‘Good Girls Revolt’ details groundbreaking sex discrimination case against Newsweek

By Kathryn Reed

Where would women journalists be today if it weren’t for a group from *Newsweek* who decided to sue their bosses for discriminating against them?

That’s a hard question to answer. What is easier to discern is their lawsuit had a lasting impact on how men in newsrooms treat women.

“The Good Girls Revolt: How the Women of Newsweek Sued Their Bosses and Changed the Workplace” is a book by Lynn Povich that came out in 2012. She was one of the women who sued.

It was a long, arduous process that in March 1970 started with 46 staff members filing a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission saying they had routinely been discriminated against when it came to hiring and promotions.



Secretaries and researchers. That’s about all women were good for, according to most men in that era.

Considering Katharine Graham was president of the company that owned *Newsweek*, one might think the women would have had an easier time. Not so. Povich said Graham asked which side she

was supposed to be on.

It took multiple complaints to be filed for the culture to finally change in earnest.

A big sea change was when Povich in 1975 became the magazine's first female senior editor. But the fight wasn't over. When she found out her male colleagues were making more money, she fought for and won equal pay.

Pay equity in most every profession is still an issue between the genders – with women making pennies on the dollar compared to their male counterparts.

I remember in 1988 when I was hired as a reporter at the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* right out of college that I found out how much a male colleague was making – someone who was hired after me. I was making $7 an hour and the new guy $8.50. I confronted the managing editor at the time. He said he thought the new reporter had a family so he was getting paid more than me.

Being in my early 20s, I knew this wasn't right, but I didn't know what to do. If only there had been a "good girls revolt" at the *Trib* – I would have been part of it.

While it's still a male-dominated profession and one with plenty of testosterone, there are women on the mastheads of magazines and newspapers like never before.

Still, the book points out how women – even at *Newsweek* – who as recently as 2007 were not on equal ground with the men.

Povich does an excellent job of crafting a story that, while historical in many ways, is relevant today. She interviewed dozens of people instead of merely relying on her memory. A nice addition is at the end of the book she gives a synopsis of where the key people are today.

"The Good Girls Revolt" is a must-read for any woman of any age who works as a journalist and for those who are concerned

about equal rights among the sexes, especially in the workplace.