

Margaret
Cunningim
Women's Center

Let's dispel myths about rape

*Edie Rice-Sauer, Program Coordinator,
YWCA Shelter and Domestic Violence
Program*

The September 22 *Tennessean* confirmed my worst fears. The very myths regarding rape that I had thought were de-mythologized were in fact still accepted. This particular issue ran three stories that confirmed the existence of this rape mythology:

1. A Florida judge released a convicted rapist because the judge found the victim to be such a "pitiful" woman and surely "all the blame could not be laid on" the assailant.

2. Two Metro Nashville police officers admit to having intercourse with a female prisoner en route to Booking. One officer was quoted as saying "it was kind of fun for, you know, a chance, you have a female prisoner, she's not resisting, she's lotty dotty about everything."

3. The body of a female is found on Friday. On Saturday, the "badly bruised body," once thought to be the victim of ritualistic assault is now labeled merely a prostitute. The focus shifts to the victim's actions, instead of her death.

These three stories illustrate the pervasive mythic attitudes that:

- Women like to be raped.
- Good girls don't get raped.
- Rape can be controlled if women would just act responsibly.
- Men shouldn't be asked to control their urges.
- Rape is a crime of passion.

These myths continue to paint the picture that women are responsible for the violence perpetuated against them; that somehow men are not re-

sponsible for their actions and that women enjoy being violently assaulted and violated.

Consider this myth:

Bad things happen to bad girls.

Mary Ann Poole, the East Nashville woman found naked and beaten to death September 20th "was identified as a prostitute," *The Tennessean* read. The news article

went further to describe the various charges that had been listed on her arrest record and even detailed that she was charged for prostitution "multiple times."

The detail implies that as a prostitute, Mary Ann deserved to be murdered.

This attitude again appears when a woman, raped at 5 a.m., was asked what she was doing out at that hour.

Or when a woman with a short skirt was raped and somehow "found guilty of seduction," rather than her abuser being found guilty of rape.

Or when Judge Leffler in Florida freed a rapist who pleaded guilty because the women "had it coming."

Shall women be held hostage to the rules of a society that tells them how to dress, what is appropriate behavior or what time they must come home?

What happened to them was not their fault. No matter what a woman wears, or no matter what time of day or night she is out, rape is not a natural consequence of these actions.

This myth also gives us all a false sense of control. If we act as "good girls" should act, rape won't happen to us.

Wrong

Rape will happen to 25% of all women in the United States.

It really doesn't matter who they are or what they look like or what they wear. Once a rapist chooses a target, rape is inevitable.

An additional myth that receives much attention is that:

Only strangers rape.

Consider these terms: rape, acquaintance rape, spousal rape.



(continued on page four)

November calendar

Call 322-4843 for further information on the programs listed below.

5 & 12 (Mondays)

Challenging Some Myths About Childbirth. Penelope Wright, director, Perinatal Parent Education. Vignettes of actual births, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. Identical programs.
November 5 - Sarratt 205
November 12 - North Hall, GPC

6 (Tuesday)

Reproductive Health: Your Choice. Deborah Narrigan, assistant professor of the Practice of Nursing and a Certified Nurse Midwife. Second in a series on women's health. 12:15 to 1:15 p.m., Godchaux 161.

7 (Wednesday)

Effects of Parental Roles on Parents' Well-Being. Noontime Seminar, Walter Gove, professor, Sociology Department, 12:15 to 1:15 p.m., Divinity G-23.

7 (Wednesday)

Leadership for Undergraduate Women. Susan Short Jones, director of law, Metropolitan Government, Vanderbilt graduate. Light supper followed by discussion about Jones' career path. Reservations requested. 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., VIPPS House, corner of 18th and Edgehill.

9 (Friday)

Women's Center co-hosts **International Services Coffee.** 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., McTyeire Living Room.

12 (Monday)

Book Group will discuss *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson. Margaret Meggs, facilitator, 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., Godchaux Living Room.

