

## **Lessons on the Big Idea and Public Relations: Reflections on the 50-Year Career of Charlotte Klein**

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*Called the father of advertising by some, David Ogilvy is credited with coining the phrase “the big idea”: one that gets noticed, remembered, and inspires action. This paper explores the life and career of Charlotte Klein, a 20<sup>th</sup> century public relations executive who started her career with UPI and the film industry in the 1940s and who went on to work on such accounts as the Ideal Toy Company, French couture and champagne, the government of Israel, and PBS to name a few. Along the way, her self-confidence and early work in Hollywood helped her develop “the big ideas” that served her clients, society, and the profession. Using in-depth interviews and primary and secondary documents, the authors discuss Klein’s big ideas that resulted in such outcomes as creating and promoting the first anthropologically correct black doll, building public support for the young state of Israel, and founding the U.S. Women’s Hall of Fame. In addition, we explore her influence as an early woman leader in PR professional societies and the gender-related challenges she faced in her career. As such, the paper helps document and contribute to our knowledge of a rich but little documented era in public relations history and records successful strategies that remain relevant to practitioners today.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“To honor in perpetuity those women,  
citizens of the United States of America whose contributions to  
the arts, athletics, business, education, government,  
the humanities, philanthropy and science,  
have been the greatest value for the development of their country.”*

-----National Women’s Hall Fame (“Our mission,” n.d.), Seneca Falls, New York

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Although public relations practice arguably can be traced back to the days of Aristotle and the practice of persuasive rhetoric, the profession itself is generally recognized to have come of age in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1923 Edward Bernays coined the term “public relations counsel” in his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* and taught the first college course devoted to the public relations field at New York University (Hanson, 2008). Scholars have documented in textbooks and literature a number of public relations practitioners of the mid-twentieth century. Not surprisingly, the majority of these histories have been about the men who dominated the era’s executive suites. A few, including Suzannah Patterson (2009), Karen Miller (1997) and Margot Lamme (2007), have documented women’s contributions, and Patterson “encourages scholars to join the development of the history of women using public relations” (2009, p. 14).

This charge can be challenging, given the scarcity of early women PR executives in the profession’s first decades and the nature of the business itself, where practitioners project the limelight on their clients, but remain in the background (Gower, 2001). However, this paper helps answer Patterson’s call. The information was obtained through telephone and personal in-depth interviews with the subject and by e-mail and fax correspondence with her over a five-year period by two researchers. (Personal interviews with Charlotte Klein were conducted at her apartment on East 36<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, October 25, 2004; January 6, 2005; June 12, 2008; and April 20, 2009. Telephone interviews were conducted October 24, 2008 and February 14, 2009. E-mail and fax correspondence occurred periodically from October 2004 to April 2009.)

“The life history, then, exists somewhere between history and memory,” says scholar William Tierney (2000, p. 545) regarding such qualitative research methods. For this article, information that surfaced repeatedly was included, and member checks were conducted by verifying quotes and interview information with the participant and through secondary sources when possible.

“History left too long unrecorded will eventually be lost,” writes Patterson (2009, p. 14). Scholar Jacquie L’Etang (2008) notes, “Since the past is gone, historians can only pick over the remains, eye-witness accounts and oral history interviews which all provide authenticity—but only from the point of view of that particular actor” (p. 324). This article adds to our knowledge of 20<sup>th</sup> century public relations practice through the experience of one woman’s lengthy and noteworthy career. In addition, it is oral history recorded from multiple personal interviews, which include the benefits of personal reflection and hindsight, rather than information gleaned only from documents and third-party recollections, which dominate our literature about women practitioners.

### **Journalist and Publicist**

The early 1940s were an interesting time for young women coming of age in America. With multitudes of men away at war, opportunities that likely would not have been available to them only a few years prior, now were possible. Charlotte Conrad Klein, a sociology and psychology major at University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1944, is a case in point. She was among a group of three women editors of UCLA’s

college newspaper, *The Daily Bruin*, in 1943–1944—only the second time women had served in that position at any of the school's newspapers, dating back to their origin in 1919 (Garrigues, 2003). But it seems for Klein that such leadership was not unusual, for she had long been primed for a man's world.

Born June 20 in Detroit to Jewish parents Joseph and Bessie (Brown) Klein (Who's Who, 2008) in the same year Bernays' book and public relations course were introduced, Charlotte was the last baby of her Canadian-raised homemaker mother, who gave birth to her when she was 31. Klein's two sisters, Adelaide and Beatrice, were 13 and 10 years older than she, respectively. Her mother told Charlotte she had felt guilty and apologized to her father after Charlotte's birth because the baby had not been the longed-for son. But Klein's father had not been disappointed. An auctioneer who owned his own business, he often traveled around the city and took his youngest daughter with him. Klein attributes this early travel, in part, to her later willingness to travel widely and to take risks.

