

Hammering away at stereotypes

The work force is changing as women venture into traditionally male trades

by Marge Davis, editor

When Robin Hindman decided to become a pipe fitter eight years ago, the decision wasn't about gender politics, moral imperatives or the tyranny of patriarchal stereotypes.

It was about paying the bills.

"I was a single parent at the time," says Hindman, 33. "I was bartending, working a lot of night hours. I had no health insurance, no security.

"As a pipe fitter, I would actually be making a decent wage. I would have insurance, a secure job, a career. I would be a *craftsperson*."

It's been two years since Hindman, who lives in Woodbury, Tenn., "topped out" of the apprentice program overseen by Local 572, the plumbers and pipe fitters union. Today, she's a journeyman pipe fitter, replacing air lines, installing water pipes, repacking steam valves — doing everything, in short, that men pipe fitters do.

It's hard work, she concedes. Not only does she have to lift heavy loads, work in cramped spaces and handle potentially dangerous tools; as a woman, she "has to prove (her)self over and over again." She might spend four hours a day just driving to and from the job site, and when she gets there, she often has to put up with "stupid little comments" from some of her male co-workers. And though there are periods when she works more than 60 hours a week, there are other times when she doesn't work at all, when her health insurance lapses and her savings start to dwindle.

But, as Hindman is quick to point out, when you're earning \$16 or \$17 an hour, the vagaries of the job are

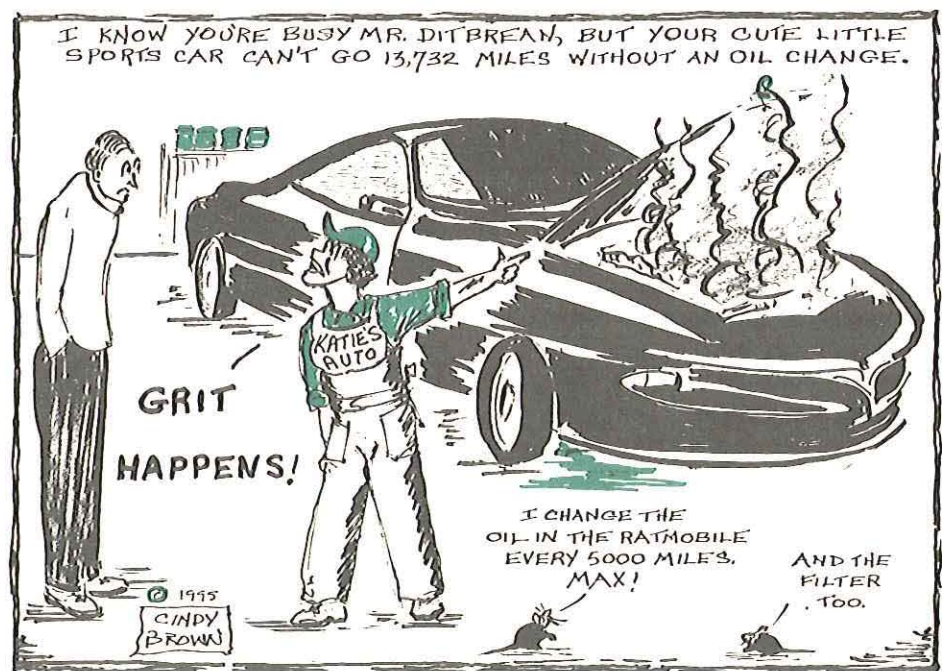
much easier to take. Besides, she says, "I like what I do. I'm good at it. And I'm proud of my accomplishments."

Robin Hindman represents a growing phenomenon in the American labor force: the skilled *tradeswoman*. In small but increasing numbers, women are stepping into jobs traditionally dominated by Big Strong Men: Auto mechanics. Brickmasons. Carpenters. Drywallers. Electricians. A whole alphabet of alternative careers is opening to women who have the guts and desire to pursue them, and for those who succeed, the rewards are proving — as Hindman has found — well worth the effort.

