

BONNIE FULLER
EDITOR-IN CHIEF COSMOPOLITAN

The hotshot Canadian, Bonnie Fuller, stepped into the well-worn fashionable shoes of Helen Gurley Brown in February 1997, taking over as Editor-In Chief of Cosmopolitan, the number one young woman's magazine in the world with 15 million readers per month in North America. It was a highly risky, almost no-win situation. Her job: to make a highly successful magazine even more successful without tampering too much with a tried and true formula, and still leave her mark. Working her magazine magic and newsstand wizardry, just as she had done as editor of "Flare", Canada's fashion magazine, "YM," and "Marie Claire", Fuller boosted Cosmopolitan's newsstand sales by 17%, raised paid circulation 9%, and increased ad pages 12%, resulting in ad revenues climbing 21% after the first year. Advertising Age acknowledged those achievements by naming Bonnie Fuller, "Editor of the Year".

Fuller, an Ontario Scholar, graduated with honors from the University of Toronto with a B.A. in general arts. Earlier in her career, Fuller was an editor at Womens Wear Daily and a fashion writer for the Toronto Star. Within a week of the launch of the first issue of Cosmopolitan, Fuller gave birth to her third child. The 42 year old editor resides in Westchester, New York with her husband and three children; an eleven year old son and two daughters, an eight year old and the baby who is 17 months.

MM: Every magazine for which you have been editor has immediately improved newsstand circulation, overall paid circulation and ad revenue. What can you reveal about your strategies?

BF: What has always worked for me is to really get into the head and have a lot of empathy for the reader. I have been able to understand what she's looking for in each magazine that I have edited. I found that it wasn't that hard for me to plunge back to my memories as a teenager and that's what inspired me at YM. When I was at Marie Claire it was easy because I was in my readership's age. Here at Cosmo, I'm out of the readership age, but I am surrounded by women who are. I'm good at listening and feeling what it is these women are hungry for, what they are turning to a magazine for and then giving them lots of that. I have observed that some editors go off course by editing for a reader that they want, but they don't have. Perhaps they're not that happy with the reader they do have. Or maybe they target and edit for a small group of people in the center of Manhattan or Toronto, instead of editing for who their readers really are. And I think that can be a mistake. You have to give the readers what they want.

MM: Obviously what the Cosmo reader wants is more information about multiple orgasms, which is the headline story in a recent issue. What has Cosmo uncovered about climaxing to help women reach new heights?

BF: Our experts explained that a lot of times that you don't have multiple orgasms because you're not seeking them out. You don't realize that you can have them, so after you've had one, you just relax and think, "Well that's it, I'm done." However, there are ways to reach new heights again. We've got tips that women can pass on to their man; things that he can do. There is an explanation as to where the G-spot is and

how to enjoy it to the utmost. There is also a new G-Spot, described by Dr. Barbara Keesling, author of "Supersexual Orgasm," which requires a new position to be reached. The most important thing you can do to improve your chances of multiple orgasms is to practice exercises called Kegels. You do this for the PC or pubococcygeus muscles, the ones that contract when you have an orgasm or cut off the flow of urine. Also faking orgasms can help you, moaning out loud, breathing harder and faster, tightening and loosening your pelvic muscles will send your body signals that it's time for another orgasm and will make multiples more likely.

MM: More Cosmopolitan fare includes "50 Tiny Things You Do That Will Make Any Man A Mushball." Name three.

BF: One man said that "A great-looking woman driving a pickup makes me weak in the knees. Has to be a real truck, though, not one of those sissy-ass sport-utility vehicles." Another one was "I really get into flannel pajamas. I can hardly wait to see what's underneath" and finally "Tube tops. I'm glad they seem to be coming back. I never really got over them."

MM: You write a lot about men, how to ignite them, how to get inside their heads. Where do men fit into the Cosmo picture?

