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When I read the biographical sketch that I wrote 10 years ago, I can only smile with satisfaction at how far away the gender problems that I faced at the beginning of my career are from the situation of today's women in science (even though not all of them are solved yet).

The last 10 years have been years of big changes. I went from being the Director of the Physical Oceanography Division at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (PhOD/AOML) in Miami, to being the Chief Scientist of AOML, to retirement from the federal government, and finally to a part-time position as a scientist at the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies (CIMAS), a joint institute between NOAA and the University of Miami (UM).

The journey to my positions as division director and chief scientist, even though it was not free of obstacles, was very rewarding. I think that my main achievement during those years—in addition to carrying out the administrative duties associated with the job—was to continue my career as a scientist, obtaining funds, directing scientific projects, and publishing scientific results, as well as remaining an involved mother and spouse.



As PhOD director, I was pushed to expand my scientific horizons, not only regarding my own projects, but also the various projects of the entire division. I also faced, for the first time, important administrative challenges, including being responsible for managing big budgets, writing performance reviews, hiring and firing personnel, and being a “woman boss” (which, in a few cases, presented some problems). At the end of my 10-year tenure in that position, the laboratory went through an intensive external review. It was of great personal satisfaction to learn that the division came out of that process with excellent reviews. At that time, I decided that I had closed one cycle, and it was now time for someone new to take my place. I stepped out of the position of division director and accepted the position of AOML Chief Scientist. Freed from my previous managerial responsibilities, my new career efforts were directed toward science policy and strategic planning at NOAA, particularly in the area of ocean and climate.

On December 31, 2012, I took one of the most difficult steps of my career: I retired. This was an extremely difficult decision for me to make, even though as I retired from the federal government, I accepted a part-time position at CIMAS/UM. The idea behind this most recent change was that now I was going to be free to direct my energies only toward writing those papers that I always wanted to write but never had enough time to do. Or, to have the luxury of being able to get away from the office for extended periods of time to participate in interesting research cruises. Although retired, I am still highly involved in scientific projects of my preference. But after the initial shock, and after two good years, I can say that I am enjoying the change.

My advice for young women: Change is good. It is difficult, and scary, but good!