

Margaret
Cunningim
Women's Center

No-whining Maxine cites the life of the secretary

Joan Anderson, Secretary,
Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine

"Mind if I smoke?"

"Not at all," I said.

Maxine pulled a Bic lighter out of her breast pocket, lit a Camel Light, and took a long, deep drag.

"Whew! It's been years since I've had a smoke." As she spoke a thin trail of smoke escaped her mouth.

Maxine is a secretary I know. Not all secretaries smoke, of course. Maxine was smoking that day because her boss had been back from his sabbatical three days and was driving her nuts. Not all bosses drive their secretaries nuts, but Maxine's can on occasion. Thus, the cigarette. We were having lunch and I asked Maxine about her life as a secretary:

"Being a secretary is a service occupation, as I see it. I'm here to provide a service in a support role. I've been office wife, manager, technician, public relations rep, mediator, and mother confessor, depending on what's on my desk and

master secretaries. Let them get their own fix. But I'll go a long way for a boss if he or she is decent. I prefer the carrot to the stick any day."

Temporary help: "I've temped a lot. I like it because you get variety going from place to place. A lot of people view temps as the prostitutes of the business world, so to speak. Temps arrive on the scene, turn their trick, take their check and move on. The regulars don't invest in a temp. They kind of keep their distance, and I can understand that. Who wants to develop a relationship with a person



who is history even before she arrives? But it's interesting from the temps' point of view to separate out the regulars. Some will be nice and helpful. Others treat you like a paper clip unless they need something from you, in which case they come up to you and use a kind of fake voice—you can hear it—as if you had a social disease or were retarded. These people missed the point somewhere."

Management: "I like to train my bosses to my style. That boss-secre-

tary relationship is an office marriage, no matter what the sexes are. Male or female, you're married to your boss. Train 'em. If something isn't going my way, I try to talk with them about it. If

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that doesn't work, I've got other ways. I'll tell you this, I play a lot of 'Off my desk and back onto yours.'" Another game I play is 'Dumb,' but I use that one sparingly because it can get in the way of your options, if you know what I mean. 'Upward delegation' usually works better. One of my favorite games is 'How about if we stop playing games and everybody pitches in and GETS THIS JOB DONE!'"

White collar slavery: "Once I had a boss who was awful to me, unreasonable and hellacious. Finally one day I looked that woman straight in the eye and said, 'They emancipated the slaves, you know.' And I quit. It wasn't easy because I had the three kids and the bills, but we made out, and I just felt free and somehow whole again. I know women who sit year after year in jobs they hate. Maybe they're bored or are in the wrong line of work or they work with a Simon or Simonette Le Gree—whatever. I say, find a job that works for you."

Benefits: "Lord, I love benefits! That's why I quit temping: It feels so good on Thanksgiving Day to kick back with family and know you're getting paid for it. And that's only the

(continued page two)



who's standing in front of it. I'm not one of those fix-the-coffee-for-the-

Maxine: The life of the secretary (from page one)

beginning. I do the Credit Union Christmas savings plan, retirement, the whole bit. It's there; why not use it?"

Men as secretaries: "Why not? They've got to feed their families just the same as I do."

Women as bosses: "Why not? They've got to feed their families just the same as I do."

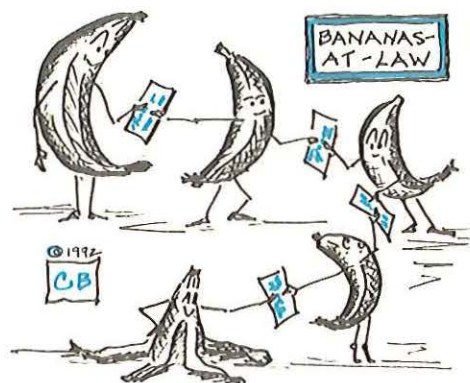
The Network: "When I want something done, I get on that phone and start calling. It's amazing the amount of power and knowledge in the network. All together, people can do almost anything. I like to make connections wherever I can. I figure, we're all in this together and I'll do for you and then you do for me. If you treat people right, you are in the network: office gossip, politics, shortcuts, who knows what, and lunches! I just love lunches."

Secretary's Day: "My guess is Hallmark started this one to sell cards. Well, it's a great idea. We work our tails off all year long and it means a lot to have somebody say, 'Hey, you do a great job. You fill a place here

that is special. You are special.' I expect either lunch out or a gift. I let my boss know it's coming, then I let him worry about what to do. He has his weak points, but on Secretary's Day he comes through."

Market value: "Somehow I think we're all equal here from Joe B. on down. Some people can tolerate cleaning toilets and some people can tolerate cocktail parties. Same difference really. You're lucky if you like what you do, but whether you like it or not, it's a job, and in my book they all have equal value because a boss needs a secretary and a secretary needs a boss."

