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**What was it like to be on the pill just after its approval?**

At the beginning, nobody was quite sure of its efficacy. They thought it was 99 percent effective, but the test trials were to show how many cycles you could go without getting pregnant.

When we started with the pill, the dosage was 10 milligrams (of estrogen). In the first few weeks, I probably gained 15 pounds. The dosage dropped to 5 milligrams and then down to 1. Now, it's even lower.

Women were cautious of the pill because they couldn't get clear information about it. After it proved to be meritorious, they flocked to it, but doctors didn't want to give it to unmarried women because they thought it would promote promiscuity.

When the pill was first launched, the medical director of Planned Parenthood refused to give the pill to unmarried women until they had had their second illegitimate child. Eventually, the board, which I was on, persuaded him to change the rule so a woman could get on the pill after having just one child out of wedlock.

**The long-term effects of the pill have been profound, but what were the biggest changes you saw?**

The pill made it possible for women to control their fertility, which changed everything. It was a watershed. It changes women's lives. It changed men's lives. Children are great when you want them, but a millstone around your neck if you don't.

Another big change was the information given out with medication. Prescriptions didn't come with instructions until the pill came along. Medicine used to be a secret society, like wizardry. Doctors didn't want to give away their secrets.

**Even though the pill has been around for half a century now, what hurdles remain for women and access to birth control?**

Women are slowly achieving a form of equality, but it's happening much slower than I thought it would. There's still a fear of women having control. Men don't want to relinquish power because they don't want to share. In all areas of life, it's uneven, but before the pill, it was much more out of balance.

Access to the pill has improved, but even if you can't pay anything, you can still buy it subsidized from Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood pushes everything but abortion. So many women were dying from botched abortions, and Planned Parenthood was designed to prevent them.

It's easy for young women to take the pill for granted. When you grow up with something that's available, it's not as imperative that you take it. In the future, I see the pill becoming even more routine. As young girls reach puberty, they'll be better educated about it, but that hinges on improved sex education.

There's this thought that if you teach women about sex, they will be promiscuous, but you never hear them saying the same thing about men.

abroyles@statesman.com; 912-2504