



## Interview with Author Frances Hesselbein

Many times you were “the first women who” served in a particular position – i.e., “first woman in 40 years to serve as chairman of the United Way Campaign,” etc. How did this affect your leadership performance in these situations?

Serving as “the first woman” always added a special dimension to my determination to serve in a way that had no emphasis on gender – only on the quality of my performance. I was never a “woman leader,” I was always “a leader who is a woman,” if you want to add gender as a consideration.

Why did your grandmother, Mama Wicks, have such a powerful influence upon your career, your life?

My grandmother had a powerful influence upon my life and work because she was a perfect role model for me growing up. She was an inspiring example of an adult who lived her values. She lived the advice she gave.

How has your family’s long history in the military, from the American Revolution to today, influenced the way you’ve lived your life, the way you choose where and how you volunteer your time, today?

I grew up with deep respect for the military because of the love of country and the sacrifices generations on both sides of my family made. “When called, we go.” To this day, in the military or not, I feel that “to serve is to live”.

Peter Drucker wrote about, spoke about, and chose you as President and CEO of the Peter Drucker Foundation. What are the two most powerful messages he shared with you?

“Think first, speak last.” “The leader of the future asks; the leader of the past tells. Ask, don’t tell.” Peter F. Drucker

You write that your last year as CEO of the Girl Scouts of the USA was the most exuberant year of your 13 years as CEO of the largest organization for girls and women in the world. That is very unusual. What made this time so “exuberant?”

That is when we came to see ourselves as “one great Movement,” not as over 3,200,000 members in 325 separate Girl Scout Councils, and the National Organization apart. “We are one great Movement” became our battle cry.

We had achieved the highest membership and the greatest diversity in our history. Our program for girls was highly contemporary, heavy on math, science, technology, and the leadership learning opportunities for adults was equally exemplary.

The board and staff saw themselves in a remarkable partnership – no “we/them” friction. Peter Drucker once said as he was leaving our Girl Scout Headquarters in New York; standing in our lobby, “I can tell a great deal about an organization from its headquarters.” (He had been in our building, all day.) He went on, “In this building the culture is palpable. There is little tension, and no meanness.” As I was leaving, I had little pewter “pinboxes” made for management staff. On the lid was the Girl Scout name, logo, date and, “Thank you for keeping the faith.”