"I know of a law firm in Washington, DC, where everybody makes the same salary—the top banana down to the last banana peel. About five years ago they were all making \$14,000 a year. It's the truth. They did that Karen Ann Quinlan case—remember the movie? Anyway, when I heard they all got the same paycheck I



thought, that's right. I wonder if they're still doing it?"

Status: "I don't care how many speeches some people make, or how many trips they take or how many books they write. They are doing their thing, and I say, go for it. Me? I'm a secretary. I hold my head as high as anybody. When that head hits the pillow at night I'm in good shape with my Maker—and at work, I hit that keyboard with pride." ■

News quote

Little given toward preventing women's attrition from science

Despite many efforts over the past twenty years to recruit women into scientific and technical fields, those disciplines remain dominated by men. Recent studies indicate that colleges which succeed in bringing women into science through intervention and recruiting are losing the women further up in the pipeline. Because few of the intervention programs monitor their own long-term results, there is little data on why so many women leave scientific and technical fields before earning advanced degrees.

A report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), "Investing in Human Potential: Science and Engineering at the Crossroads," found that nearly three-quarters of the undergraduate and graduate programs surveyed did not routinely collect data on attrition rates for those most at risk of dropping out, making it impossible to evaluate efforts to encourage women in the sciences. While scholars have identified many factors which contribute to this attrition—such as competitive classroom styles, the inability of some individuals to view women seriously as scientists, and the incompatibility of tenure rules with raising a family—little change has occurred at the institutional level to alter these effects. These issues are explored in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 11, 1991 and in *American Scientist*, September-October 1991.

University Women, University of Wisconsin System
February 1992



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A
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1992

Calendar
of
Events

Margaret
Cunninggim
Women's
Center



For further information call the Cuninggim Center at 322-4843.

2 (Thursday)

Thordis Simonsen, author of *Dancing Girl*, speaks at Cuninggim Center. For over a decade, Thordis Simonsen has lived at least part of every year in the Greek village of Elika. Her 1991 book describes life there. Through a selection of readings from *Dancing Girl: Themes and Improvisations in a Greek Village Setting* (1991) and slides of Elika, she will take you on a journey into the lives of three women in Greece. 4:30 p.m.

Co-sponsored by Women's Studies and English Department. Reception to follow.

{Thordis Simonsen will sign her books at the Cuninggim Center from 3:00 p.m., April 2}

6 (Monday)

Cuninggim Center Advisory Board second spring semester meeting. 4:10 p.m., Carmichael Towers East, room 108.

8 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop meets from 5:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center. New members welcome.

13 (Monday)

Book Group will discuss *The Road from Coorain* by Jill K. Conway. Facilitator is Cynthia Lynbeck. 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

14 (Tuesday)

Noontime Seminar. Gayle McKeen, assistant professor of political science; Andrew W. Mellon Fellow, leads a seminar "How Has Feminism Changed the Way We Think About Politics?" 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

22 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop meets from 5:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center. New members welcome.

23 (Thursday)

Not Over the Hill, But On A Roll. Panel of older adult women who have carved out interesting lives for themselves:

- Marion Caplan, writer and producer of original plays, free lance writer, and editor of *The Senior Sentinel*.

- Virginia Naylor Smith, former public school teacher turned television commercial actress, ballroom dance instructor, and genealogist.

- Rosa Mimms, retired after forty years of nursing and teaching in department of surgery at Meharry Medical College, now lobbyist for AARP and health promotion coordinator for Hadley Park Seniors.

- Moderator, Janet Jernigan, Executive Director, Senior Citizens, Inc.

Refreshments 4:30 to 5:00 p.m., panel discussion 5:00. University Club, Garden Room. Co-sponsored by Vanderbilt Alumni Committee on Status of Women.

Please save and post. Individual flyers for these programs will not be sent.

Speaking of women . . .

Tichi leads in male-dominated academic arena

Jeanne Peck, A&S '92

Cecelia Tichi says women who call themselves feminists also have to be willing to take the title of "rude extremist."

"It's true not just of Vanderbilt, but all around the country," said the William R. Keanan Jr. professor of English. "It's a time when women students seem not to want to be identified on the whole as feminists."

And even though Tichi, a professor at Vanderbilt since 1987, says she considers herself a feminist, she hesitates to give herself the title.

"I feel that I haven't always earned it enough," she said. "I am not, for instance, a member of NOW [National Organization for Women]. And NOW wants you not just to send your check, but to do things and to lobby your legislature."

More than a feminist, Tichi is known for being the teacher who forces even the shyest of students into the spotlight.

"Classroom work is collaborative," she said. "I cannot imagine writing a book and not making that part of my classroom effort. That seems schizophrenic, unnatural, to me."

Before she came to Vanderbilt five years ago, the Pittsburgh-born Tichi spent twenty years at Boston University. Tichi said her experience as an instructor has taught her that men and women behave differently in a classroom setting.

