

Margaret  
Cuninggim  
Women's Center

## Perils and opportunities of growing older in America

On April 11, 1991 Dr. Teresa Bernardez will speak on "Women and Aging: The Perils and Opportunities of Growing Older in America." Dr. Bernardez, a psychiatrist with a long career in women's mental health issues, is in demand as a speaker on this subject. The Women's Center invites you to join us April 11 at 4:00 p.m. in Light Hall, room 214.

Dr. Bernardez agreed to share some of her thoughts in a phone interview with Beth Colvin Huff, RN, MSN.

WV: What are the greatest challenges to American women over 50?

TB: The most obvious challenge to women of this age is that they now have opportunities for work and education that have not been available in the past. Women are taking advantage of chances to expand their learning by entering universities or to expand their work skills by training or retraining. Especially for women who have invested their work at home, they are now free of child raising and housekeeping responsibilities. Middle-aged American women are generally healthy and vigorous and with longer lifespans now have at least twenty more years to utilize their productivity. The challenge comes in finding those gifts and talents we have not used prior to this age.

WV: It seems that men over fifty increase in power and status while women of this age diminish in these areas. How do you see this?

TB: In middle age, this does seem to

be true in our society. Prejudice still divides the sexes. Men are involved in business and public work and have increasing positions of power in those arenas. Women are still newcomers here.

However, old age is the equalizer. Over the age of seventy, men and women are seen more as equals in wisdom, knowledge and power.

The world needs the wisdom of women!

WV: What are some other areas of conflict in this age group?

TB: Middle-aged women may find themselves, due to death or divorce, looking for a partner. The question is, where can women use their energies instead of looking for a partner?

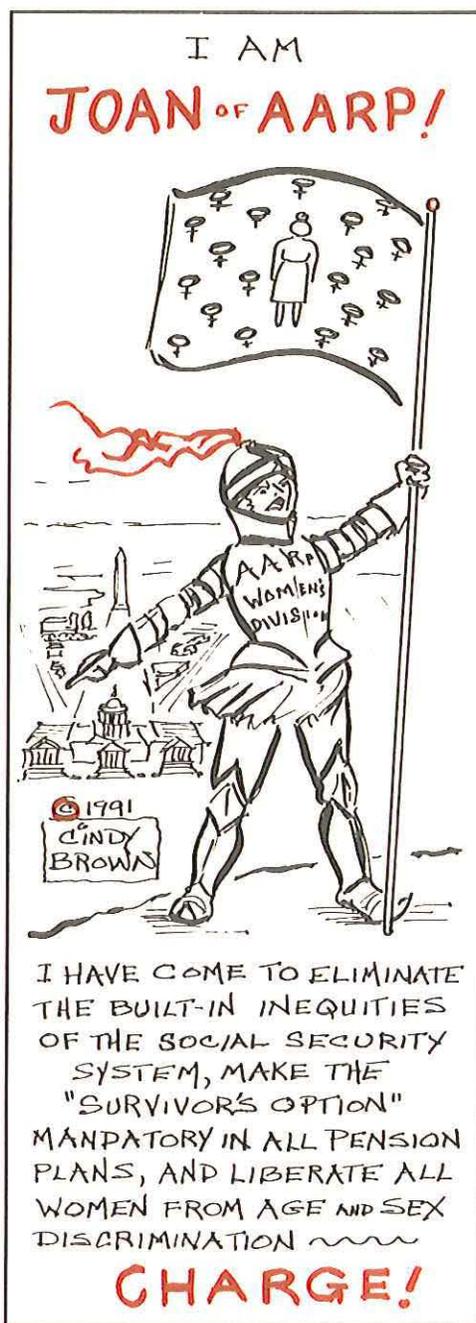
In their fifties and sixties, women are in a vigorous, active period of their lives. They are capable of contributing to their society and to themselves. By giving to others, they increase their connections to all people. They become able to do work, to participate, to be active, to take care of their dreams, and maintain sound relationships with their families. The prejudice to have a partner interferes with these energies. When women discover the potential of their abilities, when they take active management of their lives, they energize and contribute to the world.

WV: You have studied women and anger in your professional career. Why is this emotion so difficult for women?

TB: There are different cultural prohibitions around the world. In the United States, we have been very much influenced by England in our language and traditions. Women in South America have a different set of prohibitions.

Here, women are inhibited from open expressions of anger. This interferes with our mental health because anger is a basic emotion. In our culture, it is acceptable for

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women to show anger on behalf of others — children, for example. But it is not okay for women to be angry about what others do to them.