For many, perhaps most, the chief appeal of such careers is the pay. According to Merlin L. Taylor, who works for the U.S. Department of Labor as director of Tennessee's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Train-

ing, journeyman-scale wages average \$10 to \$20 an hour or more, often with health insurance and other benefits. And as anyone knows who has ever hired a plumber or carpenter, self-employed contractors can earn much more. Even during the lengthy apprenticeships required by many trades, when the novice is paid 50 percent of journeyman scale, she may still take home more than her counterparts in more traditionally female jobs.

But the advantages of working in a "man's" world are not merely monetary. Less tangible, perhaps, but no less real are the increments in self-esteem and self-determination that often accompany such work. "I love stepping back from a house and saying, 'Gee — I did that,'" said Marcy Hardwick, who last year helped build the "Women's House" for Habitat for Humanity and who now works for



Habitat's Nashville office as a construction supervisor. "For women, the gratification (of building something themselves) is unbelievable."

Sharon Lester, who supervised the "Women's House," agrees. Lester is a Nashville contractor who specializes in custom, high-end residences (\$700,000 and up) in the tony Forest Hills neighborhood. Her houses, she said, have earned her "a lot of respect. I know what I'm talking about, and (my male colleagues) know that I know what I'm talking about. I do a good job. I do a *better-than-good* job."

It's not that she's stronger than her competition, Lester said. "I've learned to work very smart with my body, but the bottom line is, a woman will never be physically as strong as a man." Instead, Lester believes, her edge as a female contractor lies in her attention to the customer, her commitment to quality over quantity, and her ability to keep track of a hundred things at once. "Women are socialized to attend to detail. Look at any mother who works, keeps house, does the shopping. Look at the number of balls she keeps in the air at once. That's why (a woman) can succeed in these jobs. It's not brute strength."

Of course, not all women do suc-

ceed in these jobs. Some will be forced out by the overt sexism, the Makita poster girls wearing bikinis and workboots. Others will find their spirits eroded by the isolation and boredom. Others, especially those with young children, will be discouraged by the unpredictable commutes to far-flung job sites (as one program official noted, "that's why they call them *journeymen*"). Still others will succumb to the sheer physicality of the work: the heat, the cold, the dirt, the heavy lifting, the noise.

In fact, estimates Merlin Taylor, "almost 100 percent" of women who venture into the trades eventually drop out. Considering that the attrition rate for men is 70 percent, this may not be quite as abysmal as it sounds. Nonetheless, the numbers of women in nontraditional trades are disproportionately small, less than 9% of the national work force, according to the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department. In Tennessee, fewer than 1% of the state's 770 licensed boiler-makers in 1990 were women, 5.5% of sheet metal workers, 2.8% of electricians, 1.1% of roofers, 2.3% of plumbers and pipe fitters, and fewer than 5% of all construction workers. Almost *no* women held supervisory positions, and those jobs with anything like significant female representation (in the 20% to 25% range) tended to be machine operators on assembly lines.

These inequities have not gone unnoticed. Around the country, the deficit is being addressed by women's groups, government agencies, private foundations, trade groups such as the National Organization for Women in Construction and even some employers. In Birmingham, Ala., for instance, BE&K Construction Co. has established women-friendly work policies, from a mobile day-care center that follows working mothers from one job site to the next, to women-only meetings at construction sites, where women are free to express their concerns about everything from sexual harassment to portable toilets.

On the federal and state level, women receive guidance and training through such initiatives as the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional

Occupations Act, the Job Training Partnership Act and the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act. The programs funded by these mandates are handled, in most cases, by intermediaries such as schools, YWCAs, social-service centers and non-profit groups. Of the latter, the best-known are Chicago Women in the Trades, Wider Opportunities for Women in Washington, D.C., and Tradeswomen of Purpose in Philadelphia. A fourth, nationally acclaimed program is based here in Tennessee. The Women in Trades program of the greater Memphis YWCA provides job assessment, preparation and referral for displaced homemakers, single parents and welfare recipients. Similar programs are offered by the Center for Community Career Education in Chattanooga and the Career Directions adult education program of the Nashville schools.