13 (Tuesday)

Lunchtime Book Review. Nina Gove, professor, Slavic Languages and Literature, reviews *Soviet Women: Walking the Tightrope* by Francine Du Plessix Gray, 12:15 to 1:15 p.m., Sarratt 118.

28 (Wednesday)

A Male/Female Continuum: Paths To Collegueship. All-day workshop, Loew's Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel, sponsored by the Opportunity Development Center. (See page 3 for details.)

28 (Wednesday)

Grassroots Development in Africa: The Gender Question. Sandra J. Robinson, director of Programs and Field Operations, African Development Foundation, Washington, D.C., 7:00 p.m., Furman 114. Reception follows, Furman 132. Sponsored by Office of International Services, African Student Union, the Women's Center, and others.

29 (Thursday)

Body Image. Workshop on how men and women can build positive and realistic self images. Nancy Ransom, director, Women's Center. Free. Reservations required. Call the Women's Center to register. Open to all. 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., Furman 109. ■

It's your health

An unexpected lift from weights

What happens when people over ninety start working out with weights? A study conducted at Harvard Medical School took ten frail, institutionalized volunteers, male and female, between eighty-six and ninety-six years old, and had them do leg lifts on a weight bench for forty-five minutes per session, three times a week, over a period of eight weeks.

At the conclusion of the study, measurements of strength, on average, more than doubled; size of

leg muscles increased as much as 13.5%; and walking speed increased by nearly 50%. Two participants who previously needed canes quit using them altogether, and another subject who couldn't get out of a chair without leaning on the arms became able to do so. One man did drop out of the program halfway through, but that was due to pre-existing problems he was having with a hernia — not the weight-lifting regimen itself.

While some of the participants experienced mild soreness in their hips or knees, it wasn't severe enough to warrant even an aspirin, and none of the nine volunteers who finished the program missed even one session. No cardiovascular problems were seen. The authors of the study noted the participants' responsiveness was "remarkable in light of their very advanced age, extremely sedentary habits, multiple chronic diseases and functional disabilities, and nutritional inadequacies."

In those who are not vigorously active, muscle strength diminishes by about 40% over the average lifespan. Thus, the significant gains amassed during this experiment left the volunteers probably stronger than they had been in years. Albeit small, this study — in conjunction with others that have yielded similar results (usually among groups of somewhat younger subjects) — proves that working out with weights can and does build muscle mass and strength even among nonagenarians. And that can reverse, to some degree, the muscle atrophy responsible for the loss of mobility and subsequent loss of independence that so often accompany old age. In short: It's never too late for exercise to improve the quality of your life (of course, be sure to consult your physician before starting any sort of fitness program).

The Johns Hopkins Medical Letter: Health After 50, Vol. 2, Issue 8, October 1990

Speaking of women . . .

Jeanne Peck, A&S Jr.

Even though men's sports still control the spotlight at Vanderbilt, Wendy Scholtens thinks female athletes are finally getting some of the recognition they deserve.

Scholtens, NCAA All-American and a star of the Vanderbilt women's basketball team, says her talent for snagging rebounds and smashing backboards opened the door to higher education for her.

"Women are finally realizing that it doesn't matter if they're really good players, just as long as they can contribute. They don't need to feel that they have to go after all the awards," she said. "They can use sports to get an education."

That's exactly what Scholtens has done. The senior economics major from Arkansas says that even though she spends twenty hours a week playing basketball during the season, she is a student first.

"I came here for the education and to get a job afterwards. Of course, I try to help the team as much as I can."

The student-first concept is especially true in women's sports, Scholtens says, because there are few opportunities for women to go into professional athletics. But she is quick to note that tradition is changing.

"For a long time, there was nothing for women after college ball," said the 6-foot-4-inch center. "That was a roadblock. But now there are overseas opportunities." Scholtens says that she is considering playing in a Japanese women's basketball league.

And that's not all she is planning. Whether or not Scholtens decides to play professional basketball, she took the LSAT in October to keep her options open. "If I don't get into law school, it's not because I am a girl," Scholtens said. "It's because my grades weren't good enough. I feel like I've had all the opportunities here that anyone has."

