

WHO WE ARE

Ethel. For the wholehearted, curious women, engaging deeply with the world around them.

MISSION

Connecting and inspiring women through intellect, generosity and story.

ABOUT US

Ethel is a platform and creative project fueled by a desire to express purposeful, well-rounded femininity, and to explore the perspective and brilliance of women so we can better understand and embrace our world.

The concept for this publication was inspired by my (Allison's) great, great Aunt Ethel, who was many things—but among them, an educator, a benefactor, and an independent traveler. She was an impressive picture of femininity for a woman born in 1903. It's because of her kindness that I experienced the college education I did, and because of her, my family knows the stability they have. Just as I have seen flickers of myself and who I want to be in this distant image of a storied family member—whose name, like mine, means

“noble”—I look for these women everywhere I go and hope to engage the world around me in similar ways—full of humility, spunk, and purpose.

At Ethel, we believe that intellectual, experience-based conversation cultivates empathy for the complexities of life and drives us to be more whole-hearted, generous individuals. We believe that women fuel and drive these conversations, too often from the background, and we want to take that to the front page. Not just story, not just emotion, and not just reporting, but the intersection of it all—just as it occurs in our real lives. We're hoping to contribute to a more beautiful world and to meaningful legacies.

OUR STANDARD

We prioritize accuracy, experience, and heart. We don't care if we have the most seasoned writer; we want the most qualified individual with the most unique, thoughtful perspective for their respective topics.

OUR VOICE

Intellectual and accessible. Kind and bold. Feminine and grounded. Researched, empathetic, humble, welcoming.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We are hoping to *create conversations, substantiated with research and integrity; we want to prioritize learning from credible and timely sources, to extend the same opportunity to our audience.* Even personal stories can be strengthened by factual context. This also means we want writers who are personally involved, attached, and experienced with their subject matter; we value *the voices of those with dirty hands, those in the arena.*

Our priority is to be a platform of *accessibility and meaningful empathy.* We know powerful, productive conversations start with *humble communication and invitation,* and are sustained with *perspectives that highlight pain or complexity alongside solutions and hope.* We believe *context and nuance* is important, and we want to *build a table that everyone feels welcome to join.* The goal is for our audience to leave that table with a *greater understanding of humanity and hope,* with a better vision of what the world could be.

Ultimately, a large part of our heart for Ethel is to be *countercultural* in our approach to difficult or uncommon topics—we want to be *bold and humble, intelligent and approachable, challenging and gracious.* We also know this vision comes from a team effort, and we hope you'll be a part of the process with us as we thoroughly edit for the most *intentional results,* while *prioritizing your voice.* We're okay with taking our time and leveraging a team to cultivate the best work.

WHAT WE'RE NOT LOOKING FOR

- Purely emotive, blog-style writing
- Perspective or research without personal buy-in
- Narrow or incomplete presentation of a topic or issue
- Unnecessarily inflammatory tone or language
- Inactionable (non-solution-oriented) highlighting of problems
- Lack of or limited consideration for other education levels, circumstances, backgrounds, or socioeconomic statuses

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PRINTING

Newspaper Club
Peterborough, UK

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Collection One

The Legacies We Leave

A
LETTER
FROM
THE EDITOR

BY ALLISON ANTRAM

PHOTOS BY LAURA BODNAR

“You would have liked her..”

It’s what my dad always says about my great, great aunt Ethel.

I grew up hearing a variety of stories about this woman. My interest in writing and English began young, and this unfamiliar relative was our family’s nearest reference point for that set of skills. She was an English teacher, I was often told. And by the sounds of it, a stickler by all accounts. Eventually, I also grew to know her as the benefactor whose funds would end up covering the first several semesters of my college education. There were other details here and there—about how she bought my dad his first car, how she never married—but they floated in the background of my consciousness.

There’s an inevitable degree of identity we take from our families; we inherit eyes and bodies and even mannerisms along with, for the fortunate among us, recipes and inspiration and warm memories. As much as I take from my parents—my dad’s logical brain, his thick brows and careful wit; my mother’s deep sense of care and her commitment to baking traditions—there are core interests of mine, pieces of my identity, that we don’t necessarily share. My creativity is a larger corner of that, as well as other life circumstances or privileges I’ve independently collected:

The vast majority of my formative years and twenties have been spent quite single. Gratefully, I now say. Travel, and forming a wide worldview through it, has become a core value of mine in my twenties—a fortunate opportunity I don’t fully share with much of my family, though I hope to share it with them someday. For better or worse, I also operate with a sense of independence and a hunger for tackling new challenges: I left my home state for school, I chose a major that was wildly impractical, I’ve enjoyed solo travel, and I’ve wrestled through any job where I felt limited in my growth capacity.

“You would have liked her,” my dad reminded me again, for what conversational relevance I can’t now recall. I pressed in, and asked why—asked for more.

He told me that yes, she was single. And so she traveled Europe, she had cats, she owned rental properties, and her sharp sense of sass never dulled. I felt a sudden sense of awe, of kinship with this distant relative, who seemed to share qualities with me even those closest to me naturally did not. She was independent and feisty, particularly for a woman born in 1903.