All of these programs are geared primarily for women over 18. But what about the girls still in school — girls in the third or fifth or eighth grades, girls whose notions about appropriate roles and gender stereotypes are still in the formative stages?

These are the youngsters Dr. Fay Gannon tries to reach through her job as gender equity specialist in the Metro schools. For several days each fall and again in the spring, Gannon and her team visit all 4,600 eighth-graders in the system, guiding them through a "career-planning profile" and helping them fill out an interests-and-abilities inventory. The purpose, she said, is to get these kids thinking about and planning for productive futures. But at the same time, she said she wants to alert them — girls especially — that there are careers other than "cosmetologist" on one extreme, and "surgeon" on the other.

Metro Schools Director Richard Benjamin agrees that the work force of the future depends on a broader cross-section of the population. "We especially need to prepare women for opportunities in nontraditional roles," he said, not only for their own benefit and that of the work force, but for the sake of future students, whose perspectives — and aspirations — will be broadened by their example. ■



Women's VU is published monthly September through June at the Margaret Cuninggim 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@ctrivax.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...

Sexual abuser / basketball star rejected by Seton Hall

Admitting top basketball recruit Richard Parker, who recently pleaded guilty to a charge of sexually abusing a high school classmate, would have sent the wrong message to women, according to Seton Hall University President Thomas R. Peterson.

Instead, he chose to “maintain the integrity” of the school, despite Parker’s prowess on the court, and reject the athlete’s application for admission to the perennial basketball power.

Parker had been offered an athletic scholarship before his guilty plea, and is considering suing the Roman Catholic School for withdrawing its offer. President Peterson says the scholarship offer was made before Parker had admitted the sexual abuse, and Seton Hall never admitted him.

Women in Higher Education
March 1995

AAUW joins Citadel brief

The American Association of University Women has signed an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief in support of Shannon Faulkner, the plaintiff in a discrimination suit against the state-funded, male-only military academy in South Carolina, the Citadel.

AAUW joined several other women’s and civil rights organizations in signing onto the brief, filed by the National Women’s Law Center.

Campus Connection
January 1995

Top science prize to San Diego high school student

Winning first-place prizes is nothing new to a 17-year-old student from San Diego. Irene Ann Chen, first in her class of 300 at La Jolla High School, was the top recipient of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search.

Irene entered a biochemistry project on lymphoma, a type of cancer, and was rewarded with a \$40,000 scholarship in what is considered the nation’s most prestigious high school science competition.

This year, for the first time in the contest’s 54-year history, Westinghouse judges named a posthumous finalist. Soo Yeun Kim died in a car accident two days before the deadline.

New York Times
March 15, 1995

Women and AIDS

A new study revealed that HIV-positive women are more likely to die before developing an AIDS-related infection than are HIV-positive men; and women with AIDS die faster than men with AIDS. In the study, 27.5% of the women were not diagnosed with AIDS until the AIDS infection was determined as the cause of death, compared to 12.2% of the men.

The study was led by epidemiologist Sandra Melnick at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

The study’s authors were unable to define medically why women have a lower survival rate, but mentioned that social issues such as access to health care, domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse and pregnancy might impact the progression of the disease.

Women are the fastest-growing group of people infected with HIV. The Campaign for Women’s Health disclosed that from 1990 to 1991, the number of reported AIDS cases among women grew 37%, as opposed to a 4% increase among men during the same period.

Off Our Backs
February 1995

TV programming: source for models of sexual harassment

An analysis of prime-time situation comedies by three researchers at the University of Dayton found that the programs are larded with examples of behavior that fit the legal definition of sexual harassment: “unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature.”

