

Making Headlines
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For the first four years of her life, Kay Graham — along with three siblings — was abandoned to the care of a nanny in New York City while her parents relocated to Washington, D.C., to pursue social and business success inside the Beltway. When the insecure child grew up, she married a man who further undermined her confidence by constant criticism — and the nickname Porky.

Was it any wonder that when Kay's father, Washington *Post* publisher Eugene Meyer, left control of the newspaper to her husband, Phil, instead of his journalist daughter, the unassuming young woman didn't think to protest?

Kay Graham's professional life could have ended right there. But events conspired to transform a life in the shadows into one in the public glare.

Phil Graham — brilliant but unstable — had his first nervous breakdown in 1957. The couple tried to hide Phil's difficulties, but in the next five years, his mood swings accelerated. His bon mots degenerated into vicious jabs, now directed not only at his wife but also at longtime associates. He began an affair with another woman.

Phil killed himself in 1963, and the Washington *Post* — not yet the award-winning superstar it would become — was up for grabs.

When a friend suggested that Kay take the reins, she said: "Me? That's impossible. I couldn't possibly do it."

Obviously, she could — overcoming a lonely childhood, an abusive husband and the low self-esteem that had dogged her all her life — and did, opening the way for women journalists everywhere.

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