She left fingerprints on my life, and my family’s trajectory. I didn’t recognize in my late teens just how

much her generosity enabled me to go to the college of my choosing. I didn't think much about her support of my dad when his family was less able, and how she gave him a car and an education that otherwise wouldn't have been possible, which eventually resulted in a more stable foundation for our generation. I didn't realize how her actions significantly shifted the opportunities available to me, and my family.

From my mom's side, I have a little lined card that reads in the most stunningly perfect cursive writing, "My Christmas Cookie Recipe," and goes on to spell out my grandma Polly's cutout recipe, the centerpiece for all my Christmases. I distinctly remember that my mother's copy of this also has "to save on your phone bills!" printed in that flowing cursive. I've committed myself each Christmas of my adult life, apartment counterspace be damned, to making these cutouts, inviting friends into the tradition of frosting them, and giving them away before they become the bulk of my December diet (they inevitably do).

The recipe is one of my favorite inheritances from that side of my family, along with a handmade Raggedy Ann doll, a CD of my mom and her sisters' favorite songs from the 70s, and a boisterous extroversion shared by much of our large extended family.

Experiences and relationships evolve into the recipes, gifts, or stories we pass on, and the legacy we offer. Without much say, we inherit the glasses through which we see the world, the words we use to interact with others, or the hands that bake cookies from our foundational interpersonal relationships—familial or otherwise. Some amount of leverage comes in our adult lives—how and with whom we decide to spend our time, if and what we decide to study or practice, what we fill our minds with. Yet we never mature beyond the profound impact of the people closest to us, and what they are willing to offer.

"You would have liked her."

I'm sure I would have. Even knowing marginally little of her legacy, the idea of her—not to mention the tangible remnants of her—have been a comfort and an encouragement, knowing someone in my bloodline shares these miscellaneous pieces of identity that have long felt random.

It feels foolish to say, at my still young age and being quite childless, that I think often about who comes behind me—how the whispers of my life might drift into someone else's, or even the ripples that I can cast in my present life. But I feel a deep indebtedness to those around me and before me. Their legacies have molded

everything I am and everything I believe, not to mention an ever-deepening humility knowing how much more there is to learn and grow.

So, the namesake of this publication is my great, great aunt Ethel, yes, but it could just as easily be Polly, Sharon, Heather, or any of my many influential aunts. It could also bear the name of my mentors; of professors and preachers; of my friends who have become chosen family and the women I'm in awe of every day, who I've inherited so much from, and continue to. To tell you the truth, Ethel is simply a scapegoat for any threats of favoritism (and I do enjoy the antique charm of it).

Ethel Magazine, then, is an ode to each of those women, and hopefully an offering of the same wisdom and warmth to you. Minds and hearts change and are formed not in determined corners of the internet, but compassionate conversations around a table. While this is a far cry from a table, I hope it can be some kind of space to hear about an experience you've never had or never learned about, or acquire second-hand knowledge about a meaningful topic or a unique occupation, or simply gather and share what you have to offer with women generous enough to do the same.

Mostly, I hope the words featured will move our hearts in such a way that bends us to real action. I hope what you find here is not haughty opinions, but thoughts that motivate hospitality or service or even a radical change. Because truly, with everything I have, I believe each of us has something to offer the world around us—and particularly as women, that's too often and too quickly dismissed, when in reality, that's the bulk of what's formed me and the motivating force behind who I want to be.

This creative project is our love letter—myself and my dear friend and cofounder, Ashley—to the women and the legacies that have carried me, and my meager effort to give them the platform they deserve. I think you'll like them.

Allison Antram

Cofounder & Editorial Director



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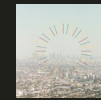
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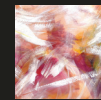
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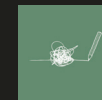
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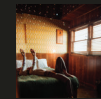


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Collection Two



When We Grow Up

WHAT WE'RE MISSING
WHEN WE RESENT AGING

By Allison Antram

PHOTO BY KATE GROUNDS

I sat in my neighborhood cafe recently; it happened to be a jazz night.

Life pumped through instruments and glasses of wine. The small younger crowd in the room—admittedly myself included—kept to themselves, hidden behind laptops and books. But the majority of the room bore grey hair, artful caps, and corduroy jackets. Each time the door opened, a new member of this society slipped in and greeted at least a few of the others with a hug and wide smiles. They tapped their feet enthusiastically, clapped and whooped at the conclusion of a song, and I gazed with an admiring smirk at an older woman standing in the middle of the room, a wool skirt twirling as her orthopedic shoes danced and swayed to the music, an animated smile beaming from beneath a bowler hat and short, grey bangs. I was in awe.

I suppose, however, not all of us can carry the life and joy and gratitude of someone who has lived that many years well and found themselves welcomed in a tight-knit community of a local cafe. No, that has to be earned. Received. The warm and gentle smiles, the carefree-ness. It's not that all older people are this way. But when I see someone like that, I am captivated with admiration and awe. That is what I want to be.

