PS1 for 8/27/87#WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

The 67th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on August 26 will be an occasion for feminists to complain that the right to vote was but one small mark of progress, and that equality for women is still an illusive goal. Actually, this anniversary should be an occasion to proclaim how fortunate American women are to live in a land of freedom and equality of opportunity, where women and men can both enjoy the fruits of their hard work and talent.

Let's list just a few women of particular achievement in this land of opportunity. In the political arena, we have Kay Orr, Governor of Nebraska; Martha Layne Collins, ~~past~~ Governor of Kentucky; Jeane Kirkpatrick, former Ambassador to the United Nations and internationally acclaimed foreign policy leader; Sandra Day O'Connor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice; Elizabeth Hanford Dole, Secretary of Transportation; Paula Hawkins, former U.S. Senator from Florida; and Faith Ryan Whittlesey, U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland.

Women achievers in other fields include Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics; Lynne Cox, who just became the first person to swim the icy Bering Strait; Dr. Mildred Jefferson and Dr. Carolyn Gerster, both physicians and pro-life leaders; Mother Angelica, television producer; Mary Ann Mobley, former Miss America and television personality; Amy Grant, popular singer; Barbara Mandrell, musician and entertainer; and Nellie Gray, organizer of the remarkably successful annual March for Life.

These women are shining examples of what can be accomplished in a free society where every person has the opportunity to achieve and succeed, and where each can keep the fruits of his or her own labor.

Fame, however, is not synonymous with achievement, fulfillment, or success. The public has never heard the names of most women who

reached those goals, but lack of publicity did not diminish their enjoyment of life.

When I think of remarkable, achieving women, I think first of all of my own mother. Named Odile Dodge Stewart, she passed to her eternal reward this summer at the age of 91.

Odile Dodge was born during the great St. Louis tornado of 1896. The diapers that had been so lovingly hemmed by her mother (the custom in those days) had been scattered by the high winds.

The unfriendly winds that swept through my mother's home at birth were surpassed 35 years later by the unfriendly winds of financial adversity that swept through her home when she was a young mother. The Great Depression of the 1930s called for uncommon courage and commitment, strength and stamina, prayer and perseverance -- and my mother rose to every challenge.

She met life's disappointments with dignity and without complaint, life's reverses with resourcefulness, life's challenges with commitment, and life's uncertainties with the certain knowledge that God is in His Heaven, and that everlasting life awaits those who keep His Commandments.

Fortunately, as a young woman before her marriage, my mother had prepared herself for life. She had received her Bachelor's Degree from Washington University (a coed university) in St. Louis in 1920, plus another degree in Library Science. So, when the need arose, she was able to serve for 25 years as the Librarian at the St. Louis Art Museum.

Odile Stewart was a remarkable role model for her daughters. She taught us high standards of duty, honor, and family. By example, she taught us respect for eternal verities, and for the essential place of beauty and tradition in our daily lives. She taught us a sense of mission, of heritage and history.

There wasn't any financial security in the thirties and forties, but Odile Stewart gave her children something far more important. She gave us a home with emotional security based on a loving, lifetime marriage to my father, Bruce Stewart, and an abiding faith in Jesus Christ.

By example, my mother taught her children lifetime habits of industriousness, that is, of making full use of the few precious years we have on this earth, in order to fulfill God's mission for our lives. She set noble goals, and she worked tirelessly for their achievement.

In her spare hours, after grueling working days, she wrote a cultural history of St. Louis. Still in manuscript, we hope some day to publish it.

The current trendy pursuit of ""equality'' would have had no meaning in my mother's life. She, like other successful women, was too busy achieving and putting real meaning into life to be diverted into a dead-end dialogue about the alleged oppression of women in America.