



Finding Celia's Place

Celia Morris

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For most women who came of age in the 1950s, and particularly for a smart, attractive, and ambitious girl from Houston, life as a single woman was unthinkable. Marriage was a woman's destiny, and everyone expected her to choose well and live happily ever after.

For Celia Morris and many women like her, this set of assumptions proved to be misguided. In this wrenching but ultimately uplifting memoir, she describes how marriage and conformity to received notions of “woman's place” ate away at the selfrespect, dignity, and even sanity of her generation.

Busy, bright, and athletic, young Celia Buchan had a hectic schedule that masked an emotional void at home, where an adored father dominated and a depressed but dutiful mother drank. As a star student at the University of Texas, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and crowned University Sweetheart, she studied hard and eagerly supported fights against injustice. A year after graduating, she took what seemed the logical next step by marrying fellow student Willie Morris, a hardhitting, controversial campus newspaper editor and Rhodes scholar.

In the years that followed, amidst exhilarating intellectual circles at Oxford, graduate studies in California and New York City, and the heady life she shared with Morris during his celebrated tenure as editorinchief of *Harper's* magazine, her life was a baffling mixture of high times and misery. During these years, through psychoanalysis, she began a journey that strengthened her emotionally even as it made the inequities of marriage harder to tolerate. As tumultuous events and fundamental changes transformed American society, she divorced Morris, went to work while raising their son David, and eight years later married Texas Congressman Bob Eckhardt, another liberal hero. Deepening friendships and her immersion in professional work that she believed in and could do well sustained her when, after ten years, that marriage, too, foundered.

In *Finding Celia's Place*, Morris unflinchingly weighs her own experiences and the unconventional lives of several close college friends and reflects on the tangled relationships of women and men in their generation. Coming to terms with what their sixtysomething years have taught them, she offers four defining principles they hope to pass on to a younger generation.

Finding Celia's Place is a candid, gripping story that will ring true to everyone in this bridge generation. It should also appeal to their children and grandchildren, who can learn how hard the fight has been for the precarious freedoms women now enjoy.

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