

Jumping off cliffs

Graduating seniors welcome the challenges of an uncertain future

Recently, Women's Center Director Nancy A. Ransom had an extended conversation with four graduating Vanderbilt women. Kammy Turner of Atlanta is a double major in computer science and math. Becky Welch is a mechanical engineering major from Lilburn, Ga. Chia-Lun Chung is a double major in art history and religious studies from Flower Mound, Texas. And Elizabeth Dobbins is an English major from Stow, Ohio. The following is an excerpt of that discussion.

NAR: To start, I'd like you to talk about where you are at the moment, and where you think you're heading in the immediate future.

KT: I'm going to work in California in Silicon Valley, and that's just like the biggest thing for a computer science major. I'm happy, but at the same time sad, because my family lives in Atlanta, and my boyfriend doesn't know where he's going to be. He has a job offer also, but not in the same area. He's interviewing for a job in Washington state, so I'm hoping he gets that. It's really strange, because I look back and I think on how I guess if I had been in my mom's era, I probably would have just followed Charles wherever he went. But I'm not going to, and it's been a tough decision. I mean, I did think about that for a while: should I just follow him and

not take my job? But I decided to take my job. We're going to have a long-distance relationship for a while.

BW: What about him following you?

KT: We actually talked about that — I told him he can be a house-husband! — but both of us felt like if one followed the other we both might regret giving up something. So we thought it might be best if we both got our careers going first.

BW: Well, I don't have a job. But the last couple of years I've saved up a lot of money working, and I decided I

I'll be printing my own t-shirts and selling them in the parking lots. After that, I'm going to move where I want to move and get a job. I'll probably go out West. I like Seattle a lot, and Portland.

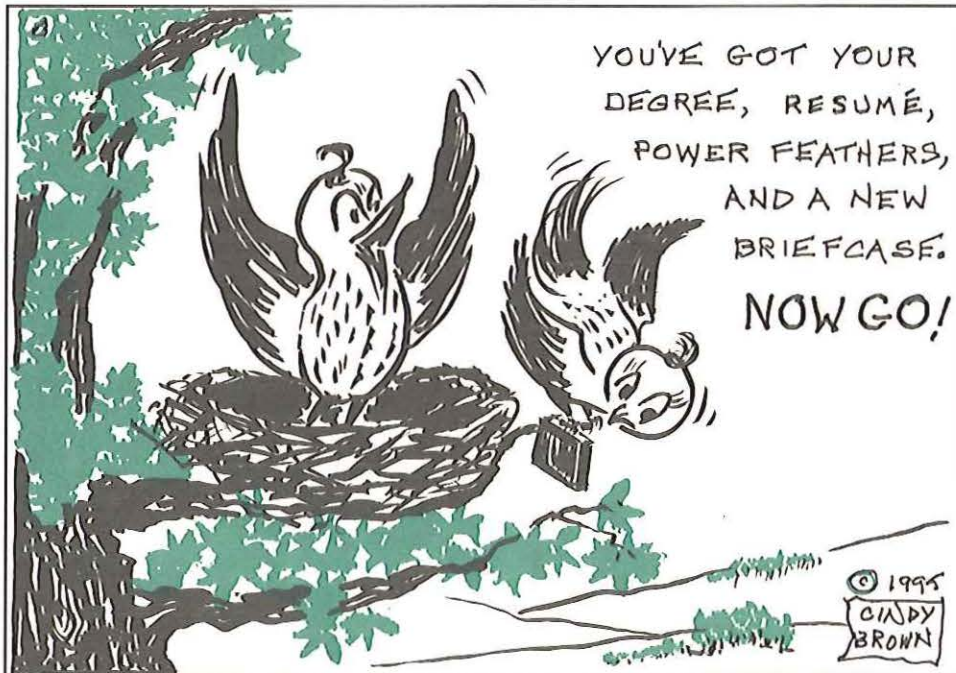
NAR: What kind of companies might you work for?

BW: I'd like to go into a more non-traditional company. I'd like to go to a company where I feel I can wear jeans to work, maybe a smaller consulting firm rather than having to be very competitive with a lot of white male engineers. I just don't think I'd be

comfortable in that atmosphere. But since I've been here I've realized there are many other things I'd like to do. I've been thinking about going to graduate school in Women's Studies.

NAR: Chia-Lun?

CLC: I'm going to take a year off and make art. After that, maybe graduate school. I had planned to



owe myself a vacation. I'm going mountain-biking out West for two weeks, then I'm going on a Phish tour.

NAR: Phish?

BW: P-H-I-S-H. It's a band. Their summer tour lasts a month. They do 22 shows. I'm going to see 21 of them.

