

## What does the Strike of 1990 mean to you?

The Strike means that Mills is continuing to focus on the education of women for the 21st century. Its commitment to women and women's advancement in all areas of life are one of the reasons I came to Mills in 1961.

—Kristin Ritter Carver '65

Still have my Better Dead Than Co-Ed t-shirt!

—Shawn Rorke-Davis '70

For me, the beauty of the Strike is almost as impossible to articulate as the Mills experience itself. Its greatness wasn't the fact that "we won" or even that it was a "movement." (Not to discount either—because both are worthy of praise and were spectacular.) It was the integrity with which it took place. The removal of a hierarchy—and its companion, patriarchy—and the use of consensus building coupled with complete egalitarian respect for each participant and her skill set—whatever it might be from writing press releases to making PB&Js. And this came about organically because of shared values, many of which had never been expressed prior. The process itself was the greatest reward. I remain utterly impressed by and thankful for the women of Mills.

—Alexa Pagonas '91

I remember living in New York and watching the *Phil Donahue* show and just being so proud and amazed at the poise and brain power! It was a great, historic moment in the College's history.

—Ann Kasper '81

Twenty years on, I'm still darn proud of that Donahue exposure and the way that students and alumnae got meaningful media coverage

—Sarah Lehman '86

I so loved Phil Donahue. During the show, he put on a t-shirt that said, "Mills: Not a girl's school without men, but a women's college without boys." Today, it is wonderful to see Mills owning the Strike so proudly.

—Lisa Kremer '90

I have the *Phil Donahue* episode on tape. Perhaps it's time to bring it out to watch again.

—Rita Morin '87

The Strike was an opportunity for me to take the talents of perception, expression, and humor that I'd honed as cartoonist of *The Weekly* to the next level. I wandered around the Strike scene and watched and listened. I drew ten cartoons, submitted them to the *Bay Guardian* cartoon contest and, to my astonishment, won! I copied them into a pamphlet which I gave to my friends, who encouraged me to make it better. *Inside the Mills Revolution* became my first published book, and with it I learned how to become an entrepreneur, selling books and t-shirts.

The Strike anniversary has given me the gift of getting behind my own dreams once again.

—Kristen Baumgardner Caven '88

At Mills, I became a strong, courageous young woman who, today, has published my first book, *How Will I Know Where I'm Going if I Don't Know Where I've Been?*—much, in part, to my experience as ASMC student body VP and the influence of faculty and friends.

—Liz Ruderman Miller '70

I was busy building a family and career during the Strike, but my reaction to the announcement that Mills was going coed was that one of the differentiating qualities would be taken away and, in the process, Mills would become just another small liberal arts college. I was very proud the Mills women's activism made the Trustees rescind their decision.

—N.T. Lucy Do '75

## Sound off! supplement: What does the Strike of 1990 mean to you?

In 1990 I was at the tail end of high school and hunting for colleges. At that time, I had absolutely no interest in a women's college, even though my mother suggested Mills. Later, I vividly remember watching the Phil Donahue talk show about the Strike. I was so impressed by the strong, articulate and passionate student panel of Mills women that the hair on the back of my neck stood at attention. I got it. I understood the value of a woman's education. It was then and there that I, too, wanted to be a Mills Woman.

—Abbey Stamp '95

I was there—and how can it possibly be that long ago? Amazing! Still have my “Better Dead Than Co-Ed” T-shirt!

—Suzanne Wickens '90

Still have my t-shirt as well: “Remember Who You Are and What You Represent.”

—Elizabeth Warner '76

I was in my sophomore year in high school. I had just moved to Oakland from San Francisco. I knew nothing about Mills until the Strike, but the news about Mills irritated me. A year later I found myself working as a porter in two kitchens and swore I would never be a student there. I am now and could not be more proud!