Scholtens admits that even though

women receive more attention today from Vanderbilt's administration and the media than ten years ago, men are still given higher priority.

"[Men] get more press," she said. "They won the NIT and we went to the Sweet 16 [of the NCAA championship tournament]."

There's a big difference between the NIT and the NCAA and they still got much more coverage."

Scholtens says that with the support of students and Vanderbilt sports information, she hopes attendance at women's basketball

games will increase.

"My coach is an excellent recruiter and the sports information people do a great job of publicizing the games," she said. "And we're definitely getting more attention from the administration."

She says Chancellor Joe B. Wyatt has recently suggested that new locker rooms be built for both the men's and women's basketball teams.

"That's good for our recruiting and for other reasons," Scholtens says. "Before, people might not have thought that they could come here and achieve All-American honors. Now women know that they can come here and get all the support they need." ■



photo by Marri Jo Lessa

Wendy Scholtens (left) is interviewed by Jeanne Peck

Valuing Diversity: A Male/Female Continuum

A workshop with Carol Pierce and David Wagner will be held November 28 from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at Loew's Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel. The third in this year's University Series on Valuing Diversity, it expands the racial and cultural issues focus to encompass gender as well.

Pierce and Wagner, both influential organizational consultants, will focus on the interactive roles of men and women and trace the journey of both sexes on a continuum from what they term "a collusion of dominance and subordination" through "transition" and ultimately to "colleagueship," a relationship featuring mutual empowerment, equity, and a genuine valuing of diversity.

Sponsored by the Opportunity Development Center (ODC), the Women's Center is one of several co-sponsors.

The workshop is free and open to all students, faculty, and staff. Space is limited and reservations are required. For further information and registration call ODC at 322-4705.

Athena's symbolism

Barbara Belfiglio, graduate student in Higher Education Administration and intern at the Women's Center.

On May 20, 1990, the forty-two foot statue of Athena made her debut at the Parthenon in Nashville. While much has been written about the sculptor, Alan LeQuire, the cost and construction, and the description and history of the original piece of sculpture, less attention has been paid to Athena as representing an intellectual as well as an artistic achievement of the ancient Greeks.

The intellectual legacy of Greek culture has left its mark on contemporary western civilization. The interests of Greek thinkers were wide and deep.

The word "philosophy" is of Greek origin and means, literally, "love of wisdom." Moreover, Greek philosophers took all knowledge as their province. Philosophy to them included what today would be designated the natural sciences, such as astronomy, physics, and mathematics, as well as the more narrowly "philosophical" subjects of logic, ethics, and metaphysics. Plato and his equally famous student, Aristotle, also examined political institutions and developed techniques for this rational process. While we can thank the ancient Greeks for their contribution to knowledge, there is a dark side to this legacy.

The ancient Greeks worshipped the masculine — man as warrior, ruler, writer, sculptor, athlete, and philosopher. Thinking was strictly a mascul-

ine pursuit. In this male-centered culture, women were discounted and had no status. The province of wisdom and knowledge was totally male dominated. Therefore, it is a paradox that the deity symbolizing wisdom would be the goddess Athena.

The Greeks managed to transcend this contradiction by defeminizing the goddess. First, Athena was born fully grown out of the head of her father, Zeus. She was her father's daughter, born of his intelligence. As a result, she was not contaminated by a woman either in her birth or rearing. Second, Athena, the virgin goddess, is portrayed as a cold, rational, asexual warrior deity.

In the contemporary religion of business, male virtues of logical, linear thinking and aggressive competitiveness are still revered. The modern business woman emulates Athena in order to survive in the masculine world of work. Women defeminize themselves by wearing dark suits and carrying leather brief cases. By cloning themselves into inferior males, these women negate their emotions, stifle their spontaneity, and aggressively pursue their career goals.

