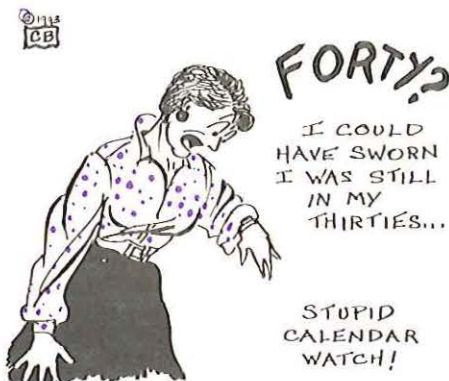


## I will never be a ballerina

Vanderbilt Register editor considers the time between youth and old age

Brenda Ellis  
Editor, *Vanderbilt Register*

If middle age is a boundary, then I have strayed across its border. No one is more surprised than I when, in quiet moments, realize I am fortysomething. I am on the frontier of middle age, yet I feel as if I have wandered into it with no



more guile than merely observing birthdays and even less preparation.

This, of course, from a woman whose family crest would carry a single word—denial—and who jokingly tells friends that the sight of a T-shirt two years ago that read, "Oh my god, I'm forty and I forgot to have kids!" prompted her to have her first child sixteen months ago at age forty-one.

I have spent some time the past two or three years thinking about misspent youth and missed opportunities, but with a faint smile, not the angst that sends some of us to local Emotional Wellness units claiming our middle years are crisis-filled.

I did notice entering middle age, cleverly defined as "the time between youth and old age, usually the years between forty and sixty," mostly by signs which are purely physical.

I winced at my first "Ma'am" from the young man who carried my groceries to the car. The tiny lines at the corners of my eyes remind me of my mother, and each morning my knees sound like a bowl of Rice Krispies.

Middle age is different for women in precisely physical ways, and our boundaries are well marked. Menarche marks the beginning of womanhood, menopause is a sign appearing in middle age, and maturity is implied in the latter.

Other signs of middle age for me are variously funny and sobering. I saw Bob Dylan, an icon of my youth, perform in Nashville in April, and I was surprised by the number of "old people" in the audience.

There are more *Lear's* magazines lying about my bedroom. My sense of style, whether it be clothing or cars, has, well, matured. I worry about breast cancer, not the perfect tan. And I see my parents aging quickly before my eyes, which now need glasses.

Re-evaluating my expectations has kept me entertained recently. But my heartiest laugh came at the expense of my sister who was found sitting at the family picnic table by her husband, head



\* see page two, *Warning*

cradled in her arms and sobbing, on her thirty-sixth birthday.

When he asked her what was wrong, she lifted her head, eyes bleary with tears and said, "I'll never be a ballerina."

He said, "After twelve years of marriage and three children, I think you would have given up on that one."

She said, "Dreams die hard, Mi-



chael," not entirely without humor because she had never had a dance lesson. But the point was tenderly made.

The assessment of who I am and what I have accomplished thus far is a task ideally suited to my middle years. I can still shift gears as noticeably as changing careers and starting a family, or in ways so subtle that they are startling: I no longer feel compelled to fill silences.

Coming to terms with some youthful expectations is easier for me than for some of my friends. I am chasing a toddler instead of unrealistic dreams. Any angst about this stage of my life is replaced by bone-aching fatigue. I am asking someone shorter than my dining table to find her nose and then her toes. When she does, I laugh and think of dancing.

I'll never be a ballerina, but she may. Meanwhile, I'm working on new dreams. ■



# Maggie Mahar tells the truth about women's pay in *Working Woman*

Maggie Mahar, a senior editor at *Baron's*, offers her theory on the pay gap between men and women in a comprehensive article in *Working Woman* (April 1993), available in the Cuninggim Center library.

"Is the wage gap finally closing? Thirty years after the Equal Pay Act was passed, women are still earning only seventy cents for every dollar a man makes. And, as *Working Woman* recently reported, the progress has been excruciatingly slow: from 1985 to 1990, women's wages crept up one penny a year—and in 1991, they slid two cents. Five steps forward, two steps back; at that rate, we said, women *might* reach parity in twenty-five years.