Men, on the other hand, have cultural prohibitions against the expression of grief and fear. These feelings are unfortunately connected to weakness and vulnerability. We are beginning to see some changes, though.

With the recent war, soldiers have felt free to comment on their fears and express grief when faced with the loss of friends and colleagues. This, to me, signals a great improvement in acceptance of these emotions.

In my opinion, women experience higher rates of depression than men because of their inability to express anger. You see women who are chronically angry, perhaps because they have been left by their husbands. When you are chronically angry, you cannot be free.

Anger should be managed more like grief work. Acknowledging the anger helps mobilize a woman's energies to feel it, express it and then move on.

Energy should be diverted away from illusional solutions — wanting to be younger, thinner, more beautiful — and into concentrating our self improvement that widens the scope of who we are.

WV: There has been a lot of attention focused recently on the exclusion of women in medical research. Is this also true in the mental health field?

TB: It seems unbelievable that there has been such a blindness to gender in the scientific establishment. There is certainly greater awareness of gender differences in the research grants that are now being awarded. Also, the geriatric population has been underserved due to the lack of studies on the aged.

As the dominant group, men have been better served by scientific research. ■

## News quotes

Women who speak softly and play dumb influence men. Men are more likely to be influenced by women who speak tentatively than those who speak with certainty, says Linda L. Carli, assistant professor of psychology at the College of Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. While it appears men are uncomfortable with assertive women, perhaps because they fear the loss of their social status, Dr. Carli's study shows other women are more likely to be influenced by women who speak assertively. The men in the study viewed a woman with a tentative manner as less knowledgeable and competent but more trustworthy and likeable.

The responses, according to Dr. Carli, may result from deeply held biases based on stereotypes. While men in authority say they are not biased and while they espouse fairness, they have not yet overcome the effects of centuries of social stereotypes. The study is reported in the January 1991 issue of *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

University Women,  
University of Wisconsin System  
February 1991

Women challenge church council assembly. Some of the most striking moments of the World Council of Churches' seventh assembly [held in Canberra, Australia in February] here have been about women, underlining their increasing influence and inspiring a sort of backlash.

The Rev. Lois M. Wilson of the United Church of Canada, one of the council's seven departing presidents, electrified this gathering of some 4,000 people by saying that women attending the conference, having received threats from men who are clerics, had cried in the restroom. She said, "These are the politics of the World Council of Churches and they stink to high heaven."

With some fanfare, the council announced in 1988 an "ecumenical decade of churches in solidarity with women." But "in fact women here

(continued page three)

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Stephanie Bryan, RN, MSN  
Center for Fertility and Reproductive  
Research

### Endometriosis and fibroids

An estimated 10-25% of women in their reproductive years will suffer from endometriosis and fibroids which can cause pelvic pain, severe menstrual cramps, and/or infertility.

GnRH agonists are a group of drugs now available to help treat these disorders. These drugs work by preventing the pituitary gland from producing FSH (follicle stimulating hormone). Without FSH the ovary is unable to make estrogen. Therefore GnRH agonists are particularly effective in treating diseases such as endometriosis and fibroids which are estrogen dependent.

A physician may prescribe a GnRH agonist such as DEpo Lupron or Synarel for three to six months depending on the severity of the diseases. As estrogen levels fall the endometrial implants or fibroid tumors will decrease in size. Many women report an improvement in symptoms after two to three months of treatment. Surgery may still be indicated; however, the atrophic tissue can be removed more easily and with less blood loss after treatment with the agonist.

Side effects such as hot flashes, insomnia, vaginal dryness and cessation of menstrual periods are commonly reported and are due to the decreased levels of estrogen while on the medication. There is a concern about possible bone loss due to low levels of estrogen but this does not appear to be a problem in women on the agonist for six months or less.

Normal menstrual cycle will usually resume within eight to ten weeks after the last dose of the drug. While these drugs are not a cure, they have been shown to be an effective adjunct in the treatment of endometriosis and fibroids. ■

# Speaking of women . . .

Wayne Wood, Editor, House Organ.

Dr. Mildred T. Stahlman, professor of Pediatrics, professor of Pathology, and director of the division of Neonatology, graduated from Vanderbilt University Medical School in 1946. She was one of four women in a graduating class of forty-eight doctors.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s her research interests moved in a direction that changed her life and the lives of thousands of newborn babies. An interest in the respiratory problems of premature newborns led her to put in place what may be considered the first neonatal intensive care unit in the world.

