



*How a farm girl from Smithville took a degree in home economics and became CEO of a top worldwide advertising agency.*

**B** By the time Pat Shepherd Cafferata '69 graduated from Northwest, she had all of the ingredients for success. In high school she was voted "most likely to succeed," was valedictorian, captain of the basketball team and senior class president. Her outgoing personality coupled with her desire to excel at anything she attempted made her equally successful at Northwest. There was no doubt that the job offers would be plentiful after she finished student teaching high school home economics.

There was one problem.  
She "absolutely hated" teaching.

The farm girl from Smithville who had plenty of experience driving a tractor, cooking and sewing, decided she would enter the competitive, male-dominated world of business.

*Written by Mitzi Lutz  
Photographs by Darren Whitley*

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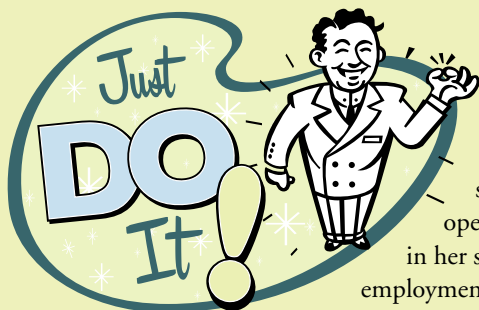


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1) Cafferata's mentor, Dr. Bill Wells, often included a tribute to her in many of the textbooks he authored. 2) Cafferata visited with President Dr. Dean Hubbard prior to Northwest's spring commencement. She was the guest speaker and received an honorary doctorate. 3) Cafferata, joined by Northwestern University faculty members, is active on the Chicago university's Kellogg School of Management Dean's Advisory Board. 4) Though both are retired from the advertising business, the Cafferatas enjoy discussing marketing strategies and campaigns.



If Cafferata was going to forego teaching, she knew she would have to be open-minded in her search for employment. Her responses to the classified ads in *The Kansas City Star* netted her three job offers. One was for an account coordinator at Barickman Advertising, the largest advertising agency in Kansas City.

"At the time, I didn't even know what an advertising agency was," Cafferata admitted.

She rejected the agency's offer because the salary wasn't quite as good as her other offers, but the agency was persistent.

"The gentleman at the ad agency called me back and said, 'Look, Pat, you've always done everything in an organized, responsible way. Why don't you take a risk and for the fun of it just do it?'" she said. "I accepted the offer, and as it turns out, I loved it."

After six months at the agency, Cafferata grew bored being a "glorified secretary." However, she became interested in the research component of the business. When the economy took a downward turn forcing the agency to eliminate several positions, Cafferata stepped up.

"It was a great opportunity for me because I took on a full-time research assistant job in addition to my other full-time job within the agency," she said. "It was then that I really learned consumer research and how to do focus

groups – something I would use the rest of my career."

But after three years at Barickman, Cafferata decided she had learned all she could there.

"I dusted a lot of desks, and the closest I ever got to an important meeting was in the back room running the projector," she said. "Although it was a great experience, it just wasn't a woman's kind of place."

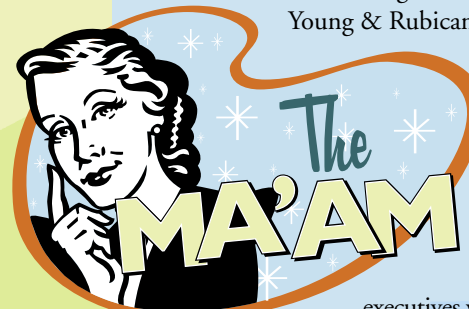


Armed with skills as a focus group moderator, Cafferata scanned the classified ads in Chicago – a mecca for advertising professionals – and landed a research position at Needham Harper & Steers (now DDB Needham Chicago). In her 13 years there, she became the agency's first female research director and, as a senior vice president, was the only woman on the board of management. There she met two important men: her predecessor and mentor, Dr. Bill Wells, and her husband, Mike Cafferata, the agency's executive creative director to whom she's been married to for 28 years.

"We'd talk about work all the way to the office in the morning and then all they way home," Mike said. "We were obsessed with it, but it was fun."

In 1986, she and Mike became business competitors and had to be more tight-lipped when she accepted a position as president and chief executive officer of Young & Rubicam Chicago – a division of a top worldwide communication company.

Cafferata, the only female CEO of a major agency in Chicago at the time, remained at the helm of



The role of women in the advertising industry has changed significantly from when Cafferata started.

"When I first started, all of the executives were men," she said. "I guess I thought that they knew something I didn't know because I hadn't been trained in advertising or marketing. I set out to learn anything I could, and I didn't let it discourage me."

"Actually, by the time I retired, we were having trouble finding qualified men in some departments."

Cafferata, a great strategist, was well respected by her peers as a leader in her field, regardless of her gender. She held leadership roles with the Chicago Ad Club and was presented the Advertising Woman of the Year award – the first researcher to receive the honor.

As CEO, Cafferata's employees often referred to her as "PC" or "The Ma'am."

"An employee once described me as managing with a velvet glove," she said, "because people knew I was the boss and I could take charge and make decisions, but I wasn't dictatorial, and I didn't use power to intimidate."

Pat and I have a great time and enjoy being with each other," Mike Cafferata said. "Even though we're both retired, we're still marketers at heart. We're always analyzing marketing plans and trying to figure out everyone's strategy. We can't help ourselves. It gets in your blood."



Cafferata enjoys horseback riding, traveling and entertaining and hopes to resume her interest in playing tennis and the piano, but she admits to having no set plans for retirement.

"I have no idea what I'll be doing in five years," she said. "I'm about as bad on goals for retirement as I was for goals in my career. I was raised to do my best, beat everybody else if I could – in an honest way – and the right things would come my way. And they have. I never had the goal to be a CEO of an advertising agency. I just stay active and know the importance of being a lifelong learner."

Cafferata, who divides her time between homes in Chicago and on her family's farm in Smithville, stays active in her retirement by mentoring students and serving on many boards. She's a member of Northwest's Mass Communication Professional Advisory Committee and serves on the board of directors for RHR International and the Columbian Financial Group. In addition, she is on the Dean's Advisory Board and the Women's Business Association Advisory Board, both with the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

She has received the Friends of Kellogg School of Management Award from Northwestern University and the Distinguished Alumni Award and an honorary doctorate from Northwest.

"Northwest is a great place – it has an excellent student environment, top academics and a great deal of pride," Cafferata said. "There's a dynamic environment at Northwest and it's never static, unlike a lot of colleges. I'm proud that I received my degree from Northwest. I learned a lot in college that I've applied to the business world."

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