"But maybe we were wrong. A new theory on the wage gap has begun drifting down from the towers of academe to the mass media. Most notably, the *New York Times* trumpeted the good news in a recent article headlined

*Women's Progress Stalled? Just Not So.* The subhead read: *Popular wisdom aside, women were big winners in the 80s, new data show, and gains should keep coming.* The story declared that "from the top of the pay scale to the bottom, women gained on men in the 80s'."

Mahar claims that figures from the Census Bureau say something different. By the mid-80s, women were only back to where they started in 1955, earning 63.9% of what a man was making. After reaching 72% in 1990, women's income showed a slight decline in 1991.

By 1990, women ages 25-34 appeared to be narrowing the gap, earning 80¢ for every dollar earned by men in the same age group. But women aged 35-44 only made 69¢; and ages 45-54, only 61¢.

In the best-paid occupations the dollar gap widens. The median salary for women judges is \$14,144 less than male judges. For operators, fabricators, and laborers, the median salary for women is \$5,928 less than men.

Education does not equalize pay. A college-educated woman earns less than a white man with a high school diploma.

Through the 80s, the wage gap did narrow but *not* because most women were doing better but because men's wages were falling.

In the '80s, women with the least education were hit hardest by inflation. Since 1989, salaries for all women have stalled. In 1991, college-educated women saw their real wages drop (after adjustment for inflation) for the first time since the '70s.

Mahar concludes that, "No matter how many hours they work, how many degrees they accumulate . . . how deftly they juggle schedules, the evidence of the last thirty years suggests that the pay gap will never close, until there is an enormous change not only in the hearts and minds of women—they're already convinced—but in the hearts and minds of employers." ■



## Women's VU

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## Warning

Jenny Joseph

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple  
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.  
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves  
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.  
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired  
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells  
And run my stick along the public railings  
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.  
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain  
And pick flowers in other people's gardens  
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat  
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go  
Or only bread and pickle for a week  
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry  
And pay our rent and not swear in the street  
And set a good example for the children.  
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?  
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised  
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

# Yale professors attend harassment workshops

*Ivy League university will also revise harassment policies*

Following two controversial sexual harassment cases in 1992, Yale University is requiring all faculty to attend workshops on sexual harassment and is also revising its policies.

One of the cases involved a student who filed a complaint stating she had been harassed by a professor during a campus visit four years earlier. Her attempt to file a complaint at that time was turned away because the harassment occurred while she was not yet a student. The professor has since been reprimanded and the policy changed. The second case involved a graduate student who accused a history professor of harassment. The professor resigned and returned to the University of Santa Barbara, where he had taught previously. Although the complaint was found to have merit, nothing was done because the professor was no longer at Yale. University officials at Santa Barbara were not informed, and students there criticized Yale for its inaction.

## *Millions granted for sex discrimination suits in Massachusetts colleges*

At least \$10.6 million will go to employees at Massachusetts' 15 community colleges. As many as 1,200 women are involved in the 16-year-old wage dispute. The women had charged that the colleges used discriminatory standards for promotion and salary increases. Back pay awards will probably range from \$500 to \$50,000, and about \$1.3 million will go to some current employees for salary increases. The settlement may be the largest in an equal-pay case in the state.

The University of Hawaii has settled a sex-discrimination case for \$1.27 million. Kay Austen, a tenured assistant professor in the English department, filed charges in 1992, claiming that she had been discriminated against because of her activities promoting women's rights in the department.

Austen was fired after a medical leave because of a ruptured cervical

## NEWS QUOTES

*news of interest to women*

disk; physicians said the condition resulted, in part, from a stressful work environment.

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that Austen plans to work with Anne Margolis, a former Williams professor who won a sex-discrimination suit there, to set up a clearinghouse for other professors battling sex discrimination cases.

## *Nepotism: Can a wife supervise her husband in the same office?*

Although nepotism rules prohibiting the hiring of a spouse have virtually disappeared, many states and institutions still have laws or rules which prohibit spouses as co-workers and/or a spouse from supervising a partner.

The Illinois Supreme Court has left intact a lower court ruling which stated that such policies violate the state's ban on discrimination on the basis of marital status.

The judges said that if it were shown a manager could not effectively supervise someone with whom he or she has a close personal relationship, the same situation could arise with other kinds of pairings. Thus, to single out the husband-wife relationship was discriminatory because the policy "is clearly triggered by a party's marital status and imposes a direct burden upon marriage. A person who remains single would not be affected by the rule." Courts in Minnesota, Montana, Washington State, and Hawaii have ruled similarly.