Of a total of 307 sexual behaviors observed, 124 — 40.4% — were unwelcome. Women were recipients of the sexually harassing behaviors in 64.5% of the cases and were found to initiate sexual harassment in 32.3% of the cases.

The tally was based on an analysis of a sample of 26 episodes of network comedies airing in October and November of 1990.

Sexual harassment was depicted as being humorous in more than 58% of the cases. In fact, when the harassment was being presented as contextually humorous, a laugh track was used in 62% of the occurrences.

Media Report to Women
Winter 1995

Women fear possible repeal of state maternity leave

Tennessee women get up to four months of maternity leave if they work for companies that employ at least 100 workers.

Under federal law, they get 12 weeks’ leave if their employer has 50 or more workers.

Nashville Rep. John Arriola’s suggestion to repeal state law and let the federal statute take over has women and workers worried they could eventually lose all their maternity leave.

Nashville attorney Mary Frances Lyle, who lobbies for the Tennessee Women’s Political Caucus, says there is no guarantee the federal law will always cover Tennessee women, especially in light of the Republican Congress’ recent efforts to repeal other regulations.

Nashville Banner
March 8, 1995

Symposium will celebrate the history of Tennessee women

Tennessee holds a unique place in the history and hearts of women. Not only did the Volunteer State cast the 36th and final vote needed to ratify the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. Women have been in the forefront of action and change through every stage of the state's volatile, colorful history.

To honor this spirit and celebrate these accomplishments, a symposium celebrating women in Tennessee history will take place Oct. 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Avon J. Williams campus of Tennessee State University.

"Shaping a State: The Legacy of Tennessee Women" will feature lectures, panels, exhibits and a special presentation of "The Perfect 36," a

video dramatization of the struggle for woman suffrage by writer and performer Candace Anderson.

Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center Director Nancy A. Ransom is chair of the steering committee. Scheduled speakers include historians Theda Perdue, Thura Mack and Marjorie Wheeler; Judy Piser, executive director of the Center for Southern Folk-

lore; writer and historian Carole Bucy; and Vanderbilt English professor Michael Kreyling.

The symposium is sponsored by the Women's Center, the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, the Tennessee Division of the American Association of University Women, and the Junior League of Nashville. ■

"SHAPING A STATE"
October 28
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
TSU Downtown

uled speakers include historians Theda Perdue, Thura Mack and Marjorie Wheeler; Judy Piser, executive director of the Center for Southern Folk-

"As a secretary, you are a kind of co-partner with your employer.... Think for him Learn his preferences Assume that he is always right."

—*Tomorrow's Secretary* (1960)

Today's 3.6 million secretaries average less than \$20,000 a year.

—*U.S. Labor Dept.* (1993)

National Secretaries Day is April 26

These nice guys finish first

The Nashville Women's Political Caucus has selected its GOOD GUYS for 1995. The awards recognize men who have been unusually supportive of women and women's issues.

This year's honorees include Nashville Mayor Phil Bredesen; MCA Records president Tony Brown; TSU track coach Ed Temple; and the Rev. K. C. Ptomey.

A reception honoring the four award winners will be held May 9 at the Cumberland Club, beginning at 6:30 p.m. For reservations, call Jean Curran at 741-3939 or 646-9191. ■

A law program for women

A unique new program at the University of Cincinnati has been designed "for women who want to practice law largely for women and with women's issues in mind." Co-sponsored by the College of Law and the Center for Women's Studies, the four-year, joint-degree program leads to a doctor of law degree *and* a master's degree in women's studies.

