 2 diabetes. I had 2 young kids. Found SP and it clicked. That

was in 2010 and still here! Life changing!

HUGS and thanks for sharing your story.  
92 days ago



**CHERYLHURT**

Hasn't life been wonderful!  
92 days ago



**JUNETTA2002**

Great thanks for sharing  
92 days ago



**IRISHEI**

Thanks for sharing your story. Education is really important. I am so glad Joe influenced you into thinking about going to college. Happy you achieved your degree and it all worked out for you. God bless.

I went for my two year degree Associate and really enjoyed it. At the time I was doing well with my career and it did not pay me to go for my bachelors.....I was already making a good living with the other degrees i had at a few other places.....I had a few different careers and was happy doing what I did.....Anything you can learn is IMPORTANT!!

Irish Ei

92 days ago



**SUNNYBEACHGIRL**

I am grateful to the high school that put me in a college prep program and told my parents I was going to college.

After college And while working I was taking a class at a local college and mid way through the woman professor took me to the director of the graduate program who enrolled me in the Masters program

After I finished, I worked as a technology administrator for the University library and was encouraged by the director to apply for a promotional position in the university which I did.

The Woman professor stayed a friend and encouraged me to apply for PhD program which I did.

My husband supported the decision and was there for me the whole way.

It took a while for me to complete the program. I had worked closely with a University Vice President who encouraged me to apply for a top level administrative position at another university which I did

I loved what I did and enjoyed my career for many years. I have always been grateful to the many people who helped me along the way. And especially lucky to be married to a man who wanted me to be successful

Your topic made me go back through and send a silent thank you to the people who were there for me

93 days ago



**PLCHAPPELL**

Only a little younger than you but glad I went to college and yes it was so much cheaper then  
93 days ago



**MAREE1953**

Congratulations! I love looking back at my life and seeing how the Lord put different people in my life, who changed my path in remarkable ways, all according to His perfect timing and plan. Similar, in many respects for a 1950s girl. Feeling very blessed  
93 days ago



**LIS193**

Wonderful story!



93 days ago



**SUSANNAH31**

My story is similar to yours. I was the oldest of three and neither parent had gone to college.

My initial plan was to attend Catherine Gibbs secretarial school. And it was a high school teacher who suggested that instead I should apply for a 2-year college A AS degree offered at Baruch School (part of the city colleges in New York).

I had to take the SATS to apply for that program - and my scores were such that I was accepted to the four-year college -- tuition free! Still, my thinking was such that I still planned to major in secretarial studies. It was another male teacher at Baruch who at the time pointed out that I would be attending college with guys who would go on to careers, and with that major, I was destined to be working for them. That convinced me to major in psychology. Both make teachers had an enormous influence on my life - changing my future completely.

93 days ago







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93 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/6/2021 2:09:49 AM



**ETHELMERZ**



Interesting story, glad it went well!  
93 days ago

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