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**Belk College Connects**

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**JOSEPH MAZZOLA**  
named dean of the  
Belk College

**REAL ESTATE**  
center develops resources,  
talent for industry

**JILL TIETJEN**  
celebrates women  
in American history

**JENNIFER TROYER**  
finds research  
inspiration close to home

## Alumni Profile: Jill Tietjen '79 Telling their Stories

Abigail Adams, who reminded her husband John to “remember the ladies” while he helped craft the first Constitution of the United States. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first American woman to receive an M.D. degree. Poet Emma Lazarus, whose sonnet inscribed on the Statue of Liberty inspired generations of immigrants. Estée Lauder, who built a billion-dollar empire with face creams she formulated and made herself.

These prominent women, and many others, are chronicled in a new book written by a graduate of the Belk College of Business. **Jill Tietjen, MBA '79**, is coauthor with Charlotte S. Waisman of “Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America,” which was published last month by HarperCollins.

For Jill, the book has been a labor of love, an avocation inspired by the women who were pioneers in her true profession, engineering.

Jill grew up in Hampton, Va., the daughter of a NASA engineer and a former teacher. Enrolling at the University of Virginia as a math major, she soon changed her major to engineering. She would become a member of only the third class of female engineers at UVa, but she found more resistance to her decision at home than in the classroom.

“When I called home to tell my parents I had changed majors, my mother said ‘No,’” Jill remembered. “I think they were concerned that I wouldn’t be able to get a job... or worse, that no one would want to marry me. But it was the right decision for me.”

Following her graduation from UVa in 1976, Jill took a job at Duke Power Company in Charlotte. “The only other women in the department were secretaries,” Jill recalled, “and for the first time I realized that engineering was a male-dominated field!” She became involved in the Society of Woman Engineers as a way to build camaraderie with her peers in other cities, and later served as the organization’s national president in 1991-92.

While living in Charlotte, Jill enrolled at UNC Charlotte and earned an MBA. “My time at Duke was important to me in a number of ways: first and foremost, it was a wonderful place to work under the leadership



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of Bill Lee,” she said. “The company encouraged me to get my MBA and, perhaps even more significantly, trained me in public speaking as part of the company’s speaker bureau.”

Public speaking skill, an engineering background and MBA coursework would be critical components in the next phase of Jill’s professional career, as a management consultant in the electric utility industry. She moved to Denver, Colo., and held positions with Mobil Oil Corp. and a number of consulting firms. Additionally, for three years she served as director of the Women in Engineering Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

“Being director of the WIEP gave me the confidence to run my own business,” Jill said. “The WIEP needed to be resurrected. I set up scholarships and programs, attracted a top board and was active in fundraising. By the time I left, the university was acknowledged as having one of the best WIEP programs in the country.”

Now president and CEO of Technically Speaking, Inc., Jill has remained active in the Society of Women Engineers. Throughout her career, she has used her role in the organization to both recognize the

contributions of the woman who broke barriers in the profession and to encourage girls and young women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In 1991, she successfully nominated a technology pioneer, Admiral Grace Murray Hopper, for the National Medal of Technology (the U.S. equivalent of a Nobel Prize). Admiral Hopper was an officer in the U.S. Navy and a pioneer in computer science. She developed the first computer compiler, found one of the first "computer bugs" (a moth in a relay), and was the first person to develop an English-based computer language. Later, she was instrumental in developing the COBOL computer language. In 1996, four years after her death, a Navy missile destroyer was named in her honor. The ship shares her nickname: "Amazing Grace."

"Admiral Hopper was influential in my life development," Jill said. "I didn't have a role model when I began my college studies and my career; I had to do it myself. That's why I'm bound and determined to do it for others."

Admiral Hopper also served as an inspiration for Jill and her colleague, Betty Reynolds, to pen three books in the "Setting the Record Straight" series, which profiles women in non-traditional professions.

As Jill promoted women in the sciences by nominating Hopper and other pioneering women for awards, the idea for her current book began to take shape. A small file of biographies and notes grew to a total of 866 women: from Virginia Dare, the first child born in the Americas to English parents in 1587, to Dr. Drew Gilpin Faust, the first female named president of Harvard University in 2007. "Her Story" chronicles the famous,

the infamous, the obscure and the forgotten women who have shaped more than 400 years of American history.

How does Jill balance writing with a demanding schedule of consulting and speaking appearances? "You do what you want to do in your life," she said. "If you love it, it doesn't feel like work."

"Putting together the book – assembling the timeline, the biographies, and all the photo credits – was like an enormous puzzle," she continues. "I spent my youth doing jigsaw puzzles and still love puzzles, so it was a mission and a challenge, but I had a wonderful time. Even if we don't see a penny from the book, I do what I do because I'm driven to do it."

Jill has been recognized by her peers and colleagues with a number of awards, including the Distinguished Alumna Award from the University of Virginia and an honorary Distinguished Engineering Alumna Award from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She has made generous contributions to the University of Virginia and the University of Colorado at Boulder to provide scholarships and support experiential learning programs in engineering. With her recent contributions to UNC Charlotte, she hopes to encourage women in engineering to pursue an MBA, as she did.

When asked what her advice would be for today's women pursuing careers in business or engineering, Jill is forthright: "It's important to have persistence, determination, and passion in one's work and one's life. Put yourself on a path, and never give up. Sometimes you have to fight to move forward."

It's a lesson well taken from a remarkable woman who has devoted her life to supporting remarkable women – past, present and future. **bcc**

STORY Sasha Trosch

One spread of "Her Story" features Rosie the Riveter, actress Angela Lansbury and Jill Tietjen's mentor, Admiral Grace Murray Hopper.

