Patsy O'Connell Sherman

1930 - 2008

"Girls should follow their dreams. They can do anything anybody else can do"

Patsy Sherman lived by these words. In high school, Patsy took an aptitude test and during that time, there was a different test for boys and girls. The results of her aptitude test claimed that Patsy was best suited to be a housewife. This wasn't Patsy's only aspirations. She requested to take the boys' aptitude test and the results were slightly different…dentist or scientist. With those results, Patsy went to Gustavus Adolphus College in St Peter, Minnesota and was the 1st female from the college to graduate with a BS in Chemistry and Mathematics in 1952.

Patsy Sherman started her professional career at 3M in 1952. Her employment was temporary because the notion was that women would quit their jobs to marry and start families. Her project was to develop a new kind of rubber for jet aircraft fuel lines that wouldn't deteriorate. In 1953, a lab assistant accidentally dropped a bottle of a fluorochemical polymer Patsy, and her colleague Samuel Smith developed. The polymer splashed into the assistants' canvas tennis shoe. They attempted to remove the polymer with no success because the compound repelled water, oil, and other liquids. Over time, the areas with the fluorochemical polymer spots remained clean while the rest of the shoe became dirty. Patsy and Sam saw that the polymer could be used to protect fabrics from water and other fluids. Development of their invention presented another challenge for Patsy, at that time women weren't allowed to be inside the textile mill where performance tests were conducted. Patsy couldn't be present during trials and fabric testing. She would wait for someone else to deliver the results to her. After three years of research, the fluorochemical polymer, became known and sold as Scotchgard™ Stain Repellent. On April 13, 1971, they received approval for United States Patent 3574791 for "Block and graft copolymers containing water-solvatable polar groups and fluoroaliphatic groups." Eventually, 3M would have about 40 products in the Scotchgard™ family and Patsy Sherman held 13 patents with Samuel Smith on that invention. Patsy Sherman has 16 patents in total with other notable invention being an optical brighter touted by companies to offer "whiter than white".

Patsy Sherman worked her entire career at 3M. She eventually was offered full time employment with benefits. In the 1970's, she became the Laboratory Manager and from 1982 -1992, she was the Manager of Technical Development. She also developed and led 3M's technical education department in the 1980's. She retired in 1992.

Patsy Sherman has received numerous awards and accolades:

- 1st woman inducted into 3M Carton Society in 1974
- Named to the Minnesota Inventors Hall of Fame in 1989
- Named to the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2001

Patsy Sherman said it best…*"Keep your eyes and mind open, and don't ignore something that doesn't come out the way you expect it to. Just keep looking at the world with inventor's eyes!"*

http://www.women-inventors.com/Patsy-Sherman.asp

https://www.msthalloffame.org/patsy_sherman.htm

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https://digging-history.com/2014/09/29/mothers-of-invention-patsy-oconnell-sherman/

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