



## Standing My Ground: Memoir of a Woman Physician

**Clair M. Callan**

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*This is the incredible true story of a remarkable woman who cracked the glass ceiling of the medical world.*

Like many unsung heroes of women's history, Clair M. Callan has had a remarkable career. Born in Ireland during World War II, she followed her mother's footsteps into medicine, becoming an anesthesiologist. As her family grew and moved across continents, Callan balanced her work with her family, children, and eventual diagnosis of breast cancer, all during a time when women were not necessarily a welcome presence in the medical world. She describes her life and livelihood in the engaging memoir, *Standing My Ground*.

The book doesn't avoid discussing the difficulties that Callan experienced due to her gender, but it does treat them as a known entity, an occupational hazard that the author is fairly well prepared to handle. She approaches hostile bosses and a demanding home life with equal aplomb and a matter-of-fact resourcefulness born of both hard work and self-respect. This memoir may inspire women in particular, who still struggle for equal visibility in the sciences, but any medical professional will be able to take a page from Callan's book. Rather than labeling herself a feminist, mother, or icon, she simply commits herself to being the best possible professional, and her memoir is all the more accessible for it.

In fact, with its clear-cut style and thoroughness, this book could serve as a manual for success in medicine. From medical-school experiences to research in the private sector, the author's career track takes her through several different areas of the medical world, and explores the connections between them. The book particularly emphasizes the importance of participation in professional organizations and the development of personal networks. Callan spells out several strategies for working into useful leadership positions, and demonstrates why taking on new roles is critical to professional advancement. Leadership tips feature prominently, and the book often highlights the importance of shedding the early socialization that encourages women to defer to men in professional settings.

Though it chiefly describes her medical career, the book also demonstrates an impressive example of the elusive healthy work-life balance. Callan often cites her own mother's regular absence from the dinner table as inspiration for her family-oriented attitude. Yet she and her husband function as equals professionally, and though she occasionally makes sacrifices for her family, the presence of her children doesn't prevent her from succeeding in her field. Her even-keeled management of both her medical and maternal roles will resonate with career women of all stripes.

Though *Standing My Ground* is likely to appeal to career women, medical professionals in general will find this memoir's many tips and pointers to be useful. Callan's years of experience are not only a good representation of a woman's medical career during a time of social transition, but are also a fine overview of the real requirements of success in medicine.

ANNA CALL (May 19, 2015)

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