BF: Women definitely want insight into how men are thinking. So we often ask men their opinions or ask them about behavior that mystifies our reader. We also know that we have about 3 million male readers. So not only are they secret readers, where they will read their wife's copy or their girlfriend's copy, but there are a lot of men that buy their own copy. I recently spoke to an avid male reader, who is a mountain climber and adventure seeker; he owns the resort Snowbird. He told me that he loves to buy Cosmo because it gives him insight as to what women are thinking about.

MM: Who is the Cosmo woman today as opposed to the woman Helen Gurley Brown once catered to?

BF: It's actually the same women; it's just there is a hell of a lot more of them today. The Cosmo woman has always been one who seeks to make her own destiny. She wants to have it all; she wants to have a great career, wonderful relationship, and a great sex life. Why not? She wants to have the best look that she can, and have good health. The only difference is that today, added to that equation is the fact that she also wants kids. Maybe 30 years ago when Helen started, women who were seeking to have it all through career and relationship didn't feel they could also juggle a family. Today young women want to have that added to the equation, it's critical.

MM: The Cosmo covers are always cleavage oriented. One headline blares, "Remind Your Boobs to Wish Your Bra Happy Birthday."

BF: I don't really know why cleavage works on the cover and research has not uncovered an answer. We know it works, so we keep doing it. I think having a sense of humor is important. Sometimes we are talking about very serious issues, but other times we reflect that life is fun.

So we celebrated the 85th anniversary of the sexiest apparatus of the 20th century, the bra, something that has managed to boggle men's minds and mitts for nearly four generations. It's fun and it's entertaining.

MM: Cosmo and feminism have taken their share of knocks and backlash, and yet the

Cosmo philosophy appears to have endured, becoming bigger and more appealing than ever, while hard core feminism has been labeled the "f" word. Is there a conflict between the two?

BF: I think that Cosmo is a very feminist magazine. I think the ultimate meaning in being a feminist is to be able to realize your own dreams and to not have barriers in your way. That's what Cosmo's all about, giving women tools and support to go after what they want to achieve in their lives, and so I think we are completely in sync with feminism. Cosmo doesn't think that it's essential that you have a man. What we think is that if you want a man, we are going to help you find a good man because you shouldn't settle for anything less. Most women want to hook up with a man and have a wonderful loving relationship. There was a lot more emphasis on women getting married and being matchmade for hundreds and thousands of years before now. Now women make their own decisions about what kind of romantic relationship they're going to commit to. I don't think there is anything wrong with looking for advice, not just from your friends and mother; but also from a magazine that tells you don't settle for anybody that's not going to respect you and be a full partner.

MM: You've held on to your maiden name for so many years and why did you recently stop using it?

BF: It was a sign that my hand was really getting sore from signing a hyphenated last name on every cheque. I have to sign a lot of things at work and it just took too long. Also, I have been married for 16 years and I have 3 children and it just gets confusing. The kids are one name and your another name, so it's all those reasons. It's easier.

MM: Tales are legendary of you counting labor contractions at a meeting and then heading off to the hospital to have your baby and then we find you two days later at your kitchen table with your baby in your arms working. Why and how do you do it?

BF: Launching a new magazine and then having a baby with 7 days of each other was not in the master plan. I wouldn't say it's effortless. In that particular case, the baby was a surprise, it wasn't like I planned the timing to work out that way. I had been hoping to get pregnant for quite a while and had actually given up on it and boom, that's when it happened. It was just a coincidence. I wasn't pregnant when I was hired for the job. I didn't really intend to have a baby and launch a magazine, it just happened the way it did, so you sort of have to deal with the circumstances you're in. I'm very lucky. I have had pretty easy pregnancies and deliveries and I have always felt fantastic after each delivery. I've got a lot of energy and this time, for the first time, I had a night nurse, so I didn't have to get up for every single feeding. I was in a very unique situation this pregnancy because I really couldn't take a maternity leave. With the first baby when I was editor at Flare, I really worked non-stop at home as well. It was hard because I didn't have as much help as I had this time. . With my second child I had a proper maternity leave. This time, with the extra help, I could enjoy the baby, but I could also hand the baby over when it was absolutely necessary, so I was able to cope. I worked at home for a month and then the baby and the nanny came to the office with me for 4 & 1/2 months, as I was breast-feeding.