NAR: You're working with them?

BW: No... I'm following them. Like

go to grad school for art history, but now, I'd probably do an MFA in studio art. I'm painting right now, but I do other things. I like sculpture. I like to work in more non-traditional materials.

NAR: Where will you study?

CLC: I don't know. See, the problem is, right now I really don't feel like

going back into school. For the time being I just want to graduate, make art for a year and see what happens.

NAR: Elizabeth?

ED: I don't have a job. But it doesn't bother me. At the beginning of this semester, I had my application done for law school, had taken the LSAT, everything. But I didn't send it. I decided I just didn't want to go. It was too much, too soon. I'm going home to live with my family, which is kind of scary, but it's nice, too, because they're being very supportive. I'm just going to see if I can find a job that will sort of point me in the right direction, something that's not a lot of hassle, but not boring, something that will leave me time to explore other options. I'm ready to take a break.



Kammy Turner

KT: I think senior year has been very stressful for all of us. I sent out more than 100 résumés, I had about 35 interviews and four second interviews. It's just been very stressful.

NAR: Can you think back to your freshman year? What has been significant about your four years here, what has been important? Have things

changed, or have they just become more clear or settled?

CLC: I've learned mostly about what I *don't* want. It's been more of a process of: I don't want to do this, I don't want to be that. Because I really was undecided when I came to college. I was just sort of looking, just trying a lot of different things. I enjoy doing art. It's not a way of making money, but I've come to terms with that.



Chia-Lun Chung

ED: When I came to Vanderbilt I was pre-med. I think a part of it was that I thought my parents would be proud of me; I thought people would be impressed. But my grades were really bad, so after my sophomore year I switched to English, just because I thought I might like it. I lucked out because I love it. I think the most significant fact of my coming to Vanderbilt was being eight hours away from home; I couldn't go home whenever things got bad. I think you can't make it if you don't do some soul-searching, realize what *you* want to do, what makes *you* happy. The thing with me, I'd always had my whole life planned out, down to when I was getting married and when I was going to have kids. And it just all changed. Life just isn't planned out. It was really tough to learn that because all of a sudden you have to trust yourself, trust those little feelings, instead of taking the easy, concrete way out. It's a lot easier to do what other people want you to do than what you want to do. I



Elizabeth Dobbins

think that was the scariest thing to learn. It was probably the most positive thing, but it was the scariest thing.

NAR: Has Vanderbilt played a role in giving you this confidence, this ability to take these risks? Because these are all risky decisions. This is jumping off cliffs, each one of you, in different ways.

BW: I don't really think of it as a risk as much as I just think of it as just

living life. This is something I want to do, something I enjoy. Yeah, I'm scared, but I'm also excited. A risk means you think you can fail.

CLC: It's not necessarily Vanderbilt that has given us this confidence. I think it has a lot to do with just our era, this exact point in time, this generation, 1995. And going to college, you get into the process of thinking, you begin to evaluate yourself.

BW: I think there are a lot more opportunities, too. My mom wouldn't have had the opportunities to do the things I'm able to do. Even if women went to college, they were the ones who would give up their jobs, they were the ones who would stay home. Women now are still working with glass ceilings, but things are changing.



Becky Welch

CLC: Just the fact that we can have these kinds of experiences, that we can say, "I'm going to go ahead and do this, even if it doesn't seem like the most secure thing to do" — this has changed.

NAR: What effects, if any, do you think the Women's Center has had?

KT: For me personally, not being in a sorority, the Women's Center has given me a place to go. Here at Vanderbilt we don't really have a real student center. Well, we have a student center, but not where people hang out, and this is where I can lighten up and hang out. The Women's Center has given me a place to just be myself.

CLC: I think with the Women's Center here, Vanderbilt hits the "okay" mark. If it wasn't here the school would go to the deficit. The Women's Center's not a bonus; I think it's necessary to the campus.

ED: A lot of people have said, "Oh, you work at the Women's Center: You male-bash." But it's not about that. It's not even about men. It's about women, and what women can do. I mean, you come in here and look at the artwork and you see that there's somebody who's doing this — and you just praise what a woman does with her mind, with the talents that she has. ■

Women's VU is published monthly September through June at the Margaret Cuningglim Women's Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. Campus address: 316 West Side Row. Mailing address: Box 1513 Station B, Nashville, TN 37235. Phone: (615) 322-4843. Fax: (615) 343-0940. E-mail address: womenctr@ctrvox.Vanderbilt.edu.

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“NEWS QUOTES”

...a compilation of news excerpts from the national press. Some stories have been edited for clarity, consistency or brevity...