—Desirena Cortijo-Roberts

I am eternally grateful to all the Mills women who were there, on campus, striking and speaking for so many of us who could not be. At the time, I had an infant in arms, a full time job and many additional responsibilities I could not abandon. But I made time to visit one night, and brought bouquets of yellow roses in vases to the all night campers, as well as hugs and wishes and dreams of the final outcome. Memories invoke such pride, emotion to this day.

—Deborah Fortune Walton '81

I still have my “Better Dead Than Coed” t-shirt. I'll never let it go!

—Susan Donaldson '94

I mostly remember getting very little sleep, fighting with my roommate because she shaved her head, and just feeling tired and irritated. But mostly I was ticked off because the students decided during the Donohue show to take over the Alumnae House so I couldn't watch it live. (They gave it back after realizing we were actually working to help them.)

I also remember getting a call from someone at Smith seeking some kind of unrelated statistical information during the Strike. I told her I'd be happy to share the stats but that the students had shut down the campus. “Oh yeah, we've had some student strikes here, too,” she said, then asked again for the information. When I told her again that I couldn't help her because of the Strike, she fell silent. “You mean you really can't get into the administration building at all? Whoa. Our students have never done anything close to that.”

—Cheryl Reid-Simons '87

As a resumer with a young toddler that attended what we joyfully called “Mills Crawlege,” the Strike was life changing for my entire family. The experience made such an impact that it came as little surprise to me that in time Stephanie would become a Bent Twig graduating in 2008.

All of my three children were affected by participating in helping with the Strike. My graduation gift from them was a t-shirt with the words inscribed, “We're not dead, and we ain't co-ed.” The motto “Better Dead than Co-ed” felt as revolutionary as the freedom call, “Give me liberty or give me death.”

—Carmen Hartono '90

I was there 20 years ago, and I thought the emotions were in check about this time in my life but when I watched the video [on the Mills Facebook page] today, I had chills down my spine and tears in my eyes. I am so proud to be a Mills woman!

—Calia Brencons-Van Dyk '90

I spent more time in meetings the year before than in the class room. The Strike meant being heard.

—Alison Mierzykowski '92

## Sound off! supplement: What does the Strike of 1990 mean to you?

It has been 20 years since I accepted admittance into Mills. I was proud to have joined such a fierce group of women and was so lucky to have been given the education I received there.

—*Jessica Bartholow '94*

“Strong women. Proud women. ALL women. Mills women.” I’m a proud aunt of two Mills women, one of whom actively participated in the 1990 strike.

—*Kathy Jacobsen*

I attended Mills long after the Strike, but in 1990, I was 10 years old and saw coverage of the Mills strike on TV.... I was struck by how passionate the women speaking were about their single-sex education and how important it was to them that Mills remain a women’s college. It struck a chord with me and seven years later I entered Mills as a freshman. Mills provided me with the room to grow, learn, and explore that only a women’s college could have given me, and for that, I am grateful to the Mills women who came before me and held the Strike.

—*Jigna Babla Shah '01*

I remember so clearly, because I was a junior in high school in Oakland and just starting to really think about college. It actually put Mills on my radar and I ended up applying (and enrolling) because of it.

—*Amber Evangeline Rogers*

I was in my 20s and beginning to think about “getting serious” about completing an undergraduate education when images of the striking students hit the news. Seeing that passion said to me that Mills was where I belonged. After the announcement that Mills would stay women-only, I applied.

As a student, whenever I was in the Student Union, seeing the butcher paper banner with the words, “Warren, go to Hell-Man,” I couldn’t help but reflect that the whole reason I was at Mills was because of the Strike and those students that made that sign.

I remain in gratitude to the then-students for their dedication and to the alumnae, parents, and faculty that supported them. Because of you (and the alumnae scholarship you awarded me with), I received the education of my dreams, made lifelong friends, and have genuine pride at my alma mater.

—*Kimberlee MacVicar '95*

Seeing coverage of the Strike on the evening news inspired me to apply. I wanted to be a part of a community that believed in women, in all that we are and all that we could be.

—*Allison Randall '97*