In 2000, she became the eighth president and the first woman elected to the post in the College’s history, as well as the first to be promoted to the position from the faculty ranks. She led the institution through its name change from WMC to McDaniel. During the past 10 years, she oversaw more than $145 million in campus improvements for academic study, student residential life and recreation. And she just celebrated the successful completion of the most ambitious fund-raising campaign to date, with $77 million raised. Her numerous honors will include an honorary degree from McDonnel at Commencement 2010. In addition to her many duties, the president ceremonially “rings in” the freshman class and “rings out” graduating seniors each year by sounding the Old Main bell. She will retire in June.

Who doesn’t like to be first?

I’m proud to have served as this historic institution’s first woman president. I haven’t thought about it too much during my tenure, although it came up quite often during the name change. A lot of people brought it up to Jim Melhorn, who was Board Chair at the time. Some said, “This is what you get for hiring a woman.” Others said, “It took a woman to have the guts to do this.”

My kind of power

I have never felt that I alone wielded power. But I’ve been powerfully invested in this College and I think others have been swayed by my commitment. The very first call that I made to a foundation was to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. We had never, ever made any inroads to the Mellon Foundation before. I went in and walked out with a $20,000 grant that day and an invitation to come back to join a very exclusive group of up-and-coming college presidents. The vice president of the program, Mary Patricia McPherson, saw how much I believed in this institution and she knew that I really thought that this institution had a future and that we deserved to be supported. I totally believe it to this day. And she was convinced.

The CEO Sisterhood

Women probably are as different as men, but I think there is an understanding — even a solidarity — among women CEOs because we’ve all traveled a more difficult path. I hope for women who are in their 30s that it will be easier because those of us in our 60s have traveled that journey before.

I’m not afraid to use the f-word

People run away from the term “feminism” now. In my opinion, the term “feminists” merely means that you believe that women deserve an equal opportunity with men. And so I certainly am a feminist.

My biggest decision as president

We’d been talking about changing the College’s name for the entire 30-some years that I’d been here on the Hill. I knew that soon after I became the president we were going to need to launch a campaign. I went to then-Board Chair Jim Melhorn and I said, “You can’t change the name of the school at the end of a campaign because people will feel like they’ve been had. You can’t change the name of the school in the middle of the campaign because people will stop giving. If we don’t change the name of the school before we start a campaign we can’t do it. So either let’s do it now or stop talking about it for the next 10 years because it’s a distraction.” And so he told me to go ahead and think about a strategy. The rest is history.

Doing the right thing wasn’t easy

Changing the name was absolutely the right decision. It was the best thing for the College and, as the president, it was now my responsibility to do what was right. I realized that not all the alumni would agree, but I never expected that people would say such horrible things to me.

Never hold a grudge

I have so much respect for Leroy Merritt ’72, who set himself up and made such a strong stand against the name change and who then came back — and gave back millions — to his alma mater with his declaration of “I don’t hold a grudge.” What a lesson for all of us. Was I hurt by some of the nasty letters I received from alumni? Absolutely. Crushed in some cases. But I absolutely don’t hold a grudge.

A new home for my hardbacks

I have hundreds of books that I have to move out of the President’s House. I’m building thousands of dollars’ worth of bookshelves just to accommodate all my books. These are my friends. You don’t think I’m going to abandon my friends?

2 books and a film I enjoyed most this year

 Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese; American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin; The Erin Diary: The Film For My Father.

Our alums are easy to love

We have wonderful alumni and it has been fun to get to know them during numerous campus events each year and while traveling around the country for regional gatherings. Of course, I keep the best alum — my husband of three years, Lee Rice ‘48.

Count me in

Talk about an honor. It will be very meaningful to receive the honorary degree and become an honorary McDaniel alumnus. It’s especially meaningful because the impetus for it came from the faculty and my role as a faculty member is very important to me.

What I won’t miss

I will miss the faculty a lot; I will not miss faculty meetings.

Women probably are as different as men, but I think there is an understanding — even a solidarity — among women CEOs because we’ve all traveled a more difficult path.

My new BFF

I love my Kindle. I’m irrational about my Kindle. First of all I make the print bigger which is a real plus. I’m convinced that I read faster (and I’m a fast reader) with the Kindle because the print’s bigger. It’s the worst thing for impulse buying. I sit in book club and they’re talking about a book that sounds really good to me and before I know it I’m downloading it for $9.99.

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