Mammography woes return

The debate over mammography for younger women was revived by a recent study in which researchers analyzed the results of 13 earlier studies. Mammography “does not significantly reduce mortality in women aged 40 to 49,” they reported in the Jan. 11 *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study reaffirmed the National Cancer Institute’s stance that women should begin having regular mammograms at age 50, unless medical history or symptoms indicate otherwise.

Women’s Health Advocate
March 1995

Women in law school get lower grades than men

A study by the Law School Admission Council, which administers the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), found that men with the same LSAT scores and undergraduate grades as women outperformed the women in law school. The study examined 6,000 male and female students at 90 law schools. ...

A number of law school critics have claimed that law school itself, with its emphasis on competition and what some have called “ritualized combat,” is inhospitable to many women students. Studies show that women generally participate less than men in law school.

Another explanation might be the devaluation of women. A number of studies have shown that men and women alike give consistently higher rankings to materials (such as articles) which are attributed to men.

About Women on Campus
Spring 1995

Birthdays of Notable Women May

- 10 1919 Ella Grasso, first woman elected governor without first assuming the post from her deceased husband
- 11 1893 Martha Graham, modern dance innovator
- 15 1858 Emily Folger, scholar who supervised completion of the Folger Shakespeare Library
- 20 1825 Antoinette Brown Blackwell, first woman ordained a minister in America
- 22 1844 Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt
- 27 1907 Environmental activist and author Rachel Carson



Health Matters: taking aim at domestic violence

by Clare Sullivan, a student in the MSN (master’s of science in nursing) program

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 — more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined. As the incidents of domestic violence increase, so too do the number of campus resources to deal with them. The Vanderbilt Medical Center’s emergency department has developed a model approach for responding to the medical needs of victims, while members of the Vanderbilt police department have received special training at Metro Nashville’s new Family Violence Detective Unit. Several members of the university, including representatives from the Women’s Center, the Department of Security and the Opportunity Development Center, are serving on the city-wide “You Have the Power ... Know How to Use It” committee. This committee is working to increase community-based resources and strategies for breaking the cycle of violence.

To further increase awareness and action, October 1995 has been declared Domestic Violence Awareness Month. VUPD’s Marlene Hall, Katie Griffith of the YWCA and Amy Griffith of the Metro Police Victim Witness program offer several ideas for campus involvement that month: Faculty might design coursework around the topic, students might sponsor an art show, and athletes might donate October football receipts to a shelter for abused women. Longer-term goals might include opening a shelter on campus, as was done recently at Michigan State University, or starting a campus telephone hot-line for victims.

Watch for details about Domestic Violence Awareness Month in the fall. ■

Play tells the story of women in Vietnam

A compelling drama about the women who served in Vietnam is coming to Neely Auditorium May 19-21. Adapted for the stage by Shirley Lauro from a novel by Keith Walker, *A Piece of My Heart* follows six women veterans as they reflect on their wartime experiences, disappointing homecomings and subsequent struggles with alcohol and depression.

The performance starts at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday in Neely Auditorium, with a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. Admission is free to women veterans. For others, the suggested donation is \$5. For tickets or other information, call 321-6304 or 322-4843. Tickets are also available at the door.

This event is co-sponsored by the Margaret Cuninggim Women’s Center and the Employee Association of the Nashville VA Medical Center. ■

In the library...

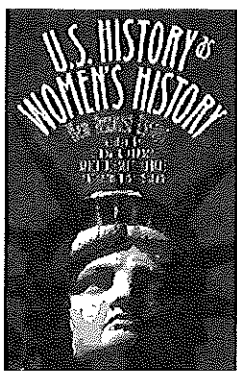
Several new books examine history from women's perspective

Barbara Clarke,
Women's Center
librarian



Distinguished historians Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris and Kathryn Kish Sklar are the editors of the new anthology *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995). The 15 chapters are written by such noted scholars as Linda Gordon, William H. Chafe, Nancy F. Cott, Darlene Clark Hine and Amy Swerdlow. Each editor also contributed a chapter to the volume, which is dedicated to women's historian Gerda Lerner.

The editors explain that "these essays seek to discover how gender serves to legitimize particular constructions of power and knowledge, to meld these into accepted practice and state policy."



The selections cover a wide variety of topics including gender and social reformers, the Social Security amendments of 1939, marriage in the late 19th century, public health, the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs and the female generation gap.