Until the world of business recognizes and encourages feminine attributes such as holistic thinking, creativity, and cooperative relationships, the patriarchal legacy from ancient Greece will continue to rob the contemporary world of gifts that women can bring to the workplace. ■



Rape myths (continued from page 1)

The term "rape" often implies rape by a stranger. It is time women reclaim the term rape. It is time to reclaim the reality that rape often is spousal or acquaintance rape.

The mental image of a rapist must change. He who rapes rarely lurks in the dark corners of our alleys. He who rapes lurks in the corners of our homes and our work places.

By defining rape as primarily stranger rape, we make ourselves feel safer. We can convince ourselves that women who are raped stay out too late, or drink too much. If that woman is not in a "bad" place, it will not happen to her.

That story is flawed.

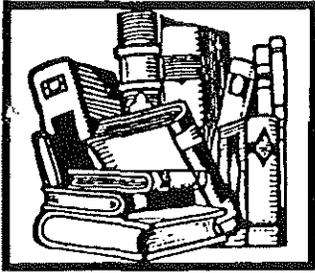
Rape mostly happens to those of us who spend time with our friends or our partners. Rapists are not lurking strangers, they are lurking friends. In fact, twice as many women are raped by their *husbands* as by strangers.

It is often implied that a victim has control over her abuser. This implication has a double edge: it blames a victim and also sets up a false sense of control. Certainly some action can be taken to limit the risk of rape.

Actions that can lessen the risk of acquaintance rape are:

- Come to know a dating partner gradually. Limit time alone with that person for some time until you feel confident of your safety.
- Do some checking. There is nothing wrong with asking about the background of a potential dating partner.
- Be prepared. Limit the possibilities of being in secluded places.
- Always be near a phone.

Women and men both must abandon the myths about rape and face the reality that every person is responsible for his or her conduct. If that conduct violates another's rights, it is immoral and illegal. Rape is such a violation. The rapist, not the victim, must be held accountable. ■



In the library

Barbara Clarke
Women's Center librarian

New books worth reading

Francine du Plessix Gray's *Soviet Women: Walking the Tightrope* gives us a fascinating look at modern Russian women. The well-known author, who speaks Russian, was born to a French father and Russian mother, and now lives in the United States. She traveled widely throughout the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and interviewed women from many different walks of life and in many areas of the vast country.

She has included detailed descriptions of the lives, goals, and attitudes of many of the women she visited. Subjects covered include the problems of daily life and the shortages of necessities, the aggressiveness of Soviet women, birth control and abortion, the ambitions of college students, religion, attitudes toward men, and impressions of American and European women. More than ninety per cent of Soviet women work full-time, and as most of them do most of the housework, many complain of the double burdens of career and domestic duties. Some have begun to say: "We have *too much* equality".

This is a very interesting look at a world that was closed to most Americans until recently. Nina Gove will review this book at the November 13 Lunchtime Book Review.

Another recent book on Soviet women is *Russian Women's Studies: Essays on Sexism in Soviet Culture* by Tatyana Mamonova. This work

was written by a scholar who was exiled from her native Russia in 1980 and who now lives in the United States. Her book deals with sexism through the ages and in many spheres of life. It includes women in history, sexism in literature, feminism, women in film, military service, and women in art and science. In short, the writer shows how women have been perceived and treated in Russia over the centuries. The book was originally written in Russian, and different chapters were translated by different American scholars.

Diane Richardson's *Women and AIDS* should be of interest to all women. It describes in a straightforward manner most aspects of the AIDS problem: how the virus is transmitted, who is most at risk, how to avoid contracting it, what to do if one tests positive, and how to care for persons with AIDS. The book includes a glossary and a useful list of addresses and telephone numbers for women looking for more information on AIDS.

Robin Warshaw's *I Never Called It Rape: The Ms. Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape* is a book that is important for both women and men. Only in recent years have most people become aware of the great extent of this problem. The *Ms.* report reveals an alarming statistic: "One in four female respondents had had an experience that met the legal definition of rape or attempted rape."

Even today some victims do not identify their experience as rape, and the majority do not report the crime.

