

F. I. R. S. T.

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F.- female professional in my family

I. – Investment

R.- Realization

S.- Stories that Stuck

T.- Tenacity

First: I am the first woman in my family to have a career. I am the first woman bassoon reed toolmaker. I am the first woman to have a bassoon product with my name on it. I am one of the first ten women to write an etude book for the bassoon and I will be the first to tell you that I set out to do none of this, I just hoped to keep playing my horn another day. I hope that reading about my journey that lead to some “first-ies” will embolden you to try new things and think about why you might be limiting yourself.

Investment: It didn’t occur to me that my family was any different growing up, until later when I looked back and saw how I was treated differently than my brother. A great example is that he was encouraged to take summer computer and typing courses (he could use those skills later) and I took art classes (why would I need to learn about computers???) This type of gender stereotyping would touch everything in my upbringing and just a small example of how I was (or wasn’t!) invested in. I see clearly now that I was brought up to be an educated mom, and it hasn’t been until adulthood that I have unpacked its layers.

Realization: My big realization that I had an idea worth contributing was when someone took it and ran! It all started when I had a student that connected me with an engineer that thought he could make a bassoon reed profiler. (This seemed so unlikely, with measurements to the thousands of an inch, but what fun!) I guided him with my ideas through each revision, but without contracting my ideas. By the time it went into production, he gave me two profilers that didn’t work properly and started a business without me. I did pursue legal channels and consulted business experts but landed on creating my own (and much better!) product. [www. Bassoonprofiler.com](http://www.Bassoonprofiler.com) or sold at Midwest Musical Imports. It is the only bassoon reed tool designed, retailed, and named for a woman.

Stories that Stuck: I want to share with you two stories that have really stuck with me on my journey. I hope that you can use them as your own opportunity to reframe your vision of possibility.

Story #1- Some of you know my husband, Dr. Steve Maxwell (Tuba-Euphonium) and that he is a big fan of sports. Not long ago he shared with me about discussions in professional football about having more diversity in coaching staff. One of the threads of the discussion that moved me deeply was this idea that the typical make up of NFL coaches is white men, who very often grew up around professional sports or other coaches and were exposed to the culture their whole lives. This compared to non-white men who were trying to enter the arena of coaching but didn’t have the advantage of investment or legacy. This

really hit home, this was me. I took art classes when I should have been taking computer classes and going to math camp.

Story #2- I heard this story on a podcast, it was about a student going to seminary to become a minister. This was a white, male student and was taking a theology class from an African American male. In their discussions about biblical stories, without knowing it, the student continued to refer or identify with those who were in power. (king, father, scholar, etc.) The teacher was able to kindly point this out, to demonstrate how our lens of perspective can vary greatly. As someone who didn't have a powerful female leader in my family, wind ensemble conductor, or President, I too can identify with those without power and how representation does matter.

These stories have stayed with me because they are such powerful reminders that perceptions can be broadened, and it started with my own. Limits may have been set on me, but there is opportunity on the other side. This has also given me a torch for those who are brave enough to be themselves. I hope you will be the next person to add something special to this world, because of your unique perspective.

Tenacity- I watched an interview with actor Kristen Stewart in reflection of her career and recent work as Princess Diana. She says it best that you kind of have to be crazy about what you do, to be successful in the arts. I am all-in on the bassoon and a music career and that has been the backbone of my ability to maintain the profiler business. There are often where it can be very difficulty and yet very rewarding. I hope that for all my students, they can find something they are passionate about and so will have the tenacity to just keep going, and that my journey is proof positive that you can and should!