"That's the kind of man he was," Klein said. "I really loved him." Still, "I became a tomboy," she continued. "I tried my best, you know, to be the kind of person that they were looking for. And so I was always setting myself up to compete with boys."

When Klein was 11, her family moved to Los Angeles, where her sister Beatrice, a talented tap dancer, had moved to try to break into movies. Instead, when she was 21, Beatrice met and married the eldest son of the well-known Schwab's Pharmacy family, and Charlotte worked as a cashier at the legendary store while in college. According to Klein, Beatrice was her father's favorite and would call him crying that she was homesick. So, Klein said, their father moved the family to be close to her.

In L.A. Klein received a scholarship to and was graduated in 1941 from a private school, called the Cumnock School, where she wrote for the newsletter. She enrolled in UCLA the same year.

At this time, Klein said, UCLA did not offer a journalism major, and she'd never even heard the term public relations. Instead, she started as an English major, and focused her energies on the college newspaper. As editor of the *Daily Bruin*, she wrote an editorial every day and also served as a campus correspondent for *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. It was this experience, she said, that helped her get work as a United Press International (UPI) correspondent upon graduating in 1945. Of course, countless other early PR practitioners, both men and women, also began their professional careers as writers, including Ivy Lee (Hanson, 2008), Doris Fleischman (Henry, 1997), and Lorena Hickok (Martinelli & Bowen, 2009).

"At UCLA, just before we would graduate, they would tell us how to behave when we were looking for a job," Klein remembered. "The instructions to women were that you must wear your gloves—little white gloves—and you must wear your hat. And I wanted a journalistic job, you know. And they wouldn't hire me at any of the newspapers. And so I went to United Press with my little white gloves and my little hat,

and of course they never wore clothes like that. . . . They were really hard working and so forth. And he [Mr. Swisher, the head of UPI in Los Angeles] looked at me . . . and he said, 'You know, I would like to hire you, but just by looking at you, I really don't feel that you would be that comfortable here. We just wear any old clothes. . . .' And I had to beg him to hire me. I tore off my gloves and said, 'I'm ready to work!'"

Starting at \$27 a week and still living at home, Klein would have to leave very early in the morning to get to work by 6 a.m., traveling through downtown Los Angeles, where she would often encounter winos in the streets. Being a woman alone on the dark city streets made her feel vulnerable, she said, and she carried a knife. But she never shared this vulnerability with her mother, for fear her mother would worry or want her to quit. This early work at UPI involved giving the farm report and the price of eggs for the Egg Council, but she soon began writing news for the print and radio wire service as well.

Although she regularly reported news about the war, she recalled she could not use the word "blood" in her copy, for radio announcers were not allowed to say it on the air. In addition, she said, "In those days, when crime was written about, they would always say, 'Joe Jones, black,' 'a black' or 'a Negro did such and such,' but they never did it for any other type [of person]. So I used to omit that. I would just say, 'Joe Jones.' I felt, you know, because I was a sociologist, I felt that that was a very unfair thing to do. I was conscious of profiling, I guess, very early."

She also remembers receiving publicity releases. "I'd throw them right in the wastebasket," she said. "I would hardly even look at them. . . . We covered the news; so that was my first opinion." Little did she know then that public relations would dominate her professional life, and that through it, she would help build institutions and propel social causes.

Klein left UPI after a year, in 1946, to write for a CBS radio show called "Ona Munson in Hollywood." Although Munson had played Belle Watling, the madam who was a friend of Rhett Butler in "Gone with the Wind," she had never become a star; instead, she interviewed such celebrities. Klein would secure the guests and write the background material for Munson. This job gave Klein more insight into the ubiquitous world of Hollywood publicity, and when the show ended in 1947, Klein left to join Selznick Studios in Culver City, California. Run by David O. Selznick, who had produced "Gone with the Wind," the studio allowed Klein to pursue big ideas.

"It was great because you had almost an unending budget to develop all kinds of ideas for movies," Klein said. "That was a fascinating time, and I was a junior publicist. So I got to brainstorm all these wonderful kinds of things for movies. . . . We had complete open possibilities for any kind of PR and stunts, publicity of all kinds because they had such big budgets. So you could dream. And, you know, they could make your dreams come true."

During this time, before television, special events were used to get word and name recognition for one's clients, she continued. In 1946, when she was assigned to publicize the new Selznick film "Duel in the Sun" (which starred Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotton, Jennifer Jones and Lillian Gish), she thought of the intense rivalry of the UCLA–University of Southern California (USC) football game—itsself a "duel in the sun." She approached the schools' athletic departments, which organized student placard cheers, and suggested they hold up placards to spell "Duel In the Sun" during the game. She then interested a *LIFE Magazine* photographer in snapping the photo, which ran nationwide, Klein recalled.