"Men students, wherever they sit in the classroom, feel free to raise their hand and speak," she said. "Women seem not to feel free to speak, on the whole, unless they are fairly close to the instructor."

Tichi said now she tries to make sure that women feel as confident to speak in public as men do.

"Studies suggest that if women don't develop those fast-paced responses, they will lose out when they are working in teams and committees," she said.

Tichi, who has taught courses in American and environmental literature, published *Electronic Hearth* in 1991. The book, like others Tichi has

published, probes the relationship between literature and culture.

"There are more serious novelists who are bringing television into their texts," she said. She cited fiction by David Foster Wallace, who wrote stories based on *Late Night with David Letterman* and on the game show *Jeopardy*.

Tichi's next project, she said, will include a discussion of loneliness, a

subject which often pops up in country music.

"Loneliness doesn't get talked about in the American literary tradition," she said. "The nation is represented as a city upon a hill. But at the same time you get these immigrants writing in diaries about these wrenching scenes of departure from family and friends. If you listen to country

(continued page five)



Walking for better health

Beth Colvin Huff, MSN, RN
Associate in OB-GYN

This time of year beckons with its warmer temperatures and gorgeous displays of spring flowers. What better time of year to plan and start a walking program? Let's review just a few of the benefits.

Cardiovascular research is beginning to point out that while lowering total cholesterol is good, raising HDL (high density lipoprotein) cholesterol is even better. Remember that there are two types of cholesterol—HDL and LDL (low density lipoprotein). HDL is considered the "good" cholesterol and its role in preventing heart disease is becoming more apparent. Studies indicate that a one per cent rise in HDL cholesterol results in lowering the risk of coronary artery disease by three per cent.

A recent study on cardiovascular disease in women has determined that regular walking can reduce the risk of heart disease. Women were asked to walk three miles a day, five days per week. Three speeds were studied—three miles in an hour; three

miles in 45 minutes; and three miles in 30 minutes. All groups showed improvements in cardiorespiratory fitness, especially the group who walked at the faster pace. However, HDL cholesterol increased significantly in *all* the groups. This seems to support the theory that vigorous exercise may not be necessary to impact HDL, thereby lowering cardiovascular risk.

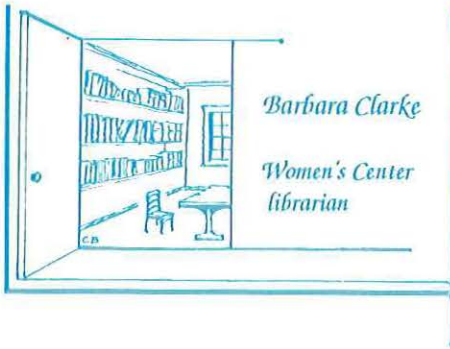
Walking also exercises the long bones of the legs which help strengthen the skeleton to prevent osteoporosis. In addition, the sunshine you get when walking outside provides Vitamin D which helps the body utilize calcium more efficiently.

Stress management is something we can all use and walking can be helpful here, too. Having some time each day for your own thoughts can put problems in a new perspective or simply allow your brain to wander on its own creative path.

So, grab some comfortable shoes, get outside, and start walking. It's easy to do and your body will thank you for it.

Beauty as the beast is featured literary topic

Mirror, Mirror . . . The Importance of Looks in Everyday Life by Elaine Hatfield and Susan Sprecher is an interesting work on the effects of physical attractiveness. Looks are important not only for women but also for men and children.



Most people feel that beauty should not play a part in how successful we are in life. However, research shows that appearance does make a difference throughout life, even in such areas as school grades, in finding employment, in starting salary levels, and job promotion. People believe that attractive persons possess more good qualities than do more homely people, and the good-looking people are treated differently, as if they really did have more desirable qualities.

While there is some correlation between good looks and self-esteem, attractive people possess only a little more self-esteem than do persons of average appearance.

Real happiness depends on other factors besides beauty, and the writers conclude that neither women nor men should overemphasize appearance or go to extreme lengths to improve their looks. Images of beauty change over time and we all age, so "while one must pay some attention to the physical, it is more important to nurture the mind and the spirit."

The best-selling *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* by Naomi Wolf is a fascinating and somewhat depressing book. Wolf believes that "there is a secret 'under-life' poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of

lost control."

The writer feels that "we are in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement." In her sections on work, religion, advertising, pornography, the media, and violence, Wolf shows how greatly women suffer because of society's expectations of beauty and physical perfection. She concludes with some suggestions as to how women can break free from the bonds of the beauty myth.

Moving the Mountain: the Women's Movement in America Since 1960 by Flora Davis is a comprehensive and scholarly history of the women's movement over the last thirty years. Davis did not attempt to discuss feminist theory: "This is an activists' history, short on feminist theory and long on accounts of political action."