While the ruling does not affect federal anti-discrimination laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, a suit could be filed under these laws to challenge similar rules or other state laws which prohibit one spouse from supervising the other. The case

was *River Bend Community v. Illinois Human Rights Commission*.

## *One-quarter of college freshmen think that women belong at home*

Twenty-five percent of first-year college students agree with the statement, "Married women's activities are best confined to home and family." The statement was part of a survey of more than 213,000 students entering more than 400 two-year and four-year institutions in the fall of 1992.

Over 30 percent of the men and 21.3 percent of the women answered positively. (One can speculate about the implications for married women faculty when large numbers of students may believe their presence in the classroom is inappropriate.)

Just under 80 percent of the students' mothers were in the work force, 6 percent were unemployed, and slightly more than 14 percent were full-time homemakers. The survey was reported in *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1992*, published by the American Council on Education and the University of California at Los Angeles Higher Education Research Institute.

Source for all "News Quotes":  
*About Women on Campus*  
Spring 1993

## *Pay gap begins at home*

More than half of six-to-eight year-olds get an allowance, averaging \$2.79 a week. ♦ Parents give nearly \$7.5 billion a year. ♦ Boys get a weekly average of \$7.16; girls get \$6.58.

SOURCE: FIRST FOR WOMEN, MAY 17, 1993



# Listening to the 'unheard voices' of the South

Anne Firor Scott looks at five forgotten women historians

*Unheard Voices: The First Historians of Southern Women* (University Press of Virginia, 1993) edited by Anne Firor Scott is a study of the lives and works of five southern women historians whose work was ignored for many years.

The women, who were born between 1895 and 1903, were Virginia Gearhart Gray, Marjorie Mendenhall, Julia Cherry Spruill, Guion Griffis Johnson, and Eleanor Miot Boatwright. Scott, a well-known historian, is fortunate enough to have known four of the women in their later years. Four of the five taught at colleges, and the fifth was a high school teacher in Georgia.

All five of the historians had lived or worked in North Carolina, and all wrote about the history of southern women prior to the Civil War. It is undoubtedly because they wrote women's history that these writers were not considered important and are almost unknown today: "history is about what men do."

Though there had been some notable women among previous generations of historians, most of these women were from the North, and did not write about the history of women. Even among the historians of Gray and Mendenhall's era, there were very few southern women.

Scott includes one article or book chapter by each of the historians. These selections were originally published between 1928 and 1941.

*The Female Heart: The Truth About Women and Coronary Artery Disease* (Simon & Schuster, 1991) by Marianne J. Legato and Carol Colman, is an important book for women. Legato is a cardiologist and Colman is a medical writer, and the book is designed for the lay reader.

Most people assume that women are much less susceptible than men to heart attacks, partly because heart disease tends to strike women later in life. Only one of the major medical studies on heart disease has included women, mostly because heart attacks have been thought to be largely a "man's prob-

Barbara Clarke,  
Women's Center  
librarian



lem."

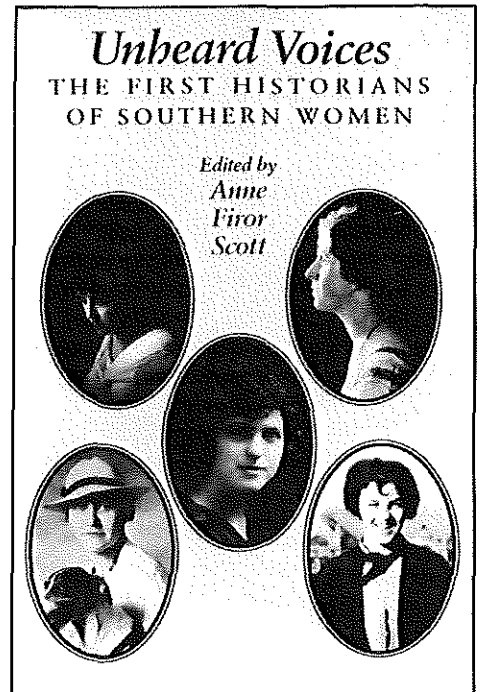
Women and their doctors frequently either ignore or misdiagnose symptoms of heart disease, as they assume that heart trouble is highly unlikely. As a result, women are sicker when the cardiac problem is finally diagnosed, are twice as likely as men to die after their first heart attack, and are twice as likely to die during coronary bypass surgery.