While at Selznick, Klein also had an idea for an early form of product placement. When she was assigned to promote the 1948 movie "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House," starring Cary Grant and Myrna Loy, cigarette giant Philip Morris had an advertising campaign that showed people telephoning for Philip Morris, Klein said.

"In those days, in the hotels, bellboys would shout the name of a person who had a telephone call. So I suggested that we call different hotels at dinner time and other times and ask for Blandings. So all throughout the city they were paging Blandings and, of course, the movie was opening and it was 'Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House.'

"After that was successful, the head of PR at Selznick asked that I do a column to be bylined by Shirley Temple. At this time, she [Temple] was in her 20s and Selznick had the rights to her appearances," Klein said. So Klein ghostwrote a column for the famed actress. It appeared in the *Los Angeles Examiner* and was called "What Every Young Bride Should Know," the name of her new movie. Being a pregnant young wife herself, Temple seemed a win for both the studio and William Randolph Hearst, who owned the *Examiner*, Klein said.

"So I would go over to Shirley's house and interview her," Klein recalled. "She would travel a lot; she would tell me about her adventures and experiences, and I would write it up as a column." However, the column was not long-lived. Once Temple had her baby in 1948, she was not considered to be a "young bride" anymore.

After Selznick Studios went out of business in 1949 (with Selznick and his then-wife, star Jennifer Jones, relocating to London, where they continued to make movies), Klein continued her work as a publicist at Maury Foadare and Associates, a firm that promoted actors, actresses, producers and writers—including star Danny Thomas—in part by giving information to gossip columnists. She also got to work at the Academy Awards, identifying for reporters the stars who were coming down the red carpet. Klein said that it was common practice to make up information about and quotes for their celebrity clients, who would read and approve them prior to release. But with her journalistic training, Klein said she felt uncomfortable with this practice.

Luckily, she didn't have to feel uncomfortable for long. By 1951, the new technology of television was gaining popularity, and it was based in New York. Thomas

was leaving for New York, as were many other previously West Coast–based entertainers who looked to break into the new business.

Although still in her 20s and having never lived away from home, Klein convinced her boss at Foladare and Associates to allow her to open a branch office in New York City. But it was not really television that interested Klein. Instead, she was a self-proclaimed Francophile, who had long harbored a dream to move to France and write for a living. New York was a lot closer to France than California, she figured. After she'd sold her car and settled in the City, Klein said her boss had second thoughts about the costs of such expansion and told her to return. She refused, instead obtaining a job with Edward Gottlieb & Associates in 1951, a three-year-old firm with no connection to Hollywood.<sup>1</sup>

### **“The Clean Side of PR”**

Although Klein's prior PR work had been pure publicity, Gottlieb appreciated her sociology degree and her newspaper and radio experience, Klein said. He too had worked for a news service, INS, from 1934 to 1940, before joining Carl Byoir and Associates as an account executive (Who's Who, 1988). Klein was pleased to be out of the entertainment business and in the “clean side of PR,” she said. More importantly, Gottlieb taught her to think strategically for clients over a longer period—six months to a year—to facilitate longer term client business, and her view of public relations changed. No longer was it about a quick stunt or mere publicity. It became about servicing her clients well, helping them to achieve their objectives, and making a difference. She would remain with Gottlieb for 11 years, until 1962.

“When I started there, we were just eight people altogether,” Klein said. “It grew to about 45 people and was one of the top-rated mid-size firms. Ed made me one of the first female vice presidents in PR in New York.”

Although she'd left the world of films some 3,000 miles away, Klein's studio work nonetheless continued to serve her in terms of big ideas. For example, one of her first accounts at Gottlieb and Associates was the Ideal Toy Corporation. In the early 1950s, Klein said, “a fiery, red-headed white woman” in Florida named Sara Lee Creech was disturbed that black children had to play with white dolls. Only “mammy” dolls were available then, or white dolls that had been painted brown (“Doll,” 1951). In response to Creech's activism, a respected sculptor named Sheila Burlingame, who had created a number of black statues, was enlisted to develop an anthropologically correct prototype for the toy company (Ibid).

A natural PR practitioner, Klein did her research. She took the prototype on the New York subway through Harlem, carrying the doll in her arms to gauge people's reactions. A black woman approached her, curious to get a closer look at the doll, Klein said. When the woman saw it, she said the doll looked dead because of its grayish color. Klein rushed back to Ideal's management to suggest they enlist experts to decide on a more natural-looking color. Still thinking big, she approached Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a well-known civil rights advocate, and the former First Lady agreed to

participate. Roosevelt convened a “color jury,” by inviting a number of famous African Americans of the day, including the first black player in major league baseball, Jackie Robinson, and his wife, Rachel Isum, to her home for a reception.