Stahlman was also active in beginning the regionalization program of high-risk newborn care in Tennessee in 1973, and has helped train more than eighty post-doctoral fellows from about twenty countries in research and high-risk newborn care.

Q: There are probably thousands of people who are alive today because of your work. Do you ever think of it that way?

A: Well, I don't think you can think of it that way. I think that you can make a decision when you practice medicine whether you want to make an enormous impact on single lives or whether you're going to make some impact on lives that you will never know why they are or where they are. I think that's the opportunity research gives you.

Q: Do you feel that your gender had anything to do with the field you chose to go into, how you went about doing it, and the way you were treated?

A: I think that's been very minimal. I think you get treated like you expect to get treated, and if you ask favors and you make differences between your performance and the performances of people around you, I think people will treat you differently.

I won't say that I've been paid at the same level that my colleagues have

been paid. It was just that when I was beginning in medicine women in general didn't get paid the same as men anywhere--not in any job. It never occurred to me to make a big fuss about it.

Q: What do you think of when you hear the word "feminist" and why don't you consider yourself one?

A: I guess because so many of them are strident, they feel sorry for themselves, they want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to hold down a professional job and, at the same time, be first class at everything else they do. That's very difficult.

Q: What advice would you give a young person who came to you and said they wanted a career in medicine, but wanted to leave time for a family?

A: Then you have to make choices. There's nothing wrong with making a choice to be a physician and have a family at the same time, it's just that you have to make that choice. And your baby's first two years are going



photo by John Houser

Dr. Mildred T. Stahlman

to be without a mother, and you're going to regret it--sooner or later.

I think it can be done and an awful lot of women have made successful careers. But they don't necessarily...without giving up a tremendous amount of their time as a wife and mother, they don't really have as successful careers as their counterparts do.

I guess my main principle is responsibility. You can't be everywhere at the same time and do the same quality job. You have to make choices. That's where these young women haven't thought it through and don't recognize that sometimes those choices are going to be very bitter. ■

## News (continued from page two)

face, as in the United States, something of a backlash," said Dr. Janice Love of the United Methodist Church, who is also co-moderator of the Public Issues Committee.

There is a conflict, she said, between those who want to slow the movement of women into positions of authority in the council "and those who say, 'Slow down from what?'"

*New York Times*  
February 20, 1991

*Interesting information that was included in a February Newsweek article entitled "Big Women, Big Profits: For those sick of diets, a full plate of options."*

It's surprising the big boom took so long to explode. As anyone who has seen a cross section of Americans at Disney World knows, America is not predominantly a size eight nation. According to Hara Marano, author of the upcoming book *Style Is Not A Size,*

the average American woman is a little under 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighs 146 pounds and wears a size 12/14. "There are as many size eighteens as there are size eights," says Marano, who claims that only twenty-five percent of American women are both tall and thin, yet ninety-five percent of fashion is directed at them.

*Newsweek*  
February 25, 1991

**Highlight from the 1989 survey on earned doctorates.** Women earned 12,510 doctoral degrees in 1989, the largest number of any year. Their thirty-six percent share of the cohort is a one percent increase over their share for the past three years. Despite gains in many fields, women continued to be underrepresented in physical sciences and engineering, accounting for nineteen percent and eight percent of 1989 Ph.D.s, respectively.

National Research Council

# Calendar of Women's Center programs

Please post this page as a reminder. Flyers for individual programs will not be distributed.

## APRIL

### 3 (Wednesday)

**Writers Workshop Panel: How to Get Published,** Joan Anderson and John Egerton.

Joan Anderson, Vanderbilt staff in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, is the author of the well-received 1990 book, *The Single Mother's Book*. John Egerton, a Nashville-based free lance writer for twenty years, has published numerous books and articles.

The panel discussion will be from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Kennedy Center, MRL 241 on the Peabody Campus.

### 8 (Monday)

**Book Group** will discuss *My Antonia* by Willa Cather. Kathleen Kitzmiller facilitator, 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., Godchaux Living Room. New members are welcome.

### 9 (Tuesday)

**Lunchtime Book Review.** Margaret Bass, assistant professor of English, reviews *Balm in Gilead* by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot.

Many of us believe that our mothers are exceptional women, but few of us would ever consider our mothers' lives worthy of a biography. Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot decided that her mother's story should be told, and she began the difficult task of writing Margaret Morgan Lawrence's biography herself. *Balm in Gilead* is both biography and autobiography, for Lightfoot's narrative of her mother's life is also the narrative of her own.

The lives of both these African-American women is of great interest. Dr. Margaret Lawrence was the only faculty woman at Meharry Medical College from 1943 to 1947. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot is an eminent sociologist.

