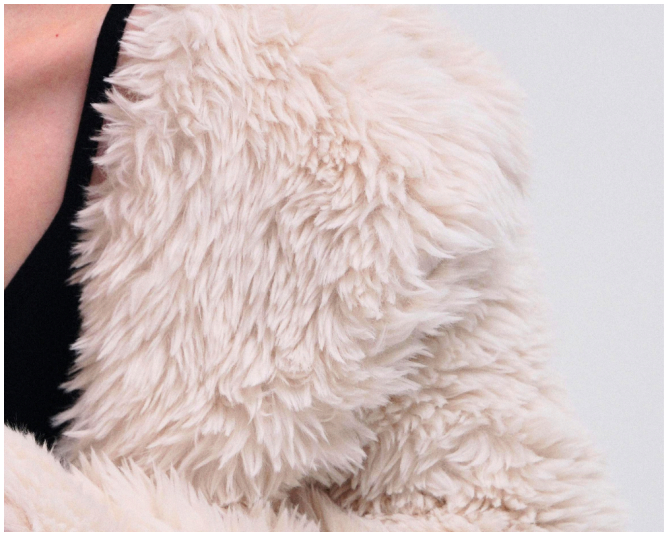
Del Norte Triplicate

COMMUNITY

Gloria Steinem Tribute: Independence Wore a Coat

By Pam Abrahamsson September 10, 2026



When I was 16, a department store gave me a credit card in my name so I could buy the coat of my dreams.

A Ridiculous Coat Purchased: A Door Opened

I didn't realize at the time, but I was doing something groundbreaking, and it wasn’t just my dubious teenage fashion moment.

American women couldn't have done what I just did even a few years before that infamous coat walked into my world. Many women around the world can’t do today what I did back then as a teenager.

And no, this thing that happened wasn't about my age - more relaxed times, and at 5'11", no one ever questioned my years on the planet or my age when it came to jobs, credit, and opportunities.

I owed that fluffy white coat to Gloria Steinem.

More importantly, I owed a path of financial independence and the fabric of my life to this trailblazing icon.

A Generation of Firsts: Credit, College, Career

That credit card gave me a credit history. When I was 18, that credit history landed me a bank loan without a co-signer. Having that bank loan gave me the money and choice to attend college; something that wasn’t in my family history or on its collective radar.

That modest college education gave me the foundation for a career in creativity, wordsmithing, and the chance to meet amazing people.

Full disclosure: it also gave me many 80-hour+ workweeks, a 24/7 always-on mentality, and plenty of cat-herding, but you don’t go into communications work for 9-5 stability.

From that early start, I launched a business, bought houses on my own credit and savings, and traveled freely.

Standing on the Shoulder of Giants: Gloria Steinem

All of these milestones were rights I took for granted - and it was only much later that I realized my right was a privilege - hard-fought for and won by Ms. Steinem and her ilk.

-If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants- Isaac Newton

I owe an unpayable debt to her, and the giants whose shoulders I stood on before and after her. Ms. Steinem and others fought, lost, suffered, and got up and continued to fight so that women would have that precious item taken for granted by so many: choice.

Freedom to Choose: Embracing Success, Owning Failure

Not a pre-ordained way to behave, not a limited path that was our only way forward. Thanks to her and other pioneers, we were free to choose, succeed – and fail – on our own terms. A rare privilege indeed. And one that, as a callow 16-year-old with dubious fashion sense, I was completely unaware of.

Today, I am profoundly aware of the work and sacrifice Ms. Steinem made on our collective behalf. I am deeply grateful for her fearless championship of equal rights for women.

Rest in power, Ms. Steinem; you transformed lives and opened doors for women in ways that gave us agency and the ability to realize our dreams.

Sasquatch Approved: A Final Note

On a side note, that "fabulous" sheepskin coat went away into history. I suspect I looked more like a Sasquatch than a fashion plate wearing it. While the choice of clothing may have been dubious, today I appreciate that newfound moment of privilege that gave me, as a young woman, my first step into financial independence, responsibility – and freedom.