For more information, contact the Center for Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati, Box 210164, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0164. Tel: 513-556-6776. ■

Birthdays of Notable Women

April

- 1 1882 Florence Blanchfield, first woman commissioned a Colonel in the U.S. Army
- 4 1802 Dorothea Dix, crusader for humane treatment of the mentally ill
- 4 1928 Maya Angelou, poet, writer, dancer and lecturer
- 7 1890 Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, helped preserve the Florida Everglades
- 13 1840 Isabella Gardner, founder of Boston's Gardner Museum
- 21 1891 Theologian Georgia Harkness, advocate of women's full participation in church offices
- 25 1918 Singer Ella Fitzgerald
- 28 1927 Civil rights and peace activist Coretta Scott King

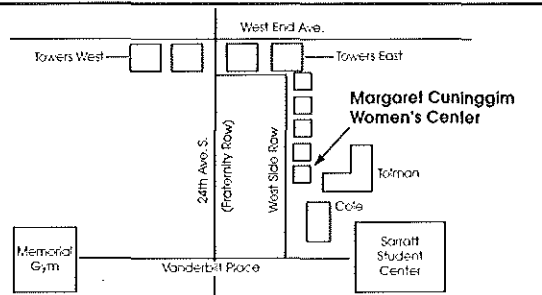
The Mary Jane Werthan Award: call for nominations

The winner of the 1995 Mary Jane Werthan Award won't be announced for several months, but it's time to start thinking about deserving nominees. Anyone can be recommended for the award, which will be given at the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture in October.

Nominations will be reviewed by the executive committee of the Women's Center advisory board. The committee's task is to single out one person who has "contributed significantly to the advancement of women at Vanderbilt University."

To make a nomination, send a letter detailing the nominee's accomplishments, along with other supporting material, to Nancy Ransom at the Women's Center, Box 1513, Station B, or fax it to 343-0940.

How to find us ...



A P R I L

Calendar of Events

Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's Center



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

April 4 (Tuesday)

Creative Life Planning Group. Noon to 1 p.m. For information call Judy Helfer, 322-6518. Also meets April 18 and 25.

Cuninggim Center Advisory Board. Sam McSeveney, chair. 4:10 p.m. Sarratt 118.

April 5 (Wednesday)

Poetry and Politics: A Mayan Woman Speaks. Educator, poet and activist Calixte Gabriel Xiouin has worked for Mayan autonomy for more than 20 years in her native Guatemala. A political exile in the United States for six years, she returned to Guatemala to work with Mayan women in the areas of health and urban and rural development, as well as to help them preserve the indigenous culture of the Mayas. 12:15-1:30 p.m. Sarratt 118.

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. Any interested woman may attend. Meetings are 5:15-6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. This month's topic is: "Can a woman be an adult and a 'good daughter,' too?" The scheduled topic for May: "Are men and women really from different planets?" For more information call Nancy Ransom, 322-4843.

April 6 (Thursday)

Journal Writing for Women: Revisiting the Father-Daughter Relationship to Claim Our Authority. This workshop looks at the original grounding of our relationship with our fathers as the basis for developing and claiming our authority as women. Led by Miriam Basuk, L.C.S.W. 7-9 p.m. David K. Wilson Hall 113. Fee \$10; \$5 students (scholarships available). Registration is required by April 4; limited to 35 registrants. To register, call 322-4843.

April 10 (Monday)

Book Group. The book for discussion is *Eleanor Roosevelt* by Blanche Wiesen Cook. Facilitator is Martha Young. 5:15-6:15 p.m. New members welcome.

April 12 (Wednesday)

Young Professional Women's Discussion Group. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Presentation Room, Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

April 13 (Thursday)

Respecting the Earth: Environmental Themes in Native American World Views. Lunchtime symposium. Amelia Becker, Divinity School graduate student with strong ties to the Northern Plains Indians, shares her experiences living on an Indian reservation as part of Vanderbilt's Earth Week Celebration. 12:15-1:15 p.m.

April 14 (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 Center staff and learn about activities and programs. Men as well as women are invited to bring a lunch from noon to 1 p.m.

April 15 (Saturday)

Creative Life Planning Group Retreat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Off-campus site. For more information call Judy Helfer, 322-6518.