Yet in my day-to-day, I, like the rest of the tech-attached world, enjoy a barrage of anti-aging advertisements—many of which are promoted by influencers or celebrities who have spent significant amounts of money and taken extraordinary measures to fight back on aging, as if it were an avoidable or a vicious disease. According to Euromonitor International (2021), even with the market trending toward customers pursuing more simplicity in their skincare routines, the anti-aging industry is estimated to reach \$181 billion in sales by 2025. Most voices in the beauty or aesthetics space insist that Botox and/or retinol (preventative, of course) must start in your twenties.

I'm a year or so shy of 30, but I'm already exhausted by this. To be sure, I won't be ditching my SPF or quality moisturizers any time soon. Yet I wonder: What do we lose when we resent aging so much?

Well... money, obviously. In a Vox article aptly titled, "How the anti-aging industry turns you into a customer for life," writer Emily Stewart (2022) points out the marketing shift that impresses upon us the need "to feel empowered to look your best at any age." Yet, "whatever the tone, the goal remains the same: to remind consumers they're not comfortable with aging and prompt them to spend money accordingly. Repackaging anti-aging in a wellness frame carries the same old price tag—and the same psychological weight."

Are we so busy avoiding, dreading, conspiring against our age, that we've forgotten it's an inevitability, or even a gift?

But surely beneath the dollars and creams and injections, there's something buried that might tell us why we insist on devaluing women in particular as they age.

Further, Stewart (2022) points out that even as we start to praise some aging celebrities, we praise them for not looking their age. In her words, "we celebrate older women but not the un-intervened-upon face." Still, it isn't the skincare industry that's failing us, even if they're profiting off of it.

In fact, none of this is particularly new phenomena to point out. But surely beneath the dollars and creams and injections, there's something buried that might tell us why we insist on devaluing women in particular as they age.

As a child, we are consistently asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" That question times out around college and then becomes, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" or something impossible like that. At the ripe old age of twenty-eight, I can't say for certain, but I imagine that question stops getting asked at some point. We stop dreaming about our futures, or settle into what we have as "it."

There is no shortcut,
no get-out-of-wrinkles-free card.
What we desire most,
we find by walking faithfully and investing deeply.

Perhaps that's not all bad, especially for those of us drowning in American ambition. But how many of us build our adult lives with or around an intention for the gray-haired version that will look back at us however many years later? Are we so busy avoiding, dreading, conspiring against our age, that we've forgotten it's an inevitability, or even a gift?

According to a recent study, "when individuals accept the changes that come with aging, they view themselves more positively as they grow old, are more self-confident with new life challenges, and participate more in social life" (Evangelista et al., 2022).

Interestingly, the study also seemed to illuminate the difference between awareness and acceptance—as we age, we can obviously only be in denial so much, and surely there is a reasonable amount of grief that comes with what we lose as our bodies grow old. But there is a big difference between being aware of our age and fixating on it, or being aware and making self-deprecating remarks or sarcastic jokes. Yet, the study found "a constant awareness of aging was associated with health problems, which... were related to considerable decreases in self-esteem," which goes on to impair life-giving activities, like relationships and social engagement (Evangelista et al., 2022).

However, it's important to note that aging, and whatever human consequence comes with it, does not have to equate to inevitable doom. Another study revealed that "the experience of aging as physical decline was not [inherently] related to self-esteem" (Westerhof et al., 2011). Instead, a strong sense of self was much more linked to achievement and personal development.

So while our lifestyle choices may strengthen our bodies and our moisturizers and SPF's may hydrate and protect our skin, aging—and all that comes with it—is an inevitability. But, how we embrace aging, how we develop ourselves, and how we build our communities—those things matter, and make a significant difference. The question then becomes, how do we restore the value of age? Ironically, it seems a lot of what we chase as women only comes with time and some wrinkles.

We read self-help books and listen to podcasts in pursuit of confidence and freedom from others' opinions, while statistically, our self-esteem only climbs with age (Orth et al., 2018). We chase enlightenment and peace and spiritual depth that often rest most simply in the earned wisdom of perseverance and wholeheartedness and long-lived-in ideologies. We hustle and grind and dream for a day when we can lead and build professionally, but—despite the cultural dominance of 30-under-30—the deep sense of purpose and expertise we crave in our work often reveals itself after years in the mundane—and if not that, in a complete departure from conventional work in pursuit of the beauty of something simpler, more restful.

I simply have learned the most about myself and my world from women who walked before me, grew in wisdom, and were generous enough to pass it along. There is no shortcut, no get-out-of-wrinkles-free card. What we desire most, we find by walking faithfully and investing deeply. But when we resent aging, we miss that. And honestly, aren't there more important things to worry about? Better pursuits to cultivate?

Serendipitously, I'm finishing out this article once again in that neighborhood cafe, once again on a jazz night, once again hiding behind my laptop. There is a coupon for cosmetic filler in my inbox. But I am crowded out by gray-haired individuals in tasteful hats, with much more participatory enthusiasm for the music filling the room. Same "whoop"s, same swaying, same greetings—how do they all know each other? I admire their joyful camaraderie, their life, their ease of confidence. This, I think, is what I'd like to be when I grow up.

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