Despite these efforts, Klein said she had to continue to urge Ideal’s president to proceed with the doll’s production because he believed blacks would not have the money to purchase it. However, Klein persisted. With the support of the president’s brother-in-law, Klein helped convince the company head by saying she could obtain a lot of good publicity for Ideal based on Roosevelt’s involvement. As she knew from her Hollywood work, celebrity activity and prominent persons make newsworthy copy.

Through her work, articles about the doll’s development appeared in *Life Magazine*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Ebony*, as well as in newspapers around the country. Roosevelt (1951) wrote about the doll in her syndicated column, “My Day”: “At 5 o’clock a number of people were kind enough to come in to tea with me to see a Negro doll, made by the Ideal Toy Corp. ... Certainly, any child would love one of these baby dolls. They have the loveliest expressions and are beautifully made.” *Time* carried a photograph of Roosevelt with the doll and said, in part: “In Manhattan, after a period of long and careful study, a panel of judges including Dr. Ralph Bunche selected a model for what will become the first ‘anthropologically correct Negro Doll’” (“Mind,” 1951). (In 1950, Bunche became the first African American to win a Nobel Peace Prize.)

The doll, named Saralee after its creator, was popular: “Stores reported it was selling unusually well and noted that the doll is so cute that it is enjoying a brisk trade not only among Negro children but among white children as well,” says a *Life Magazine* article of the day (“Doll,” 1951, p. 6). A November 1951 *Newsweek* issue featured a photograph of Roosevelt holding up the doll, and said, in part: “‘They are a lesson in equality for little children,’ said Mrs. Roosevelt, who has ordered 500 for Christmas” (“Negro,” 1951). In October 2009, Klein was formally recognized for donating the doll and copies of its major published publicity to the U.S. National Archives; they are housed in the Eleanor Roosevelt Wing of the FDR Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York.

However, despite this campaign’s success and its personal rewards, Klein’s persistent desire to make a difference caused her to consider leaving Gottlieb and Associates in 1955 to take a job at the United Nations.

### **Realized Dreams**

“I didn’t want to keep pushing products,” Klein explained. “I wanted something more socially significant.” Knowing her Jewish background and that she had been president of the Junior Hadassah, Klein recalled Gottlieb enticed her to stay by asking: “Is the government of Israel socially significant enough for you?” Indeed, it was.

“The image of Israel [in the U.S.] at that time [1955] was a little country with its hand out, and they really needed funds to continue their country,” Klein said. “And so we set out to change that image.” Klein approached *LIFE Magazine*’s editorial board to

convince them to hold a meeting with Israel's prime minister. It was a bold move, given the hostilities between the new state and Egypt, where *LIFE's* correspondent was based.

"They had to get to know [the Prime Minister], and it was very hard to do," Klein said. "I had to say to the Prime Minister, 'When they say this is off the record, they do mean it; it will be off the record.' And that was true in those days," she added. "So he agreed to answer any question they asked as long as it was off the record." As a result, the magazine sent its first correspondent to Israel and wrote a favorable editorial. The agency also sent people across the country on media tours to speak on behalf of Israel.

On April 13, 1955, Gottlieb sent Klein a memo that read:

On the eve of your departure for Israel I want to take the occasion again to tell you that I think you are doing an outstanding job and that you continue to amaze me with your capacity for thought, planning and work all in one coupled with a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility.

Keep in mind that your trip to Israel should not be entirely devoted to business. Nothing is so important on occasions of this kind as the need for one to take some time away from work to relax and to clear ones [sic] brain in part of the responsibilities in favor of fun and the needs of a social life.

Later in her career, in the early 1980s, Klein would work for the Jerusalem Foundation, which seeks to unite Jews and Arabs. For that organization, "We set up our own agency people in Israel to feed us photographs and material [for news stories]," she explained.

Also in later years, Klein said, "he [Gottlieb] apologized to me. He said, 'I feel that I've interfered with your personal life.' And that's what he meant: that I had never married. I mean, I had plenty of dates. I did have to travel a lot in my PR career. Oh, when I went to Israel, I got more marriage proposals than I could count. And the reason I didn't marry was because none of them were from love." She continued: "And, you know, there were men studying to be doctors, lawyers, or so forth, and they wanted to get to the U.S., and they said it was my *duty* to marry them. But that finished that," she said with a smile.

Klein's longstanding desire to go to France finally was realized through her work as well. Gottlieb had started looking for new clients in other countries, Klein explained, while French companies were looking to enter new markets. As a result, the firm had four French accounts by the late 1950s: cognac, champagne, leather gloves, and couture fashion. Gottlieb kept the cognac account for himself, but gave the others to Klein, and she finally traveled to France.