The book review will be from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. in Sarratt 205.

*"One of the things about equality is not just that you be treated equally to a man, but that you treat yourself equally to the way you treat a man."*

— Marlo Thomas, b. 1943  
American actress

### 11 (Thursday)

**Women and Aging: The Perils and Opportunities of Growing Older In America.** Public lecture by Teresa Bernardez, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry Emerita, Michigan State University.

This public lecture by a much sought after psychiatrist with a long career in women's mental health issues will help women of all ages prepare for growing older. (See page one for interview with Bernardez.)

Co-sponsors with the Women's Center are Women's Studies, Opportunity Development Center, University Lectures Committee, Psychiatry Department, and Vanderbilt Alumni Board Committee on the Status of Women.

Lecture will be at 4:00 p.m. in Light Hall room 214. Reception to follow.

### 16 (Tuesday)

**Slide Lecture, African-American Women: Images of Race and Protest,** Amy Kirschke, lecturer, African-American Art, Fine Arts Department.

African-American women have had a distinct tradition of including racial images in their art, even in the nineteenth century when African-American male artists largely chose not to deal with race issues in art. This lecture will provide an overview of the most important African-American women artists dealing with race and protest in the history of art.

This slide lecture seminar will be from 12:15 to 1:00 p.m. in the Fine Arts Building (old gym), room 206, West End Avenue at 23rd Avenue North.

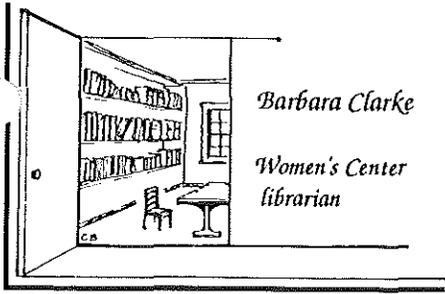
### 17 (Wednesday)

**Noontime Seminar: Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama,** Valerie Traub, assistant professor of English in Renaissance drama and gender studies.

The seminar will include the multiple forms sexuality takes in Shakespearean drama including male anxiety about female desire and the maternal body, homoeroticism and the Renaissance stage, and sexually transmitted diseases in the early modern period. Professor Traub has a forthcoming book entitled *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*.

The seminar will be from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. in Sarratt 205.

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



## In the library

### New arrivals in the library.

Linda K. Christian-Smith's *Becoming a Woman Through Romance* is a fascinating study of the romantic novels published for teenage girls between 1942 and 1982.

The fiction writers tend to focus on romance, sexuality and beauty, and generally portray conservative ideas of gender roles. As only mysteries and adventure books are more widely read by teenagers, the romance writers potentially have great influence. However, Christian-Smith believes that the novels offer readers the chance to reflect on the dilemmas surrounding male and female relations. She also feels "that romance fiction is contradictory: it reconciles women to their subordination while providing an escape from it."

The author includes the results of a survey she carried out on girls who read romantic fiction, and she also provides suggestions for parents and teachers on ways they can help the young girls reflect on the gender issues about which they read.

This is the first full-scale study of teenage romantic novels.

*The Encyclopedia of Feminism* by Lisa Tuttle is a very useful reference book for those interested in feminism and women's studies. It contains in alphabetical order over a thousand entries pertaining to past and present feminists, and to all aspects of feminist thought and activity. The work was originally published in England and is international in scope.

*Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A*

*Critical Anthology* edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is another recent addition to our collection. The twenty-one selections cover works of all types published over the past 130 years on the subject of black women. Each section was written by a separate contributor and each covers a separate writer; not all the contributors are black and some are men. The authors whose works they present and discuss include Alice Walker, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, Harriet Jacobs, Lorraine Hansberry, and Maya Angelou.

*Afro-American Women Writers, 1746-1933: An Anthology and Critical Guide* by Ann Allen Shockley includes works by forty-one black American women writers. The selections and commentaries are presented in chronological order, and include material by Lucy Terry, Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, Ida B. Wells, Priscilla Jane Thompson, and Nella Larsen. Their writings provide evidence of the rich literary tradition of black women authors.

Another new arrival is the January 1991 American Association of University Women (AAUW) publication entitled *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*. This presents the results of "a nationwide poll to assess self-esteem, educational experiences, interest in math and science, and career aspirations of girls and boys ages 9-15."

