A serious leader in broadcast journalism, Marlene Sanders (1931–2015) became the first female face on television news in 1964 when she temporarily filled in for an ailing Ron Cochran. In a field where most women were hired for secretarial work, Sanders repeatedly knocked against the glass ceiling behind the camera, working as a writer and associate producer at local New York news stations before becoming a correspondent for ABC News. There she had to overcome being pigeonholed into hosting a segment called “News with the Woman’s Touch,” covering “feminine” topics like food, fashion,
and child-rearing before she got any hard news assignments that she wanted. Once she did, she covered the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy and became the first female field reporter to cover the Vietnam War in 1966. Through her hard work and fearless news coverage, she finally broke through and became the first female vice president of the ABC News division. From that position, she went on to produce Emmy-award-winning documentaries, covering underserved voices in areas ranging from women’s liberation to elder care. Early in her life, she even had to defy her own mother’s admonition that “boys don’t like girls who are too smart” because she excelled in school. Sanders knew that the traditional woman’s role wasn’t for her, and she made the world better for it.