Another new publication on American women's history is *From Pocahontas to Power Suits: Everything You Need to Know About Women's History in America* (Penguin, 1995), which is aimed at a very different readership. Journalist and author Kay Mills has arranged this in a very readable question-and-answer style and it makes a good introduction to the topic. Typical questions are "How did the first

women's colleges train their students?" and "How did Sojourner Truth get her name?" The responses range from one paragraph to about five pages in length.

Miriam Schneir has edited two anthologies of articles on feminism. *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present* (Vintage, 1994) is a collection of important writings that were originally published between 1949 and 1993. There are selections from works or speeches by such notable feminists as Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Daly, Carol Gilligan, Audre Lorde, Susan Brownmiller, Anita Hill and Sylvia Plath; among the contributions are several poems and some fiction. Schneir has also included excerpts from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the National Organization for Women's Statement of Purpose and the New York City Commission on Human Rights Hearings on Women's Rights in 1970.



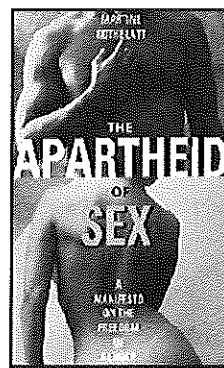
Schneir's earlier collection is *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (Vintage, 1994), which was originally published in 1972. Included are selections from Mary Wollstonecraft, Sarah M. Grimke, Margaret Sanger, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Virginia Woolf and many others. Schneir also presents excerpts from New York's Married Women's Property Acts of 1848 and 1860 and from the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions from the Seneca Falls meeting on women's rights in 1848.

Patriarchy: Notes of an Expert Witness (Common Courage, 1994) consists

of articles written between 1986 and 1994 by feminist author and psychologist Phyllis Chesler. These selections illustrate that women still face a great deal of sexism and discrimination, despite the progress made in the last generation. The eight articles deal with a variety of topics, including the Baby M case, Naomi Wolf's theories of feminism, the harsh treatment of women residents of American psychiatric institutions between 1840 and 1945, fathers and child custody, and women who kill men in self-defense.

Martine Rothblatt makes some revolutionary proposals in *The Apartheid of Sex: A Manifesto on the Freedom of Gender* (Crown, 1995). The writer advocates that society discontinue the two-gender system and believes that it is as wrong to divide people into genders as it is to segregate them into races. She illustrates how "there is a continuum of sex types, ranging from very male to very female, with countless variations in between," and she feels that sexual identity is cultural rather than genetic. The shape of one's genitals is irrelevant in modern society, according to Rothblatt, and a declaration of gender at birth should not be sufficient to lead people into two very different tracks for life.

The writer, who is an attorney, advocates that neither sex nor race be required on birth certificates and that adults be allowed to marry regardless of gender. She believes that rest-rooms need not be sex-segregated and that categories for athletic competitions should be based on participants' size rather than gender. Rothblatt describes herself as a "transperson." She spent most of her life as a man but now lives as a woman with her female partner. ■



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

M A Y

Calendar of Events

Margaret
Cunninggim
Women's Center



May 2 (Tuesday)

Creative Life Planning Group. Noon to 1:00 p.m. New members welcome. For more information call Judy Helfer, 322-6518. Also meets May 9, 16, 23 & 30.

May 3 (Wednesday)

Women's Time Out. This new monthly group at the Women's Center offers a forum to reflect on women's issues, life enhancement and personal growth. This month's topic is: "Are men and women really from different planets?" 5:15-6:30 p.m. No need to register. For more information call Nancy Ransom, 322-4843.

May 8 (Monday)

Book Group. This month's book is *Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton. Facilitator is Elaine Goleski. New members welcome. 5:15-6:15 p.m.

May 10 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop. Writers of all genres are invited to bring their writing for others to critique. 5:15-7:15 p.m.

Women's Learning Forum. 6:30 p.m. Bi-weekly group fosters growth and self-empowerment through education and discussion. Discussions address local, national and personal issues and often feature a guest speaker.

May 12 (Friday)

Brown Bag Lunch for Staff and Faculty. The second Friday of each month is designated as a time for guests to meet the Cuninggim Women's Center staff and learn about activities and programs. Men as well as women are invited to bring a lunch from 12-1.

May 19 (Friday), 20 (Saturday), 21 (Sunday)

"A Piece of My Heart" dramatizes the experiences of six women who served in Vietnam. Neely Auditorium. 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday. Suggested donation \$5; free to women veterans. Presented by the Women's Center and the Nashville Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center's Employee Association. For information, call the Women's Center at 322-4843 or the VA Employee Association at 321-6304. Tickets also available at the door. *See related story on page 3.*

May 22 (Monday)

Dissertation Writers Group I. 4:30-6:30 p.m.

May 24 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop. 5:15-7:15 p.m. New members welcome.