It was also during this time—in 1959—that Gottlieb’s life changed forever, and life at the firm was altered too. On February 4, just before midnight, Gottlieb was on an American Airlines Chicago to New York business flight, when the Electra turbo-jet plane crashed in New York’s East River (“Airliner,” 1959). Sixty-five people perished; only 8 survived.<sup>2</sup> Although Gottlieb was among the survivors, he was hospitalized for months at Bellevue Hospital in New York with severe leg injuries, Klein said. However, he didn’t stop for a minute, she recalled, and they held their staff meetings in his hospital room. Although he learned to walk again, Klein said he relied on a wheelchair and a cane for the rest of his life.

Klein credits Gottlieb for her own successful approach to clients, one that she would employ with confidence when opening her own firm some years later. “It was a calm approach, a humble approach, but with outstanding results,” she said. “He was always my destiny,” she continued. “He kept turning up [in my life].” If not for Gottlieb’s efforts, she said she would have left the public relations profession. “He had very high standards,” and I was able to “practice my journalism in doing PR.”

Gottlieb’s charm—“the French loved him,” Klein said—no doubt combined with her understanding of the power of celebrity and big ideas, paid off for the firm and its clients. For example, she used a former U.S. Olympic swimming champion, who was then married to a Frenchman and living in France, as the model and media tour spokesperson for their client’s novel washable leather gloves. She brought in television cameras to film the former Olympian swimming in a hotel pool in the morning with her gloves on, then had the media back for tea later in the day when the model wore the same gloves, now dry.

She partnered her French clients with another Gottlieb client, Cheseborough Ponds, which wanted to elevate the stature of its cosmetics line. Klein suggested they do that by sponsoring the first U.S.–televised French couture fashion show. The sponsor and the mystique of French elegance interested CBS, and the firm secured famed actor Yves Montand to serve as the show’s host.

Klein adeptly identified these clients’ target audience—upper income women—and how to reach them: through fashion shows and charitable organizations. She organized what we’d today call Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities by partnering with community groups, such as the Junior League and the Damon Runyon Cancer Fund in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, to host fashion shows that paired the one-of-a-kind couture with French champagne in these cities to raise money for charitable causes.

Klein traveled from France with the fashion designers and models on the new U.S.S. France, and a charitable event was held aboard the ship to benefit the French American Friendship Fund. First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy served as honorary chair of the fund and thus her name was associated with the event. Klein also employed a beautiful French baroness as a spokesperson for the French products, and Klein said her beauty and perfect English made their television media tour a great success.

In 1965, Klein joined Harshe-Rotman and Druck, Inc. The firm was founded in 1961 by Morris Rotman and Kalman Druck and grew to become the sixth largest in the country before being acquired by Ruder Finn in the early 1980s (“Kalman B. Druck,” 2006).<sup>3</sup> While a senior vice president there, Klein represented the United Negro College Fund and the First Women’s Bank, among other minority clients. She remained with the firm until 1978. The firm’s Midwest Division president at the time, Louis C. Williams, who now chairs his own PR research and counseling firm, remembers Klein being revered within the agency for her experience and creativity. “She was a queen there,” Williams recalled.

During this time, Klein also lectured at Boston University and Pace College and taught a course called “Making It In a Man’s World” at the New School for Social Research in New York. According to an article about the course, it involved “women’s ambitions in their careers and ways in which to deal with the obstacles they must face in human relations” (Hennessy, 1971).

“We’re in a low bargaining position,” Klein says in the article. “Corporations will say a man has a family and needs more money. Or they will say they are afraid you’ll have a child and leave.” The piece ends with the following paragraph:

“There’s nothing militant about Charlotte Klein regardless of her success in business. She’s attractive, feminine and realistic—and the ideal person to be giving a course on how without bitterness and with honest self-appraisal a woman can make it in a man’s world” (Hennessy, 1971). Klein later taught public relations as an adjunct at New York University. She taught her final course there, public relations ethics, during fall semester 2001.

### **An Enduring Legacy**

Klein’s career was rich indeed—far more so than a single article about her can relay. She owned her own agency, Charlotte Klein and Associates, not once, but twice; her first was purchased by Porter Novelli in 1984. She was among the early women presidents of the New York Chapter of PRSA, and headed a professional networking group in New York called Women Executives (WE) in PR. She championed diversity in the workplace, established the PRSA Task Force on sexual harassment, and was active politically.

She was a member of the International Women’s Forum (IWF), an organization dedicated to “advancing women’s leadership across careers, cultures and continents by connecting the world’s most preeminent women of significant and diverse achievement” (IWF, 2007), serving in leadership roles from 1993 through 2001. As part of this work, she co-chaired a task force on violence against women globally. Part of this effort included creating a hospital brigade to make heads of private NYC hospitals aware of the need to make the identification and treatment of battered women a priority, says an entry about Klein in the book *Feminists Who Changed America* (Love, 2006).