April 17 (Monday)

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

April 19 (Wednesday)

Women's Health Series: Infertility. Esther Eisenberg, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology. 12:15-1:15 p.m. Divinity School, room G26.

April 24 (Monday)

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

April 26 (Wednesday)

Young Professional Women's Discussion Group. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Presentation Room, Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

Unless otherwise stated, all programs are held at the Cuninggim Center, Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row (see map on opposite page). For more information, please call 322-4843.

In the library...

A new collection documents the life of a legendary suffragist

The publication of Lynn Sherr's *Failure is Impossible: Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words* (Times Books, 1995) coincides with the 175th anniversary of Anthony's birth and the 75th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. The volume consists mainly of Anthony's own words — from her letters, diary, speeches, remarks and interviews — interspersed with commentary and biographical information by Sherr. The selections are arranged by subject rather than chronologically.



Anthony was born into a Quaker family in Massachusetts in 1820 and died in 1906, after a long life dedicated to fighting for women's rights, especially women's suffrage. Her campaign for suffrage began in 1852, and in 1869

Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association, which later became the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Anthony also fought for the abolition of slavery, and spoke out about equal pay, domestic violence, legal rights for married women, sexual harassment and the value of female friendship. She published a newspaper for women, played an active part in the temperance movement and denounced the use of tobacco.

In November 1872 Anthony and a group of friends voted in the presidential election and were subsequently arrested. The trial made national headlines and was attended by several senators and a former U.S. president. Anthony and her friends were not the first women to attempt to vote, but she was the most famous.

"Failure is impossible" — referring to the campaign for suffrage — were the last words Anthony spoke pub-

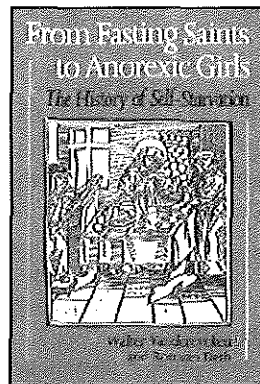
Barbara Clarke,
Women's Center
librarian



licly, shortly before her death at the age of 86. She was a strong, tireless and dedicated woman, the object in her lifetime not only of much admiration and praise but also of much derision and criticism.

From Fasting Saints to Anorexic Girls: The History of Self-Starvation (New York University Press, 1994) by Walter Vandereycken and Ron van Deth was originally published in Dutch. Vandereycken is a professor of psychiatry in Louvain, Belgium, and Deth teaches psychology in Leiden, the Netherlands.

The writers study self-starvation in the West over the past 2,000 years, and show how different types were prevalent in different eras. Most kinds of eating disorders have been much more common in women and girls. The authors describe numerous cases of religious women who fasted, of "miraculous maidens" who appeared to be able to live for long periods without eating, and of persons who fasted so that they were emaciated and could be exhibited in various types of shows. They also discuss the reasons for the prevalence of anorexia over the past 100 years or so.

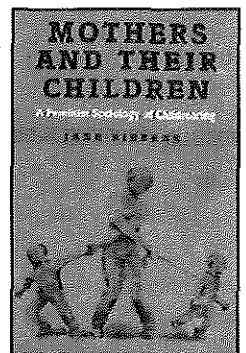


Anorexia nervosa and bulimia were described only in the late 19th century, and Vandereycken and Deth wonder whether these were really new diseases or whether they had

occurred in different forms in earlier periods. It is difficult to compare different kinds of self-starvation; the writers point out that each type must be interpreted in its socio-cultural context, and that it is a "questionable practice to retrospectively make a psychiatric diagnosis of a person from another culture or a different historical period."

Mothers and Their Children: A Feminist Sociology of Childrearing (Sage Publications, 1994) by Jane Ribbens is a

study of particular interest to sociologists and psychologists. One of the writer's chief aims is to illustrate "that the feminist sociological study of child-



rearing can reveal and respect the diversity of women's own childrearing views, a diversity which is rooted, not in contrasts between 'good' and 'bad' mothering, but in much wider issues of social and political philosophy."