This may be due partly to the fact that the stricken women are, on average, older than male victims, and that most of the research has been done on men, who tend to be larger, have wider arteries, and perhaps different drug dosage requirements. The authors point out that about half of all American women die from diseases associated with arteriosclerosis.

There are sections on how women's bodies differ from men's, on what can go wrong with the human heart, and on which women are most likely to develop cardiac problems.

The authors also give readers practical advice on recognizing heart attacks and on the different treatments that are available. They also include information on the effects of diet, exercise, pregnancy, menopause, stress, anger, smoking, alcohol, and drugs on the heart.

Erica Harth's *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Cornell University Press, 1992) is an interesting study of the "cartésiennes," the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French women intellectuals who were followers or disciples of the philosopher, René Descartes. The women, among whom were



Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Anne de la Vigne, and Marie Dupré, gathered in Parisian salons, which had members of both sexes, but which were usually presided over by women. The more scholarly academies of the era did not permit women to become members.

Many of the educated men and women of the time were attracted to the philosophy of Descartes, who died in 1650.

Despite the fact that women were not encouraged to think or write, the Cartesian women were very interested in philosophy and in issues of gender and thought. "The Cartesian woman, from the early seventeenth century through the eighteenth, spoke as both a rational 'Modern' and as a woman. From the particular position of the marked feminine, she struggled with the invisibility of the unmarked, masculine universal."

Harth had to travel to France to consult the writings of the Cartesian women. Not only are they almost unknown in this country, but their works were unavailable here until the writer helped to remedy that situation. ■





## Cunninggim Center groups continue meeting over summer

All groups meet at the Cunninggim Center.  
For more information call 322-4843.

**Book Group** meets every second Monday from 5:15 until 6:15 p.m.

Summer schedule includes:

June 14 - *Possession: A Romance* by A. S. Byatt, facilitator Carroll Young.

July 12 - *Willa Cather: 24 Stories* edited by Sharon O'Brien, facilitator Jane DuBose.

August 9 - *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin, facilitator Raquel Howard.

**Gender Study Group** meets on the first and third Wednesdays from 5:00 until 6:00 p.m.

**Writers Workshop** meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays from 5:15 until 7:15 p.m.

## Baby boomers approach period of perimenopause

As the baby boom generation approaches its middle years, menopause has been getting increasing attention. But the term menopause only describes the years after ovarian function and menstrual periods cease. Because (non-surgical) menopause does not occur at a single, dramatic moment in time, there is, for most women, a period of transition that may last years that is called the perimenopause.

The perimenopause can be likened to the changes that occur in preadolescent girls before their periods start and become regular. It is a time of hormonal fluctuation that can cause both physical and emotional symptoms.

Physical symptoms often first show up as a change in the menstrual period. The flow may be shorter or longer, heavier or lighter and the cycles closer together or further apart. There is no predictable pattern in any individual. Then, all of a sudden, everything will return to a typical flow pattern for a period of time. This may begin years before other symptoms such as hot flashes.

Hot flashes generally start before menstrual periods entirely cease. There is wide diversity in the degree to which women experience hot flashes. Some women have none or have them so mildly that they are not bothered by them. Others have significant hot flashes which interfere with sleep at night, and with work and home responsibilities during the day. Again, they may be noticeable for a few months then completely disappear for a few months during the perimenopause.

Vaginal dryness may start as a decrease in lubrication during intercourse and can, over time, progress to a level of dryness that can lead to irritation, infection, and injury. Other physical symptoms may include dry eyes, fatigue,

Beth Colvin Huff,  
RN, MSN



palpitations, and urinary leakage. But because these symptoms could be related to other health problems, it is important that a thorough physical evaluation be obtained to search for other causes.

The psycho-emotional symptoms may vary just as widely in any group of women. Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, sudden bursts of energy, sleeplessness, a decrease or increase in libido, and mood swings may suddenly appear and disappear with hormonal fluctuations. Women in the perimenopause are generally in their 40s and may feel as if they're just "hitting their stride," with feelings of power and control both personally and professionally. The emergence of these emotional symptoms may threaten their newly-found self-esteem while also raising issues of aging and mortality.