AAUW commissioned Greenberg-Lake: The Analysis Group, Inc. to undertake a study and in 1990 they surveyed 2,400 girls and 600 boys in twelve areas of the United States. A major finding of the survey is that, when compared with boys, girls leave adolescence with lower self-esteem, lower expectations for their lives, and less confidence in themselves and their abilities.

The Center for Research on Women at Memphis State University publishes many useful and interesting research papers and bibliographies. We have recently added the following six titles to our collection: *Occupational Stress, Social Support, Depression, and Job Dissatisfaction Among*

*Black and White Professional-Managerial Women*, by Mary Beth Snapp; *Depression Among Women: Exploring the Effects of Race, Class, and Gender*, by Lynn Weber Cannon, Elizabeth Higginbotham and Rebecca F. Guy; *Integrating Scholarship By and About Women into the Curriculum*, by Betty Schmitz; *Curriculum Transformation: Personal and Political*, by Lynn Weber Cannon; *Integrating All Women Into the Curriculum*, by Elizabeth Higginbotham, and *Selected Social Science Readings on People of Color*. ■

### Library Wish List

We would be happy to accept the following books if anyone has copies they would like to donate. Please call the library at 343-4849.

Ballou, M. & Gabalac, N.W. *A Feminist Position on Mental Health*; Baxter, S. & Lansing, M. *Women and Politics: The Visible Majority*; Beer, W. *Househusbands: Men and Work in American Families*; Berk, S.F. *The Gender Factory: The Apportionment of Work in American Households*; Cohn, S. *The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing*; Finkelhor, D. & Yllo, K. *License to Rape: Sexual Abuse of Wives*; Fischer, K. *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction*; Freedman, R. *Beauty Bound*; Hale-Benson, J.E. *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles*; Hewlett, S.A. *A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women's Liberation in America*; Huber, J. & Spitze, G. *Sex Stratification: Children, Housework, and Jobs*; Jacobs, J.A. *Revolving Doors: Sex Segregation and Women's Careers*; Jones, J. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*; Malson, M.R. *Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives*; Mollenkott, V.R. *Women, Men, and the Bible*; Straus, M.A., Gelles, R.J., & Steinmetz, S.K. *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*; Weidman, J.L. *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*.

# Announcements et cetera

**Second Southern Conference on Women's History** will be held June 7-8, 1991 on the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) campus. This forum for scholarly presentations and the exchange of ideas relating to all aspects of women's history is sponsored by the Southern Association of Women Historians (SAWH). Major speakers include Anne Braden, long-time civil rights activist and journalist in the South.

Registration information is available from Betty Kompst, UNC-CH Continuing Education, William B. Friday Center, C.B. # 1020, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-1020. Deadline for registration is May 20.

**Call For Papers** from Western Kentucky University conference, "Women: Where Are We Going. . . Where Have We Been," to be held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, September 25-28, 1991.

April 19 is the deadline for vitae and abstracts of papers for possible presentation at the fifth annual interdisciplinary conference. More information available at the Women's Center.

**Wanted:** experienced layout and design editor for *Women's VU*.

The Women's Center wants to hire a graduate student with experience in PageMaker on an IBM compatible computer.

Job could begin in May 1991, with learning opportunities in June and July for the 1991-92 academic year. Flexible work hours of approximately ten hours per week.

Call Judy Helfer at 322-6518.

**Symposium for graduate women on "International Security After the Cold War."** Women In International Security (WIIS) announces its second annual summer symposium for graduate women pursuing either an advanced degree in the many fields that make up international security studies. It will be held June 27 to July 2, 1991, at St. Mary's College in southern Maryland.

Deadline for application is April 5. More complete information is available at the Women's Center or by calling WIIS office at (301) 403-8109.

**The Committee of 200**, an international organization of preeminent businesswomen, and Vanderbilt's Owen Graduate School of Management, will host a conference for businesswomen and entrepreneurs Friday, April 12 at the Owen School. Cost is \$100 for the daylong conference. Call 322-2513 for complete information.

**Cross-Professional Trends In Feminist Thinking: Law and Theology as a Case Study** will be held at the Law School, room 105 on April 9, 4:15 p.m. Guest speakers are professor Katharine Bartlett, Duke Law School, and professor Mary Ann Tolbert, Vanderbilt Divinity School. Commentators from Vanderbilt are Jean Bethke Elshtain, Centennial Professor of Political Science and professor of philosophy, Nancy A. Walker, associate professor of English and director of women's studies, and D. Don Welch, associate dean and senior lecturer in law.

This inaugural Florrie Wilkes Sanders lecture is free and open to the academic community. A reception will follow the lecture. ■



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## Women's VU

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