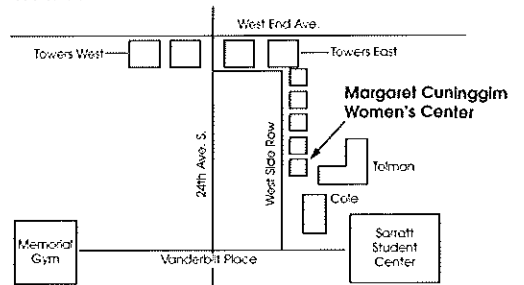
Women's Learning Forum. 6:30 p.m.

May 29 (Monday)

Dissertation Writers Group II. 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Unless otherwise stated, all programs are held at the Cuninggim Center, Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row. For more information, please call 322-4843.

HOW TO FIND US...



Announcements

Conferences

Women's Sports Foundation Summit '95, May 19-21 in Dallas, features speed skater Bonnie Blair. Call 516-542-4700 for details.

Gay and Lesbian Freedom Riders invite supporters of gay/lesbian rights to Ovet, Miss., from May 26-30 to support Camp Sister Spirit, a feminist retreat that has been the target of local violence and harassment. Participants will help clear land and build facilities. \$135 per person includes meals and supplies, as well as a \$25 donation to help with legal fees. For info, contact Metropolitan Community Churches, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Tel: 213-464-5100; or call Camp Sister Spirit at 601-344-1411.

Women Leading: Today and Tomorrow, a conference for college women student leaders, is June 8-10 at Georgetown Univ. Contact the National Association for Women in Education, 1325 18th St., NW, #210, Washington, DC 20026. Tel: 202-659-9330.

Virginia Woolf: Texts and Contexts is the title of the 5th Annual Virginia Woolf Conference, June 15-18 at Otterbein College. Pre-registration (postmarked by May 15) is \$175, \$95 for students. Offered separately from June 14-24 is "Reading/Teaching Virginia Woolf," a 3-credit course for graduate and undergraduate students. Contact Beth Rigel Daugherty, English Dept., Otterbein College, Westerville, OH 43081.

Women's Movements: Cultural, Intellectual and Political (R)evolutions, sponsored by the National Women's Studies Association, meets June 21-25 at Oklahoma University. Speakers include Wilma Mankiller, first woman chief of the Cherokee Nation, and feminist theorist bell hooks. *Deadline for early registration, on-campus housing is May 1.* Call OU Women's Studies at 405-325-0138. E-mail: aa0383@uokmvs.a.bitnet.

Transformations, the 1995 AAUW convention, meets June 24-27 in Orlando. Contact the American Association of University Women, Box 630505, Baltimore, MD 21263-0505. Tel: 202-785-7781; 800-821-4364.

Programs

"Contemporary Women Composers" is the topic of the May 6 meeting of the Middle Tennessee Women's Studies Assoc. Composer Dianne Eberhard will play excerpts from two Pulitzer prize winners. Coffee is at 9:30 a.m.; the program starts at 10:30 in room 241 of Peabody's Kennedy Center. Call 343-4554 for information.

Journey Toward Healing, an experiential workshop for adult survivors of sexual trauma, is May 13 at Scarritt-Bennett Center. \$45 (\$55 after May 5). Call 340-7450.



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Therapeutic Dance: Movement for Personal Transformation 101 uses dance and play to unlock emotions, energy and healing. Six-week sessions begin May 1-3 in the Women's Visions Art Gallery (Cummins Station, 209 10th Ave. S., Suite 211); Mondays and Wednesdays run 9-11 a.m.; Tuesdays are 6-8 p.m. Call 259-2254 to register; the \$85 fee is payable at the first class.

The National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, N.Y. (where the first Women's Rights Convention was held in 1848), invites new members. The Hall — which honors such figures as Olympian Wilma Rudolph and Nobel Laureate Rosalyn Yalow — seeks to replace a rescinded state grant by raising \$100,000 in 100 days. To join, send \$25 (or more) to the Women's Hall of Fame, 76 Fall St., Seneca Falls, NY 13148. Tel: 315-568-8060. Fax: 315-568-2976.

Special rate on AAUW dues for 1995-96 gives new members 15 months for the price of 12. Send \$46, payable to the American Association of University Women, to Janet Davies, AAUW Treasurer, 5103 Williamsburg Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027.

The Scientist Within You applies the work of 23 women scientists to help youngsters 8-13 discover science, math and history. Biographies alternate with experiments. Vol. I is \$18.95, Vol. II is \$20.95, plus \$3 handling. Call 1-800-935-7323 to order.

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Women's VII

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