

## **Emily Bourne Grigsby**

Attorney, Arbitrator, Artist and Beyond

### *A Woman for All Ages*

Emily Bourne Grigsby is unique. Truly unique, one of a kind, extraordinary – a virtual “poster woman” for achievement, talent, energy, and intellect. If Superwoman really existed, Emily would be wearing the cape!

Under her cape is a bon vivant, a bold and charming feminist, an attorney / arbitrator, and a noted artist. Emily’s also a former model, opera singer, interior designer, and multi-engine pilot. Perhaps the real question is this: what hasn’t she done in her eight decades of life? The answer – not much.

### *How it began*

Chronicling Emily’s life is like watching fireworks. As she talked about her early family life in Owenton, KY where she was born in 1922, a clear spark was ignited. That spark quickly turned into a mesmerizing display of life experiences, both happy and sad and transcending four decades. One obvious influence in Emily’s young life was her mother and father’s illnesses.

When Emily was four, her father, Morton Humphrey Bourne, suffered a stroke. A vibrant and highly educated man, he was the founder of the University of Kentucky School of Law. “To regain his health and vitality, it took guts,” Emily said. “He had to learn to walk and talk all over again. Not only that, he helped our family through the depression and later became an orator, a farmer, a judge, and the owner and editor of a newspaper.”

Mr. Bourne was classically educated and spoke Latin and Greek fluently. Clearly, a part of Emily’s intellectual prowess and determination are attributable to her father who also had additional responsibilities for raising Emily, her brother and her sister. When Emily was seven, her mother was diagnosed with tuberculosis and admitted to a sanatorium for treatment. Six years later, her mother succumbed to the disease, the impact of which effected Emily’s entire upbringing. Her father was there, however, and continued to provide love and parental support to her and her siblings throughout their childhood.

### *A lifetime of learning*

Interestingly, her father neither encouraged nor discouraged young Emily from pursuing a career in law despite his own education. What he did, however, was to ensure that his daughter finished her secondary education in Indiana – away from her high school sweetheart. In 1940, her father also saw to it that she entered Sullins College, which according to Emily, was a “typical finishing school” for young women of her day. “We were expected to wear hose to dinner as well as gloves and a hat when we left the campus,” Emily pointed out, “with permission of course.”

Other distinct memories of her less than stellar experience at Sullins were skipping recitals in favor of horseback riding and having to recite memory work for the Dean – “a form of regurgitation which I abhorred.” For Emily the bon vivant and free spirit, this particular college experience proved to be an extremely difficult and stifling one. She left after one year without graduating.

Fortunately, she moved on to Vanderbilt. Unfortunately, a motorboat experience one afternoon with friends turned into a tragedy when Emily’s young beau drowned before her eyes. Emotionally shaken by this horrible experience, Emily soon found herself on academic probation. But with an intervention and ultimatum from her father who knew she could do better, Emily managed to pull herself together. Both her grades and her confidence improved.

After marrying Paul Grigsby and moving to California, three years later Emily would find “the right college” and complete her undergraduate education. She actually found it at Mills College where she majored in psychology and was one of only two married female students.

“My teachers were great,” she said, “and I loved statistics. They offered me a fellowship for graduate work but I declined. Instead, I went to work at a psychology clinic administering tests.”

Twenty-six more years would pass – with many life experiences in between – before Emily would continue her formal education in Atlanta, GA. There she attended both Georgia Tech and the Woodrow Wilson College of Law. In 1975 she received a Master of Science in City Planning from Georgia Tech despite the fact that she never used it. “I was told I was too liberal!” she said. In 1982, at the age of 60, she got her law degree, passed the Georgia Bar, and went on to apply her knowledge of the law as an arbitrator and mediator.

Emily likes both roles, she says, because as an arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Directors (NASD), she is a decision-maker. As a mediator for the Justice Center, for example, she helps people come to a mutually acceptable decision.

#### *A life of passions*

Clearly, a defining characteristic of Emily Bourne Grigsby is her passion for life and that includes many things. One of those was and is her husband, Paul. They met through a cousin who was dating Paul herself. However, Paul proceeded to ask Emily out and actually proposed to her on their first date!

