

Don't Know What They'll Give You: The Adventures of an Immigrant Family and Their Feminist Daughter." The title is based on a bit of wisdom passed down by her mother.

Even in retirement, Sonia keeps busy. She is a popular public speaker and still loves to travel. This summer, she will take a Caribbean cruise, tour Wyoming and the Dakotas and finally meet her longtime pen pal and editor of her e-book who lives in Montana. In August, there's the conference of the International Association of Yiddish Clubs in Cleveland. A New Jersey playwright is working on an adaptation of her book. Just before our lunch date, Sonia attended her 50th class reunion at the University of Miami School of Law.

Sonia is active in the local chapter of NOW, and wants people to know that there is a busy Sarasota-Manatee chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU) that works closely with AU National and its legal department in Washington, D.C. She is a board member of the watchdog organization and a legal investigator. "It's fun acting like a lawyer again," she confesses. Sonia also enjoys the stimulation of Sarasota County's informational "Civics 101," a 10-week course that teaches about every agency within local government. "Sarasota is an incredible place," she raves. "It's a small town with big-city amenities. Whatever interests you in the world, you have to be able to find it here . . . organizations, activities, artists, theater, history." The jury is still out, however, on her three big dislikes: bugs, heat and hurricanes.

Although she strongly identifies with her religious cultural heritage, Sonia is secular and has enjoyed being embraced by the "very welcoming and warm" members of the local Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. She has volunteered as an usher at Florida Studio Theatre and the Glenridge Performing Arts Center, but was "fired" from The Play-

The first in her family to have an education, Sonia was her high school valedictorian and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Cornell, and she earned her University of Miami law degree with summa cum laude honors — first in her class — at a time when only three percent of law students were female. She spent 36 years as a lawyer, in the federal government and as a high-level executive with two multinational corporations: GTE in Connecticut (where she was called "the Jackie Robinson of the GTE executive dining room") and as

ers for breaking the rules, such as fraternizing with the customers. Sonia is what is known as "a pistol." "I just do my thing," she says with a shrug of the shoulders.

Part of the "second wave of feminism," Sonia says women cannot declare full victory yet. The issues of domestic violence, rape and murder, lack of affordable, competent child care and successfully combining work and family remain to be solved. She says that, "We have accomplished a lot over here, but women overseas are a tsouris (translation: a mess), especially in developing countries, such as China . . . and we still have meshuganeh honor killings. . . . Overseas there is a tremendous amount to be done."

As a wife, mother and hard-hitting professional, Sonia has struggled to keep her life in balance, and acknowledges that she has made mistakes along the way. "I was never one for staying and working it out. . . . If something's not good, I just go. I don't put up with it," she admits. She was always financially independent, and remained single until the age of 42, when she married microbiologist Roberto Fuentes. After eight years, that union ended in divorce. And, in spite of all her successes and mentoring of young people who continue to seek her counsel, Sonia's biggest heartache is her estrangement from her only daughter, Zia, 35, who lives in California. "You can't win with your kids. . . . You can only make the best decisions you can at the time," she says ruefully, embracing the Tao philosophy that life has its different stages and we must always keep moving forward. "My function at this stage of my life is to help other people, and I like that. It's very gratifying," she says.

She had a pithy remark ready after reading an interview of mine with a psychic: "Psychics try to predict the future. I try to change it." To that end, Sonia is currently investigating creating an endowed scholarship to help women attend college.

head of compliance and affirmative action at TRW in Cleveland. She is also a breast cancer survivor.

When people remark how brave her life choices have been, Sonia demurs. "You can't really look at someone else's life and say what they did was courageous," she intones. "When people are always saying to me, 'Oh you're so brave!' I look at them like they're crazy. Everything I did is because it would have been worse not to do it. So I always took what for me was easier in a way. . . . I am not really a brave person."