Davis touches most aspects of women's progress, beginning with a description of the battle over airlines' discrimination against stewardesses, who had to resign either when they married or had "aged" (usually when they reached 32!). She covers everything from the founding of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, and from the establishment of women's studies courses to the changes in abortion and divorce laws.

Lois Benjamin's *The Black Elite: Facing the Color Line in the Twilight of the Twentieth Century* is a new study of one hundred successful black women and men. Thirty-seven of the elite interviewed for the book were women.

Benjamin shows that even very successful African-Americans suffer greatly from the effects of racism in almost all spheres of life. Black women and men experience oppression differently, and it is not easy for women to tell if white men are discriminating because of race or gender or both. For most African-American women racism is a much bigger problem than is sexism.

Many blacks feel that the advancement of white women in the workplace has come at the expense of black men and women, and that white women should not be considered

minorities.

The writer, a sociologist, also discusses the problems of minority women in feminist organizations, the social isolation of many successful black women and men, and the problems experienced by the children of interracial marriages.

New acquisitions include: *Physical Appearance and Gender: Sociobiological and Sociocultural Perspectives* by Linda A. Jackson; *Living Out Loud* by Anna Quindlen; and *Recreating Motherhood: Ideology and Technology in a Patriarchal Society* by Barbara Katz Rothman. ■

Speaking of (from page four)

music, loneliness is so important there."

Tichi says her husband, Bill, and her two teen-age daughters have helped her bear the strain of competing in the often male-dominated academic arena.

Tichi said she and other women professors feel a responsibility to mentor junior women faculty members. "We feel obliged to keep pipelines open for younger women, to show them not to take it for granted that all the channels are clear and open."

As she spoke of women's changing role as professionals, she said, "What I would hate to see is women turn into honorary men." ■

Videotape of Gilligan lecture

If you're one of the unlucky who couldn't fit into Wilson 103 for the Carol Gilligan lecture last month, don't despair. Her riveting lecture is on videotape and can be seen at the Cuninggim Center library or at the Learning Resource Center.

Announcements

Call for papers

Emory University's second *Politics of Caring* conference scheduled for November 6-9, 1992 in Atlanta is titled "Health and Health Care Policy: Women's Strategies for Change." The conference is a forum for professionals from various disciplines and cultures to explore theoretical and practical aspects of health and health care policy. Deadline for abstracts is April 15. For more information check the Cuninggim Center Bulletin Board.

Conferences

"What difference does DIFFERENCE make? The Politics of Race, Class, and Gender" is the title of a conference sponsored by Duke University-University of North Carolina Center for Research on Women, May 29-31, 1992, at Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The Cuninggim Center will pay registration fees for students (graduate or undergraduate) who would like to attend. Please contact Nancy Ransom (322-4843) for more information.

18th National Women's Music Festival, May 28-31, 1992. Although music is an important part of this festival, its emphasis is on the broad spectrum of women's culture through workshops, special conferences,

networking, and seminars. The festival is held on the Indiana University campus in Bloomington, Indiana. A complete registration brochure is at the Cuninggim Center.

"Embracing Difference," 24th Annual Conference, Association for Creative Change, is held June 18-21 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. The conference explores, in depth, race, gender, and sexual orientation, identifying typical power inequities created by the dominance/subordination dynamic in relationships, organizations, and cultures.

Among the numerous presenters at the conference are three who are familiar to the Vanderbilt campus: Carol Pierce and David Wagner, participants in Opportunity Development Center's Valuing Diversity Series, and Bertice Berry, sociologist/comedienne who was part of the Cuninggim Center Women's History Month programming last month.

A complete brochure is available at the Cuninggim Center.

Basketball and books: a good combination

A new SEC record was set March 3 when nine of thirteen eligible members of the Vanderbilt women's basketball team earned places on the

1992 Academic All-SEC team. The previous record for the most members of one team earning academic honors was six, set by Vanderbilt in 1989 and tied last year.

Seniors Christine Dunn, Jade Huntington, Michelle Kennedy, Lori King, and co-captain Sarah Mannes, paved the way for the underclasswomen. Junior Renee Allen, and sophomores Julie Powell and Lesley Smith, also qualified for academic honors. Lisa King, a junior in eligibility and senior academically rounded out the list.

To qualify for the Academic All-SEC team, a player must have a 3.0 GPA for her entire career or the previous academic year, be a sophomore or higher in class standing, and play enough to earn a letter. Congratulations!

Wanted: experienced layout and design editor for *Women's VU*, 1992-93 academic year.

The Cuninggim Center wants to hire a student with experience in PageMaker on an IBM-compatible computer. Work could begin in May with learning opportunities in June and July. Flexible work hours—average ten per week.

Contact Judy Helfer at 322-6518.



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Women's VU

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