I'm not the only woman who has done this. I actually know several other women who have done this and they found that this was workable. You have to have a sympathetic boss, which I do. Unfortunately not every woman has this opportunity.

MM: How do you deal with the big issue of guilt?

BF: I think every working mother feels guilty. On the other hand, I think that this guilt we're talking about with motherhood is a new phenomenon. I certainly don't think that mothers of past generations felt guilty, they didn't have a choice about being a working mother; they couldn't feel guilty because life was all about survival. Women used to have much larger families and have to work for their subsistence, often taking their kids along to work. Women did not have the concept of feeling guilty. It's this generation of women who have the luxury of having guilt. I think women of our generation beat themselves up too much, and that whole issue should be put in perspective. We probably, even though we work, we give our children far more time and attention than most generations of children that have ever been raised on this earth.

MM: How is your husband a key player in Bonnie Fuller "having it all"?

BF: He is just terrific. His name is Michael Fuller, he's an architect who has an office at home and he is able to arrange his schedule, so that he can spend time with the kids. If there is something at school during the day he can arrange his schedule, so that he can attend.

MM: Have you become the predominate breadwinner?

BF: Yes, and that's also because of the nature of architecture, which is a pretty tough business. I don't think this has ever been an issue between us. I have a husband who is very comfortable in his own skin and he likes what he is doing very much. For myself I have my plate full. I am always trying to manage of my time better, so that I can spend more time with my family.

MM: What words would you use to best describe who you are?

BF: In terms of my character, I would say optimistic, persistent, and energetic.

MM: How do you respond to the snipers who call you tough, autocratic, demanding, and overly ambitious?

BF: They're usually Canadians who have those comments. And usually I don't respond. When you are in the public eye, people will take pot shots at you. However, I think the one thing that's true is that I am demanding as a boss and I think that's a positive thing. If I don't demand my staff do their best work, to dig deep and get the best stories than I am not doing my job because this is a very competitive world that I'm in. There's a lot of pressure on me to sell a lot of magazines every month, so I have got to deliver a really good product. If you don't set high standards for yourself and for others then you are never going to reach them and provide the best work for your reader. So I don't have a problem with being called demanding. People have worked a long time for me and have learned a lot; I have spawned a lot of other editors in senior positions in New York City, so it's been a good thing for their careers.

MM: As a Canadian did you bring something from your background or experience that set you apart from you American counterpart?

BF: I was lucky being Canadian because I got an opportunity at a young age, 26, to be

Editor of a national magazine, Flare. That would never happen at such a young age in the States. In terms of business, in the States there is a much larger talent pool to draw from. In Canada it was hard to find enough writers, photographers, models to do the job I wanted to do. Every time you got a terrific photographer or a model, they would move to Europe or to the States. There are a lot more trained journalists here to work with and I have an easier time to make deadlines.

MM: Now that you've moved into upper stratosphere of the New York publishing elite, what doors have opened for you?

BF: It's a great position to be in; it's very competitive. I enjoy being able to compete in the big ball game. I enjoy that, but in terms of day to day work, all you think about is the job you've got to do, the pages you've got to put out, the story you've got to get in. Nothing is any easier.

You think that more doors are going to be opened. You think your going to get bigger named celebrities or bigger politicians to cooperate with you. They still don't; it's still really hard. It's still a struggle where you're on a bigger stage, where the results are more public and where you've got a longer way to fall. So it's more pressure. There are probably more perks in people's imagination than there are in reality. I do have a car and a driver, but I work in the car the whole way in and then the whole way home from work.