

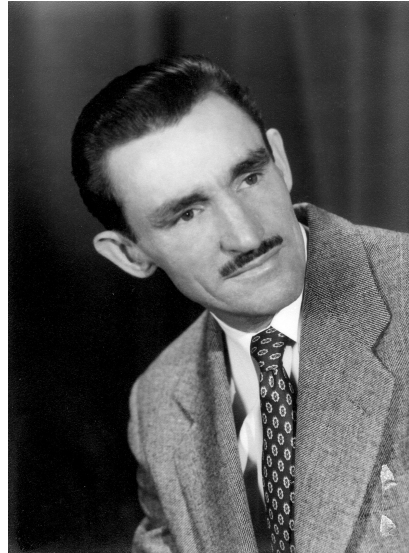
**Acceptance Speech
Mary J. Rouse Award
NAEA Women's Caucus, 2011**

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Thank you very much for this acknowledgement. I'm thrilled and honored to join the ranks of those who have received this award previously, including many of my dear ones from Indiana University, where I received my doctorate in 2001. I feel very fortunate to be a part of a wonderful community of colleagues nurtured and guided by our professional mentor, Enid Zimmerman. I appreciate you all so much for filling me with inspiration and admiration and for being so mutually supportive. I have to thank my littermate Marjorie Manifold, especially, for nominating me for this award.



I want to acknowledge as well other professional mentors and colleagues who have shared their knowledge and experience and taught me so much. I am also compelled to recognize some of my personal friends who have motivated and encouraged me along the way. I apologize for these montages [omitted], because each of these people are very important to me, but I want to use the majority of my short time here acknowledging the person who was my very first professional guide and remains one today: my mom, Iris Davenport.



When these photos were taken, in 1953, my mother had been an attorney with a firm in Atlanta for three years, one of an elite handful of women in Georgia who passed the bar in that era. She was about to marry my father, Frederick St. John Davenport, a civil engineer, and create a life that would pave the way for young urban professionals long before that term was invented.

I didn't really ever know the woman depicted here – I have only heard stories. She grew up on a farm in South Georgia, one of nine children and the first to go to college. She was valedictorian of her class and attended business school before marrying at the age of 19 and having my older brother. Soon, she was divorced and on her own. She moved to Atlanta where, as a single mother, she raised her son, worked full-time, put herself through law school at night, all while buying a house and putting her younger brother through Georgia Tech University. She was a real go-getter! And she continued to be after she met and married my dad.



She continued in her career as an attorney through the birth of their first daughter in 58, and my birth in 64, only deciding to retire when the opportunity presented itself for the family to travel around the world and live abroad because of my father's work. Mom planned the journey to visit all of the places she had always read about: the Taj Mahal, the Great Pyramids of Egypt, the Acropolis, the Eiffel Tower, the Ginza, the volcanoes of Hawaii, etc. She and my father managed to do all this with a toddler in tow. Although I remember nothing of this trip and have only fading photographs to document my presence in these places, I am fairly confident that the seeds for my international interests were planted at this time.

Unfortunately, within a couple years of our return to the states, my father was killed in an automobile accident, leaving my mom emotionally devastated, a single mother again, but with less strength to start again. The woman I grew up with struggled for years with her loss, not only of her beloved Fred, but also of her sense of self. Nevertheless, she dispensed what guidance she could to her girls and in her later years has regained much of her feisty personality. These days, although she suffers from dementia, she is cheerful and fun and up for almost anything.



For instance, when I told her about this award and told her that I wanted to share some of her key words of wisdom, at first she was reluctant, but then she agreed to let me film her so that she could be here with me in a virtual sense if not in a physical sense. If you don't mind, I want to quickly share a few video clips with words of wisdom that Mama always shared with me, words that have contributed both to my professional development and my personal sense of self.

"Use your head! Smarts don't depend on being male or female. Be all you can be!"

You bet! Indeed, Mama hammered home the importance of education and career and so both my sister and I knew from very young ages that we would ultimately have to get doctorates lest we disappoint mama!

“Be a professional! Have a career!”

I did! I wound up with a career that I love! Mama was a second generation feminist and wanted me to know that although traditional women’s roles are valuable despite being under-valued, there were other options in life! At the same time, being a southern woman, mom was neither hard-edged nor confrontational. In fact, the most oft repeated phrase, then and now, is:



“Be sweet!”

I try, Mama, I try! To me this meant: you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. She always taught me to treat folks with the same courtesy and respect and kindness that you would like in return. I like to think I treat others that way, and especially my students who may not have models of “sweet” in their lives. Of course, every now and then you run into folks who are just impossible to be sweet to! Mom’s advice then:

“Illegitamus Non Carborundum.”

I was the only student in second grade who would spout this phrase at opportune moments. This means, of course, “don’t let the bastards grind you down!” -- a quote which has also served me well, helping me rise above the pettiness and drama of others and move on to find solutions rather than wallow in problems.

And here is one last bit of wisdom from Mama Iris:

“It’ll never be noticed on a galloping horse.”

This one was passed down from Grandmama, also a very strong southern woman. To me this means that I should not allow myself to become paralyzed by the need for perfection. To keep moving and doing and working and creating is the important thing, because that is what shapes the impression you will leave upon others, not whether your sweater matched your trousers or if your shirt is tucked in. In other words, don’t sweat the small stuff.

I wish my mom could have been here today, but since she couldn’t, she asked me to record one last message:

“I’m very proud of you for winning this award. I know you’ve worked very hard! I love you!”

This message of love is the most important thing I have heard throughout my life. This, too, shapes my interactions with others, particularly with my students, and especially with my mom. I am proud of who she is and has been, and I love her very much.



She now lives with me, and has recently been diagnosed with a rare type of cancer, so I don’t know how much longer I will have the pleasure of learning from her and caring for her. But I

know that as I continue down my professional path and personal path, I will always have my mom's love and support as my foundation.



Thank you for letting me honor her in accepting this honor from you. Goodnight.