It's clear that she made a difference to her clients, her profession, and society. With all of her accomplishments, however, one of Klein's most enduring has been the work she started during her time as a senior vice president for a woman-owned PR agency, Flanley and Woodward. It was this work that would create a national institution.

It's likely a woman-owned agency appealed to client Purex in 1965, for the detergent company branded itself with the slogan: "Products with a woman's touch." However, unbeknownst to the agency, the company had invested heavily in the 1965 New York World's Fair, creating a Hospitality Center in which women's clubs could meet while visiting the event. But women weren't going to the Fair for meetings, and the company was not getting the traffic—or return on investment—it sought. Around this time Klein remembers seeing New York University's Hall of Fame and noticing there were no women in it. This prompted her to suggest creating a women's Hall of Fame for Purex to sponsor and display at the Fair.

Once again, Klein thought large. She enlisted the daughter of former President Harry Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, to head the nominating committee. Klein arranged for 200 women editors and broadcasters nationwide (media representatives who also would want to cover the story) to vote for the Hall's 20 inductees—10 living and 10 deceased women of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who had made a contribution to society. The first inductees included Margaret Bourke-White, Edna Ferber, Dr. Frances Kelsey, Margaret Chase Smith, Jane Addams, Ethel Barrymore, Evangeline Cory Booth, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dr. Florence Sabin, Eleanor Roosevelt (who received the most votes), Helen Keller, Marian Anderson, Margaret Mead, Rachel Carson, Margaret Sanger, Pearl Buck, Grandma Moses, Amelia Earhart, Babe Didrikson Zaharias and Helen Hayes ("Hall of Fame," 1965). Six of the ten living inductees attended the reception of more than 200 invited guests and print and broadcast media (Klein, 2005).

"Thirty-seven of the nation's major newspapers ran the story on their front pages, most with photos of all 20 inductees," Klein later wrote in a news release (Ibid.). "Many ran editorials, some ran color. All three TV networks ran interviews; AP and UPI covered the story more than once. . . . Traffic [in the Purex hall] increased by 400 percent" (Ibid.).

"The Women's Hall of Fame actually, in a way, was a catalyst of the women's revolution," Klein said. "And of course I am proud of that. And I became a very big feminist myself, even marching down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue with Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug. I was very active in all that, and I helped found the New York branch of NOW [National Organization for Women]."

Four years after the World's Fair, while Klein was working for Harshe-Rotman and Druck, Inc., she was contacted by representatives of Seneca Falls, NY, site of the first Women's Rights Convention in 1848, asking if Purex would continue their sponsorship of the hall there. Purex declined the sponsorship, so Klein, who had originated the hall, gave Seneca Falls permission to take it over, with Purex

management's consent. Since then, key suffragists and outstanding women have been added each year. Today, there are more than 220 women recognized there.

The National Women's Hall of Fame honored Klein in 2005 with its first Keeper of the Flame Award for being the initial hall's creator. The award ceremony was part of a fundraiser for the institution and featured Gloria Steinem, a 1993 hall inductee, as its keynote speaker.

Klein also volunteered her energy and acumen for women's causes. During her vacation time in 1976, Klein worked to set up the Women's Political News Service through the National Women's Political Caucus at the Democratic National Convention in New York. "We had most of the coverage in the media because there was little competition to Carter, so what we were sending out about women was the most newsworthy [material]," she said.

"This gave Bella Abzug and others ammunition to demand 50/50 female/male delegates to future conventions," Klein is quoted as saying (Love, 2006). And, of course, their candidate, Jimmy Carter, went on to be elected President.

Klein would interact with Carter again when she was on the Executive Committee of the American Arbitration Association. She came up with the idea of presenting the President with an International Mediation Medal for his efforts in getting Israel and Egypt to sign a peace treaty. He accepted the award in the White House Oval Office; Klein keeps a photograph of herself taken with him there. More importantly, the association's name was linked with the President's in the resulting media coverage (e.g. Haberman and Krebs, 1979).

One of Klein's major clients was the Annenberg-CPB (Corporation for Public Broadcasting) Project, and despite being an active Democrat, she obtained First Lady Nancy Reagan's commitment to tape an introduction for the public television series on youth drug and alcohol abuse, called "The Chemical People." As a result, Klein was invited to a White House reception with the First Lady.

Klein had worked in public broadcasting previously, from 1978 to 1980, as the director of press and government affairs for WNET, one of the nation's largest public broadcasting stations. She had a staff of 33 and was eager to do something for the community through her work. But she found it to be a "very limited kind of PR work, mainly promoting television programs," she said.