Much of the work is based on a study of 24 mostly middle-class white mothers living in the south of England. The writer is especially interested in the ways the women describe and understand how they are bringing up their children, and many excerpts from their interviews are included. Ribbens discusses their experiences in relation to sociological, psychological and feminist theory.

Issues in Reproductive Technology (New York University Press, 1992), edited by Helen Bequaert Holmes, was recently reissued in paperback form. This is a collection of 27 articles arranged under five major themes: new contraceptive methods, the freezing of human embryos, abortion, *in vitro* fertilization and surrogate pregnancy. ■



Health matters

Coping with cystitis

Adapted by Deborah Narrigan from "Two Types of Misery" in the January 1995 issue of the *HARVARD HEALTH LETTER* © 1995, President and Fellows of Harvard College

For many women (and some men), bladder infections are almost as familiar as a sore throat. Most of the time, the urgent bladder pressure and frequent, burning urination point to a common urinary tract infection known as *bacterial cystitis*. Although the symptoms are dramatic, diagnosis and treatment are usually easy and successful. In a few cases, however, the culprit is a chronic and less common condition known as *interstitial cystitis*. This puzzling disorder is far more difficult to manage than bacterial cystitis. Fortunately, there are ways to forestall both types of infection.

Most women encounter cystitis for the first time shortly after they become sexually active. During intercourse, bacteria which normally thrive in and around the rectum and vagina are pushed up into the urethra — the short tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body. In 80 percent of cases the culprit is *E. coli*, a bacterium that thrives in the digestive tract.

Many women also experience cystitis after menopause, when a fall in estrogen production shifts the microbial balance in the vagina and makes it

susceptible to an overgrowth of *E. coli*. Also prone to cystitis are people who have difficulty emptying their bladders completely, such as pregnant women and older women with a prolapsed bladder or uterus. If the bladder is not fully emptied, residual bacteria can hang around and multiply.

Any woman who has had a bladder infection will tell you that the symptoms cannot be ignored. Cystitis produces burning pain during urination, and a frequent, overwhelming urge to urinate. If the infection worsens and spreads to the kidneys, the symptoms may include fever, chills, nausea and backache. A kidney infection is far more serious and more difficult to cure than a bladder infection.

Most cases of bacterial cystitis can be cleared with antibiotics. Sufferers should be treated at once, to minimize the danger to the kidneys.

When cystitis is suspected, the physician will ask for a clean urine specimen, uncontaminated by skin bacteria. If the sample contains white blood cells (which fight infection) then you almost surely have a bladder infection. Urine can also be tested for specific strains of organisms, but this takes several days and is usually done only if a kidney infection is suspected. For garden-variety cystitis, the standard treatment is antibiotic pills for three days.

Many women find that a few simple preventative measures help prevent recurrences of cystitis. These include urinating as soon as they feel the urge, rather than "holding it in"; wiping from front to back after using the toilet to keep bacteria away from the urethra; drinking at least eight

ounces of water every two hours during the day to keep urine dilute; urinating after intercourse to flush out any bacteria which may have gotten into the urethra; and drinking cranberry juice if they feel an infection coming on.

If cystitis recurs despite these measures, some women may be given a supply of antibiotics to have on hand to treat symptoms quickly. Although this convenient self-treatment has proven effective and safe, it may cause side effects (stomach upset, diarrhea or vaginal yeast infections); it may also promote the growth of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Women who have more than one or two bladder infections a year should discuss a plan for care with their health-care provider.

Although cystitis is annoying and uncomfortable, it seems mild when compared to interstitial cystitis. The chief symptom of this condition is an exaggeration of common cystitis: an intense, painful urge to urinate, up to 70 times a day. Yet no bacteria are found in the urine, and antibiotics do nothing to relieve the symptoms. Although some researchers think that an elusive microorganism may be responsible, others suspect allergic reactions, toxins in the urine, even abnormalities of the spine.

