



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



May 2020 Her Story ENewsletter Oklahomans

Because of COVID-19, the times we are in today evoke comparisons to the Great Depression of the 1930s. For people in Oklahoma that was also a time of severe drought; it was called the Dust Bowl and it resulted in many people migrating from the state. Yet, just like we will persevere through the 2020 pandemic, Oklahomans persevered, and they have had many accomplished women whose contributions are noteworthy. In this month's ENewsletter, we profile two of them: Maria Tallchief and Jeane Kirkpatrick.



Born in Fairfax, Oklahoma of Osage heritage, **Maria Tallchief** broke significant barriers in 1947 when she was named the first Native American prima ballerina of the New York City Ballet. During the 13 years that she was in that role, she became the first American to dance with the Paris Opera Ballet. The *New York Herald Tribune* said of her performance, "As brilliant in speed and with steely exactness. . . Maria Tallchief is doing the most sparkling performances, outdoing herself."

Her first marriage to choreographer George Balanchine resulted in many works designed for her strengths of technical precision, strength, and musicality. After her retirement in 1965, Tallchief served as the artistic director of the Lyric Opera Ballet. She then founded and served as artistic director of the Chicago City Ballet. Tallchief received the National Medal of the Arts from President Clinton for "helping bring ballet to America." Her many other honors include the Kennedy Center Honors and induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and the National Women's Hall of Fame. She is one of five Oklahoma Native American ballerinas to be featured on a mural in the Oklahoma State Capitol.



Born in Duncan, Oklahoma, **Jeane Kirkpatrick** was encouraged to believe she could be anything she wanted when she was growing up. She said, "I had a wonderful Oklahoma childhood. My family imbued me with the frontier spirit. It is a can-do spirit. . . the frontier ethic that you can do anything – everything – always. This is what I heard, 'Jeane, you can do that.' I was always told doing something well is just a matter of trying harder."

Kirkpatrick embarked on a career in the foreign service. Ronald Reagan read one of her articles prior to declaring his candidacy for president. He asked if they could meet. Kirkpatrick became part of his presidential campaign, coaching him for presidential debates and gaining his confidence as a foreign policy advisor. After his election, he asked her to serve as Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1981, she became the only woman on the 154-member United Nations Assembly. Through this position, she served as a member of Reagan's cabinet – the first woman and only Democrat to do so. She has been inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Maria Tallchief and Jeane Kirkpatrick are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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