"This was a pretty low time in my career," Klein said. However, it provided the impetus for her to leave the position and start her own agency in 1979, where she got a lot of public television stations as clients.

## **On Her Own**

Although her experience with Gottlieb had given her a lot of confidence, she was still asking people for advice, turning to the Women Executives in Public Relations, to which she had belonged for some time.

One of the founders of the group, Denny Griswold, an accomplished and well respected woman practitioner who co-founded *PR News* in 1944 with her husband, cautioned Klein to get a male partner for her firm. "You won't be successful unless you have a man helping you to be the head of it," Klein recalled Griswold saying. "Well, I'll think about that," Klein said she responded. But she didn't think it was necessary and started Charlotte C. Klein and Associates without a male partner.

Yet Griswold's advice came back to Klein soon afterward, when she went after a large Japanese account. She was advised by another colleague to bring a man with her to the presentation, and this time, she heeded the recommendation. "And we made the presentation," she recalled, "and the PR head came to talk to us afterward, and he said, 'You've done a great job, really great job. Only one thing: would you change the name of your company? A man's name would have to be the head of it or they won't hire you.' And so I said, 'Goodbye!'"

Such continued discrimination was disheartening, Klein recalled. When she served as president of the NY Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, she remembered making a speech in which she held up one of the chapter members as an example of a man who hired mostly women.

"So I gave him plaudits and he was sitting there. And I questioned him: 'Why was it that you were so interested in hiring women? Did you think that they did a better job?' And he said, 'No, they come in cheaper!' But that was a long time ago. We have so many women who own their own agencies now. But, boy, they were sparse [then]. You just couldn't make it.

"I had all of the photographs from the Women's Hall of Fame set up in my office, all the original pictures. Every day I could look up there for all these role models," she said. Eventually, her former boss Gottlieb, who'd sold Gottlieb and Associates to Hill & Knowlton and went into the mergers and acquisitions business, helped Klein merge her agency in 1984 with Porter Novelli, who was looking for a New York presence.

She was named a senior vice president there, but quit after five years when she felt that selling accounts was taking precedence over servicing them. Because of her contract, she was able to take a large client with her, and that's when the second incarnation of Charlotte Klein and Associates began, in 1989. She ran the firm for five years before deciding to retire.

## **A Rich Career**

During her career, Klein worked for diversity issues and for women's rights, and she mixed with other prominent men and women public relations practitioners. Some of

these colleagues included the man who was most influential in her career—Gottlieb—as well as Druck, a founder of PRSA, past PRSA president and someone whom Klein called “wonderful” and “a very impressive man.”

“Kal had a way that was very different from Gottlieb,” Klein recalled with a smile. “In fact, it was just the opposite—big talk, big show, big promises. . . .”

She networked with prominent women who also served as WE PR presidents, including Griswold, Dorothy Gregg, and Caroline Hood—all of whom are included in the *Encyclopedia of Public Relations* (Heath, 2005). But most importantly, public relations helped her fulfill her dreams of contributing to society, going to France, and even having her name in *The New Yorker*.

Although the publication’s editors had sent her numerous rejection letters over the years for fiction she had sent them, her name did eventually appear in the magazine, but not in the byline she’d imagined. Instead, it was part of a feature story about one of her client’s campaigns that chronicled her pushing comic strip characters Dick Tracey and Tess Trueheart’s baby, Bonny Braids, down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue as part of a publicity event for Macy’s (“Bonny Braids,” 1951), the same street where she marched for women’s rights with feminist leaders Friedan, Abzug, and Steinem more than a decade later.

“Miss Klein informed us that Ideal Toy [Corporation] went into action the moment Chester Gould, the cartoonist who draws Dick Tracy, indicated in print that Tracy and Miss Trueheart were finally going to get hitched,” *The New Yorker’s* July 7, 1951 issue reads. “Benjamin Franklin Michtom, chairman of the board of Ideal Toy, perceived at once that a Tracy marriage could mean a Tracy baby, which could mean a Tracy doll, which could mean a gold mine for Ideal. . . . Now Ideal is keeping a sharp lookout for the first local baby to be named Bonny; this baby will be given a free Bonny Braids doll . . .” (Ibid.).

Reflecting more seriously on her 50-year career, Klein said, “Everything you ever do in your life at some point will have a meaning in your public relations career. . . . What I really tried to do in my career was things that would last, not just stunts or campaigns. . . .” Indeed, her “big ideas”—a term legendary advertising executive David Ogilvy used to describe ideas that get noticed, remembered, and inspire action (Hanson, 2008, p. 369)—included “bundling” clients together for greater collective benefit; early product placement and CSR activities; and the involvement and support of high-level political celebrities, including an Israeli ambassador, a U.S. President, three First Ladies, and a President’s daughter, to do good for both her clients and society.