Because it is as difficult to treat as it is to diagnose, patients usually seek the care of a urologist or other specialist experienced with IC. The physician will most likely perform a cystoscopy, using a fiber-optic scope to examine the bladder wall for specific lesions that indicate interstitial cystitis. A variety of treatments have been tried, from oral medications to surgery, but each seems to help only some people.

So many Americans suffer with IC — an estimated half-million, 90 percent of them women — that an organization has been formed to lobby on their behalf. Thanks to the efforts of the decade-old Interstitial Cystitis Association, the U.S. Congress has earmarked \$11 million specifically for IC research since 1991. The Association's toll-free number is 800-HELP-ICA. ■

Deborah Narrigan is a certified nurse-midwife who lives and works in Nashville.

Announcements

Conferences

Follow-up Meeting of the U.S. Southeastern Regional Conference on Women is April 29-30 in Atlanta. \$35 (\$25 before April 7). Call 404-657-9260 for more information.

Southern Women in Public Service: Coming Together to Make a Difference is April 30-May 2 in Atlanta. Chair is Lindy Boggs. *Registration deadline is April 7.* Contact 601-325-8409 for more information.

Working Women Count, sponsored by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Dept. of Labor, meets May 19-20 in Washington. *Registrations due April 24.* Contact CRP, 4201 Connecticut Ave., NW, #503, Washington, DC 20008.

Women's Sports Foundation Summit '95, to be held in Dallas on May 19-21, features speed skater Bonnie Blair as special guest. Call 516-542-4700 for information.

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

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, etc.

The Middle Tennessee Women's Studies Association meets April 1 at MTSU, beginning at 9:30 a.m. The topic is Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*, led by Laurel Schneider, graduate student in religion. Call Nancy Rupprecht at 898-2645 for information.

We Won't Go Back, NOW's spring offensive against violence, is April 7-9 in Washington, with a massive rally on April 9. Buses are being organized from Nashville, Knoxville and Memphis. Call the local NOW line at 269-7141, or contact the National Organization for Women, 1000 16th St., NW, #700, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-331-0066.

Take Our Daughters to Work Day, sponsored by the Ms. Foundation for Women, is set for April 27. The theme is "A girl is watching. What is she learning?" For more information, call the Ms. Foundation at 800-676-7780 or 212-742-2300.

Sacred Art: "Huichols from Mexico" celebrates one of the world's last surviving shamanic cultures. The show runs through April 29 at the Women's Visions Art Gallery and Center, 209 10th Ave. S., Suite 211 in Nashville (Cummins Station). The gallery is open Thurs.-Sat. from noon to 5 p.m., with special programs on Saturdays from 3-5 p.m. Call 259-2254 for details.

Calls for papers

"Prisms of Gender," the 18th annual conference of the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language and Gender, invites papers and panel proposals for the Oct. 5-8 conference in Minneapolis. Send three copies and a 75-word abstract to Dr. Barbara Lynn Werner, Speech Communication and Theatre Arts, University of Wisconsin at River Falls, B24 Fine Arts Building, River Falls, WI 54022. Tel: 800-228-9126E-mail: B.L.Werner@UWRF.EDU. *The submission deadline is April 17.*

"By the Hand of a Woman: Judith and Her Descendants" is the title of an international, interdisciplinary conference to be hosted by Oxford University in June 1996. Short paper proposals are invited in anthropology, art history, cultural history, feminist studies, literature, the fine and performing arts, philosophy, sociology, religious studies, etc. *Proposals are due by May 1, 1995.* Send them to Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, Liberal Studies Program, Georgetown Univ., Washington, DC 20057.

Courses

Summer Executive Institute on Women and Leadership is an eight-day seminar on such topics as effective communications and overcoming the glass ceiling. It's sponsored by Stanford University's Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Offered in June, July and August, it costs \$6,000. If you're still interested, call 415-221-4545.



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