

VALERIE HAMLIN RAMSEY '57: A 'MODEL' ROSEMARIAN

BY SUSAN E.B. SCHWARTZ '74

As the adage goes, if at 20, we have the face we were born with, and after 40 we have the face we deserve, then Valerie Hamlin Ramsey, at age 67, must be highly deserving.

Four years ago, when most people her age contemplate retirement, this mother of six and grandmother of seven successfully launched a new, highly implausible career: high-fashion model. A conversation with Valerie quickly reveals her backbone is even more impressive than her cheekbones.

And you soon realize that Valerie's story is not about modeling designer clothes; it's about making the most of each life stage and meeting life's challenges. Born in California, Valerie was four when her parents divorced and her glamorous mother moved to Manhattan for her career, which was scouting hotel locations throughout South America.

Facing a rare double 1950s whammy—a child of divorce along with a “road warrior” executive mom—Valerie felt different from most children. At seven, Valerie attended her first boarding school; three years later, she entered Rosemary Hall as a seventh-grade boarder.

Initially homesick, Valerie grew to love Rosemary Hall, which became her surrogate family. Valerie fondly recalls Halloween parties in the catacombs under the Greenwich Main Building, Nativity plays, Christmas caroling, daily chapel, and even the school's strict rules. “We couldn't talk to boys on the phone unless they were our brothers,” she adds. “It was amazing how many brothers we had!”

Besides her height—five-foot-ten—Valerie never thought her appearance striking at Rosemary Hall, particularly since her close friends included Ali McGraw '56. “I was gangling and gawky,” Valerie insists.

After Rosemary, many people suggested that she should try modeling. But her mother was horrified. “In those days, nice girls didn't become models,” Valerie says.

Instead, Valerie enrolled in Rollins College, but left after her sophomore year to marry her college sweetheart. Forty-seven years later, they're still happily married; Wally Ramsey taught English at Avon Old Farms, Greenwich Country Day, and then in 1987, at The Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, Calif. Happily and uneventfully, for most of Valerie's life, she was a dedicated prep school master's wife, housewife, and stay-at-home mom.

In 1987, in Pebble Beach with her children grown, Valerie decided to enter the work force full-time. Hired into an entry-level administrative position at the Pebble Beach Resorts, over the next decade Valerie worked her way up the corporate ladder.

At age 57, she was promoted into her current dream job of Manager of Public Relations and Media. She couldn't imagine her life becoming more exciting. But she was wrong.

Five years later, as part of her liaison responsibilities for television and movies, Valerie was showing the resort to a television



producer scouting locations for a golf tournament. “I love your look,” he kept saying to Valerie. “It's very Ralph Lauren. Do you have photos I could show to modeling agencies?”

Valerie recalls, “I thought he was giving me the big Hollywood come-on because he wanted Pebble Beach to host his tournament.” She was wrong.

Four modeling agencies quickly signed her, including legendary Ford Models. Valerie now continues full-time at Pebble Beach, while fitting in television and print shoots and high fashion runway assignments. Her Web site, www.valerieramsey.com, has a portfolio of her recent work.

With her signature long, platinum tresses, she is already a local celebrity, with renown spreading nationally. Recently, she has appeared on several television shows, including *Extra* and *Today Show*, alongside Raquel Welch and best-selling author Gail Sheehy.

Valerie's beauty tips include exercising 30 minutes each morning, weight training, eating small portions, and exfoliating. She has not had plastic surgery. But the real tip, Valerie maintains, is to embrace the most of every age. “You have to be happy from within, stay open to new beginnings, and cherish the relationships in your life with your friends and family, particularly your children and grandchildren,” she says.

Ten years ago, she was diagnosed with uterine cancer and heart disease. Her successful treatments made her even more grateful for having developed a strong backbone, and not relying mainly on her cheekbones.

Her life story is being penned by one of her daughters, with the book's introduction by soap star Susan Lucci. Valerie comments wistfully, “I wish my mother could have been alive to see this. She would have gotten such a huge kick out of seeing me now.”

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