They set the date for June 27, 1942, but almost didn’t make it because Emily had mono. But Paul was ready to carry her down the aisle if he had to because he was *determined* to marry her and take her away with him to New Hampshire after receiving his commission as an officer in the US Navy.

Emily, on the other hand, wasn't quite as sure about all of this, even asking her suitemates to "vote" on whether or not she should marry Paul. Fortunately, they voted YES. In June, 2002, Emily and Paul celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

While Paul was assigned to officers' training at Dartmouth in Hanover, NH, Emily discovered a new passion. For a short while she filled an "equitation position" at a camp in Vermont and taught horseback riding to young girls. She loved it!

But one of Emily's greatest loves was yet to be discovered. It was the height of World War II. Paul was serving in the South Pacific theater and she was living in San Francisco along with many other Navy officer wives. She had received her degree from Mills College, and was taking ballet lessons in the city. One night she heard voices from the ballet building and went in to check it out.

Miraculously, she actually came face-to-face with the renowned conductor himself, Kurt Herbert Adler. Through a stroke of luck and good fortune, their chance meeting opened a whole new world for Emily. For the next three years, she would sing in the chorus with the San Francisco Opera Company, a company equal to the famed Metropolitan Opera itself. She was the youngest member of the chorus.

In 1945, she and Paul moved to Atlanta and there was no opera company. "Not being able to pursue singing again was the sorrow of my life," Emily said.

Only one thing could fill the void. She must stay busy learning and doing something else. One of the first things she did was become a runway model for Rich's Department Store and other fashion institutions of their day. Emily would continue this for 15 years.

Overlapping her modeling work, Emily also learned to fly airplanes. By this time, Paul had 16 electronics stores throughout the Southeast. He bought a plane to facilitate his getting around and insisted that Emily learn to fly "in case something happened to him." She did her first cross country with a girlfriend and ultimately earned 700 hours of flying time in twin engines. She only stopped flying, and stopped coming in for "hot landings" when Paul got sick and sold their plane. This was in the mid-60's.

Emily also has a passion for water sports, including boating and swimming. At 80, she still enjoys swimming and says "it pulls me through the rough times." She's currently enclosing her pool in the backyard of her home so she can swim year-round.

The passion – and talent - that many people associate with Emily is her art. To see her home filled with over 200 original paintings of her own is spellbinding. To know that she has been in 16 art shows over the past 25 years throughout the US and France – and has scheduled her 17<sup>th</sup> for early 2003 in Atlanta – is equally impressive.

Her love of art began, she said, when she was at Mills. She saw her first nude model there and thought, "That's interesting." Now she has a hallway of her own nude works. Giving credit to those who encouraged her, Emily says, "Thank you to Sylvia Hansell for

telling me to ‘go for it’ 25 years ago and to Athos Menaboni, the noted bird painter, for identifying my true talent among my many pursuits.”

*Sharing her legacy*

It is impossible to imagine Emily NOT being at the epicenter of what’s happening now. She has always been and remains an activist in the cause of women’s issues. She is committed to making a difference through initiatives and organizations like the Possible Woman International Foundation where she is a charter member of the board of directors.

Emily is also past president of the Atlanta Music Club and past board member of the Partnership Against Domestic Violence. She was most recently recognized by being elected to Leadership America.

When it comes to women’s impact in business and leadership, Emily has the solution: “If we women who own stock will simply vote our convictions – i.e., don’t vote for any slate of directors if there aren’t at least two women directors, then things will change. We need to harness our collective financial clout and quit waiting for men to make it happen.”

And there you have it. Strong, assertive, proactive, passionate, and persuasive - Emily’s advice is exactly what you would expect from an extraordinary woman whose whole life is one of action. What can you add to that? Only that she is indeed a role model and a SHEro upon whose shoulders contemporary women stand and stand proudly. Thank you, Emily, for your unceasing inspiration to all women of all ages.

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By Susan B. Hitchcock

For SHEroes (a book in progress)