Acquaintance rape is a big problem on college campuses, and this topic is covered extensively in the book. The writer hopes that readers will be better equipped to prevent date rape from occurring to them or to those they love. Warshaw has compiled a list of resources — including books, posters, audiovisual materials, and conference listings — for those wishing to do further research, or to organize educational programs. ■

News quote

During recent weeks a great deal of attention has been given by the media to women reporters in locker rooms of male athletes. Here are a few comments.

The right place for women.
Twelve years after a Federal judge ruled that denying female sportswriters entrance to the locker room denied their right to equal access, some athletes still think of them as prurient voyeurs.

"You are not writing; you are looking," Zeke Mowatt of the *New England Patriots* said to Lisa Olson of *The Boston Herald* last month. Mr. Mowatt, as well as four players who substituted gestures for language, was naked at the time. Victor Kiam, the Patriots' owner, took out newspaper ads deploring the incident, but only after the National Organization for Women threatened to boycott his Remington shaver company.

This week the Cincinnati Bengals' coach, Sam Wyche, was even more insulting about Denise Tom of *USA Today*. He barred her from the locker room Monday not only to protect the privacy of the players but, he added, also "their wives."

The silliness of such behavior is manifest in news from Saudi Arabia. While women soldiers load missiles and unload cargo planes, some well-paid, mean-spirited jocks find fun in dirty-mouthing women journalists. Sportswriters, male and female, are a small group. But the issue reflects anew how long and hard is the task of making society understand that women's place is any place.

excerpted from *The New York Times*,
October 4, 1990

Charles Krauthammer of *The Washington Post* writes:

What to do? The obvious solution is to bar everyone from the locker room. Conduct the interviews elsewhere, later, in a state of dress. If that solution is so prudish, retrograde and anti-feminist, how is it that women's teams insist upon it?

Atlanta Journal and Constitution,
October 15, 1990

Page 5, *Women's VU*, November 1990

Announcements et cetera

Call for papers

Graduate students are encouraged to submit proposals for papers on gender sensitive original research for the Graduate Women's Studies Conference, University of Michigan. Although the deadline for abstracts is November 1, the possibility for an extension remains.

The yearly conference will be in Ann Arbor March 8-10, 1991. For additional information call the Women's Center, 322-4843.

Free flu vaccine

Vanderbilt Employee Health Service will offer influenza vaccine free to all faculty and staff November 1-30 from 8:00 - 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. in room 2525 The Vanderbilt Clinic. While there is no charge for the vaccine, a current Vanderbilt Clinic Card is required. The 1990-91 vaccine contains antigens for: A/Taiwan, A/Shanghai, B/Yamagata.

Conversation Hour with Mary Catherine Bateson

In conjunction with the Southhall Distinguished Lectures on November

1, Mary Catherine Bateson (this year's lecturer) will be present for a Conversation Hour on Friday, November 2, 10:00 a.m., in Mayborn 205 on the Peabody Campus.

Bateson's 1989 book, *Composing A Life*, is a study of how five highly intelligent women have shaped their lives as artistic creations. Bateson is the daughter of Margaret Mead.

*All women are
beautiful, intelligent,
strong, and powerful,
and that includes me!*

From Bonita L. Swan's *Thirteen Steps*, a book from the Women's Center Library.



This issue of *Women's VU* is printed on recycled paper.

Eudora Welty Prize goes to Nancy Walker

Nancy Walker, professor of english and director of the Women's Studies Program, has been awarded the first annual Eudora Welty Prize. Sponsored by the University Press of Mississippi and Mississippi University for Women (MUW), the Prize honors MUW alumna Welty; it carries a cash award of \$1500.

Dr. Walker's award-winning book, *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women*, was published in May 1990 by the Press. The award was presented at the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium in Columbus, Mississippi on October 11.

Out-of-print book needed by library:

Working Women by Jessica Strang, (1984), Harry N. Abrams.

Women's VU

Editor: Judith Tefft Helfer

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Faculty _____ Adm. _____ Contributor _____ Other _____

Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center

Vanderbilt University
Franklin Bldg., West Side Row
Box 1513, Station B
Nashville, TN 37235

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