In her book, *The Silent Passage: Menopause*, author Gail Sheehy offers three helpful hints as we begin to face our "second adulthood." First, recognize that half of your adult life is still in front of you. Use this opportunity to decide how you want that half to be spent. Second, find a healthcare practitioner who will treat you as a partner. Managing the menopausal transition is not an exact science. It takes trial and error, listening and learning on both partners' parts to come up with a plan that works best for you. Third, take responsibility for the passage. If you don't take care of your physical and emotional health, no one else will do it for you. ■

## Nominations being accepted for 1993 Mary Jane Werthan Award

Nominations for the 1993 Mary Jane Werthan Award will be accepted now through the summer. This award to a person who has made a noteworthy contribution to the advancement of women at Vanderbilt will be presented at the Margaret Cunninggim Lecture on November 9, 1993.

The award was established in 1988 when it was presented to the woman for whom it is named, Mary Jane Werthan. She was the first woman elected a life member on the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. Subsequent recipients have been Marillyn Craig, librarian at the Jean and Alexander Heard Central Library (1989); William A. Jenkins, vice-chancellor for administration (1990); Miriam Cowden, life member of the Board of Trust (1991); and Susan Ford Wiltshire, Professor of Classical Studies and Chair of the Department (1992).

Letters of recommendation for the 1993 Award may be sent to the Cunninggim Center.



# Announcements

*Additional information on items listed below is available at the Cuninggim Center.*

## CONFERENCES

**Reweaving Women's Colors: Scholarship, Curriculum and Our Lives**, the National Women's Studies Association's National Conference, will take place June 16-20 at the Washington Marriott Hotel in Washington, D. C.

The new NWSA constitution reaffirms commitment to the goals of feminists, multicultural education at all levels, strengthens the voice of the membership in its governance, and improves the organization's ability to represent and serve its diverse constituents. More information is available at the Cuninggim Center. Registration forms must be postmarked by June 7.

The American Association of University Women's 1993 convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 19-22. This year's convention theme is "Vision, Voice, Victory" and conveys the group's "pride in the achievements of the past two years and in the power of our collective energy." The convention will include three dynamic speakers: Maya Angelou, Mary

Hatwood Futrell, and Wilma Mankiller. The highlight of the AAUW Educational Foundation banquet at the convention will be the acceptance by Mankiller, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, of the Foundation's highest honor, the AAUW Achievement Award. (Editor's Note: The Women's Center is proud to recall Mankiller's visit to campus and lunchtime conversation in 1988.)

Registration is \$280 and can be sent to AAUW Convention Office, P. O. Box 96793, Washington, D. C. 20090-6793. For further assistance, call the Convention Office at (202) 785-7781 or the AAUW HELPLINE at 1-800-821-4364, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST.

The 1993 National NOW Conference will be held in historic Boston, July 2-4. The conference will feature informative workshops covering National Organization of Women priority issues, along with strategy sessions, plenaries, issues hearings, and fabulous entertainment by Grammy-winner Mary-Chapin Carpenter. This is also an elections conference, where delegates will select NOW leaders to represent the organization over the next four years.

Conference registration forms are available at the Cuninggim Center. We encourage you to make your travel ar-

rangements through International Travel Associates by calling 1-800-741-4384. (Your use of International Travel helps NOW accumulate frequent flyer miles to pay for travel for conference speakers and entertainers, helping to reduce the cost of the conference.) Registration is \$75. For more information, contact the Cuninggim Center.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**2nd European Feminist Research Conference 1994: Technology, Work & Ecology**, July 5-9, 1994, Graz, Austria.

The current social and political restructuring of Europe together with the rapid diffusion of technologies change the face of work and of the environment. To cope with the diversity and scope of these processes, organization and technological knowledge, as well as vision, are required. Feminism and women are called upon to contribute to this challenge, both in a theoretical and a practical way.

Deadline for submission of abstract is June 25, 1993. A complete brochure is available on the Cuninggim Center Bulletin Board.



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- A yearly subscription to off-campus addresses is \$5.00. Please make checks payable to Vanderbilt University.

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