Unlike Fleischman, who worked largely in the shadows of her husband, Klein was among the first generation of women to be accredited by PRSA and recognized by their peers, both men and women, as professional leaders. Klein headed the Woman Executives in PR in 1965 and the NY Chapter of PRSA in 1985. She received the New York Women in Communications Matrix Award for distinguished contributions in the

field in 1975, won the PRSA Silver Anvil Award in 1978 for her work educating consumers about fluorocarbons, and received the New York PRSA Chapter's John Hill Award ten years later.

She has remained single. Although she had offers, "I was married to my work," she said. "You know, the men that I would meet wanted me to be there [for them]. And I always wanted to have children. I adopted, just by mail, really, an Israeli child. And, you know, I was involved with that child for about ten years."

Klein continues to stay active. She serves her Murray Hill Neighborhood Association in New York City, editing their 20-page, four-color quarterly newsletter that includes local advertising, in the same apartment where the second Charlotte Klein and Associates operated. She looks back with great pride on her public relations work and accomplishments.

"I learned that you could do almost anything in PR if you had the budget and the idea," Klein said. "But I was really interested in establishing things that lasted. You know, public relations can be so broad and it can accomplish such terrific things."

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gottlieb also helped launch the career of Amelia Lobsenz, who was a freelance writer and book author who joined Edward Gottlieb & Associates in the early 1950s, before starting her agency, Lobsenz PR in 1956. She was the first woman president of the International Public Relations Association in 1986. She died in 1992. *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, p. 493.

<sup>2</sup> Despite the trauma of the accident, Klein said Gottlieb remained foremost a PR man: Following the crash, a garbage barge reached him and pulled him aboard, and the crew allegedly asked if they could get him something to drink. “Yes,” Klein said he replied. ‘I’ll have cognac!’”

<sup>3</sup> Like Gottlieb, Druck also got his start in public relations with Carl Byoir Associates, joining the firm in 1939. Byoir served with Edward Bernays on the U.S. Committee on Public Information during World War I.

## **Appendix A**

### ***Fifty-year Career of Charlotte Klein***

#### **Career Timeline**

- **1923:** Charlotte Conrad Klein is born in Detroit, Michigan
- **1934:** Klein's family moves to Los Angeles when she is 11 years old
- **1943:** Klein serves as editor of UCLA's *Daily Bruin*
- **1945:** Klein graduates from UCLA with a dual sociology/psychology degree and begins her career as a farm reporter for United Press International
- **1946:** Klein leaves UPI to write for the CBS radio show, "Ona Munson in Hollywood"
- **1947:** Klein leaves CBS to join Selznick Studios as a Junior Publicist where she publicizes many films and writes for Shirley Temple's column, "What Every Young Bride Should Know"
- **1949:** Klein continues publicity work at Maury Foladare & Associates after Selznick Studios goes out of business
- **1951:** Klein convinces Foladare to send her to open a branch office in NYC; upon her arrival, Foladare changes his mind about her move
- **1951:** Determined to stay in New York, Klein obtains a PR job with Edward Gottlieb & Associates, thus ending her Hollywood publicity work; here she learned to think strategically and made an impact with several notable campaigns, including perfecting and promoting the first negro doll created by Ideal Toy Corporation; rebranding the government of Israel; and was responsible for three French accounts: champagne, leather gloves & couture fashion
- **1955:** Klein is promoted to VP at Gottlieb & Associates
- **1963:** Klein begins as senior vice president at woman-owned agency Flanley and Woodward; here she created the Women's Hall of Fame, sponsored by client Purex. The initial Women's Hall of Fame induction increased Purex hall traffic by 400 percent and garnered 37 national media hits
- **1966:** Klein begins work at Harshe-Rotman and Druck where she remains until 1978 and rises to Senior Vice President; here she works with the United Negro College Fund and other minority clients
- **1965:** Klein heads Women Executives in PR
- **1971:** Klein teaches "Making It In a Man's World" course at the New School for Social Research in New York
- **1976:** During vacation time at Harshe-Rotman and Druck, Klein sets up the Women's Political News Service through the National Women's Political Caucus at the Democratic National Convention
- **1978:** Klein begins work for WNET of New York, one of the nation's largest public broadcast stations
- **1979:** Klein begins her own agency, Charlotte C. Klein & Associates
- **1984:** Charlotte C. Klein & Associates merges with Porter Novelli; Klein is named Senior Vice President
- **1985:** Klein becomes president of PRSA's New York Chapter

- **1989:** The second incarnation of Charlotte C. Klein & Associates begins; Klein maintains her own agency for five years before retiring in 1994
- **2001:** Klein teaches her final college course, public relations ethics, as an adjunct at New York University
- **2005? to present:** Klein serves as volunteer editor of the quarterly newsletter *Murray Hill Life*