Building a fulfilling career: Balancing personal and professional life

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Maryellen Giger’s Career
• Academic medical physicist – Professor at the University of Chicago
• Research
  – Grant-funded lab on CAD and quantitative image analysis
  – Ph.D. students, undergrads, post-docs, senior researchers
• Education
  – Teach in our CAMPEP-accredited Ph.D. program
  – Advise graduate, undergrad, medical students...
• Administration
  – Director, CAMPEP-accredited Ph.D. program
  – Director, UC Imaging Research Institute
  – Vice-Chair of Radiology for Basic Science Research
  – Chair and/or member of various university committees, etc.
• Member
  – AAPM, RSNA, SPIE, ...
  – National Academy of Engineering

Giger’s Involvement in AAPM
• Commission on Accreditation of Medical Physics Training Programs in 1987-1992
• MEDICAL PHYSICS associate editor 1995-2007
• Program committee as co-director of AAPM annual meeting for 1998 and 1999
• Board Member
• Treasurer
• 2008 President-Elect, 2009 President, and 2010 Chair of the Board

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Hopefully you picked a career so that your job is not a job but a passion.

If you like your job, you won’t work a day in your life!

“And to think they pay us to do this!”

Building a fulfilling career: Balancing personal and professional life

• It is difficult
• It is possible
• It can be enjoyable
• It can be fulfilling
• It can benefit your family, especially your children
Caveat

• I was raised with four brothers
• I was raised gender blind, race blind, etc.
• I never admitted there was a glass ceiling
• I progressed through life as a person (not thinking as a women in a man’s world)
• I assumed the men also saw all others as people
• And so I just “did”

However – Looking back

• I did modify my life and work to “fit” into a man’s world - subconsciously
• When I became engaged (1982), I told my advisor, but then I also mentioned that I would not immediately be having children
  – Why did I feel obligated to say that?
  – What this self imposed? Or a sign of the times?
  – My self confidence was not strong enough
• But that was then, now I have the self confidence
• So, do what you have to do to have a strong self confidence and don’t make excuses

Mentors

• You don’t find a mentor, they just happen!
  – Role models who are willing to communicate with you
  – Sounding boards
• Start communicating with some senior folks

Balancing personal and professional life

Note: my following thoughts concern both personal and professional life.

This is a conversation, not a lecture.
Looking Back  
(since I don't think I realized all of these 25 years ago!)  

- The “SWITCH”  
- Work hard  
- Be creative  
- Don’t miss opportunities  
- Show that you can get “things” done in an effective and efficient manner  
- Share and be nice  
- “Pay it forward”  
- “Don’t sweat the small stuff”

Looking Back  

- The “SWITCH”  
  - Early mentor told me that her entire post doc salary went to child care. If you don’t feel comfortable with who is watching your children, how can you work productively?  
  - Be glad when your children want to be with the childcare provider  
    - Work hard  
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Looking Back

- The “SWITCH”
- Work hard
- Be creative
- **Don’t miss opportunities**
  - Careful what you say no to; You might not be asked again
  - Senior folks – pass a leadership role to a junior person
    - Show that you can get “things” done in an effective and efficient manner
    - Share and be nice
    - “Pay it forward”
    - “Don’t sweat the small stuff”
- **Share and be nice**
  - Everything I learned, I learned in kindergarten
  - Play nice in the sand box; but also stand up for your rights
  - Keep your door “open” for others
  - “Pay it forward”
  - “Don’t sweat the small stuff”

Looking Back

- The “SWITCH”
- Work hard
- Be creative
- **Don’t miss opportunities**
- **Show that you can get “things” done in an effective and efficient manner**
  - If you want to get something done, give it to a busy person
  - “Just do it”; “Walk the talk”
  - I tend to be a “behind the scene” person
    - Share and be nice
    - “Pay it forward”
    - “Don’t sweat the small stuff”
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• “Don’t sweat the small stuff”
  – Don’t worry about small set backs; keep moving forward
  – Many problems arise purely from a slight miscommunication
  – Worry less
  – Don’t worry about the dust under the couch!
    • It is all about setting priorities

Best Payback

When a student/trainee becomes a colleague!

Family

• Have them understand your job and make them a part of your work life
  – Have them work next to you at home
  – Show them how you work hard & they will learn by example
  – Include them in lab lunches and have lab picnics at your home
  – Bring them to AAPM and other meetings

• Take time off to go to their events
  – Even if you have to drive an hour for an hour-long kindergarten play, and then drive an hour back to work
  – Even if you have to stay up late
  – Be the girl scout leader
    • also when you are in charge, you get to set the schedule!

• Be there for them

Now - how to get involved!

• Go ask a senior person on how you can involved
• Attend committee meetings as a guest
• Volunteer and actually contribute
• Network during AAPM events
• Email the current President-Elect with your interests
  • You will eventually be known, and then asked to join more committees!
  • And when you are senior, give others that break!
So Which Committees, for example..

- You are the future, technology keeps expanding
  - Join a subcommittee or working group of the EMCC – Electronic Media Coordinating Committee
- You have concerns and questions on the clinical practice of medical physics
  - Join a subcommittee or working group under the Professional Council
- You perform research in a specific scientific area of medical physics
  - Join a subcommittee or working group under Science Council
- You are very interested in education of your students and/or residents
  - Join a subcommittee or working group under Education Council

New Subcommittee on the Professional Development of Women in Medical Physics

- Co-Chairs: Jean Moran and Nicole Ranger
- Charge: To assess professional challenges unique to women medical physicists and develop additional resources for meeting these challenges.
- 20% of AAPM members are women
- Balancing professional and personal lives

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I wish I had heard these talks 25 years ago!