

Staying safe

Awareness is best self-defense against campus crime

When students arrive on campus for their first semester away from home, thoughts are often focused on new experiences, new friends and new freedoms that lie ahead.

For the parents leaving these students behind, however, the focus is usually very different. A primary concern is whether their daughter *or son* will be safe in their new surroundings.

At freshman orientation in June, a common pattern was for fathers of new students to go first to the financial aid table, while mothers headed straight for the booth of Vanderbilt's Crime Prevention Unit.

Staffing that booth was Marlene Hall, a crime prevention officer who says students can do several things to reduce their chances of being victims.

Safety in numbers. Although statistics show Vanderbilt is a relatively safe campus, students can be vulnerable because of their late hours and tendency to travel on foot.

Hall emphasizes that both men and women should avoid walking alone at night. Walking in pairs can reduce the risk of crime by 70%, and walking in groups of three or more cuts the risk by 90%.

While women on campus tend to be careful about going solo, men are frequently not as careful.

"Everybody should be concerned and that's been one of our biggest hurdles," Hall says. She notes that the last murder on campus, in 1989, occurred when a male student insisted on walking his female companion back to her residence and then walked home by himself. He was shot to death in an apparent robbery attempt.

When a companion is not available

for a late-night walk, call Vanderbilt's escort service (1-8888) for an officer to accompany you to any point on campus.

Be aware. Students are often involved in conversation as they traverse the campus, oblivious to their surroundings and any potential threats to their safety. Hall advises women to "look around and pay attention to who's nearby." If instinct warns that a person poses a threat, pay attention to the feeling and be on guard. Walk with a confident posture and make eye contact with those you encounter.



Marlene Hall

Safeguard your possessions. Students are far more likely to be victims of crime against property than of a violent personal assault. Although residence halls tend to be safe because of limited access and early locking times, public areas, especially those on the edges of campus, are not as secure. Keep a close eye on personal items like purses and backpacks at all times.

Emergency phones. Learn the locations of emergency blue light phones around the campus and be prepared to use them if a dangerous situation arises. ■

Welcome . . .

. . . to the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center, Vanderbilt's resource center for women students, faculty and staff.

The Women's Center offers a variety of special events, ongoing programs and the only library on campus devoted entirely to women's issues.

If you're new to campus, please drop by our offices in the Franklin building on West Side Row, near the Sarratt Student Center, to acquaint yourself with our staff and available resources.

And to keep up-to-date on the programs offered by the Women's Center, be sure to request your *free* subscription to *Women's VU*, the monthly newsletter that highlights ideas and events of special interest to Vanderbilt women. See back page for subscription details.

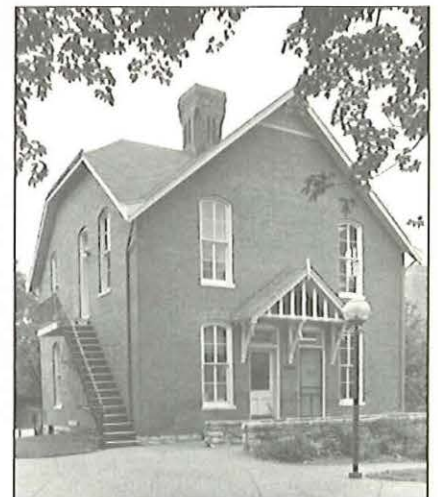
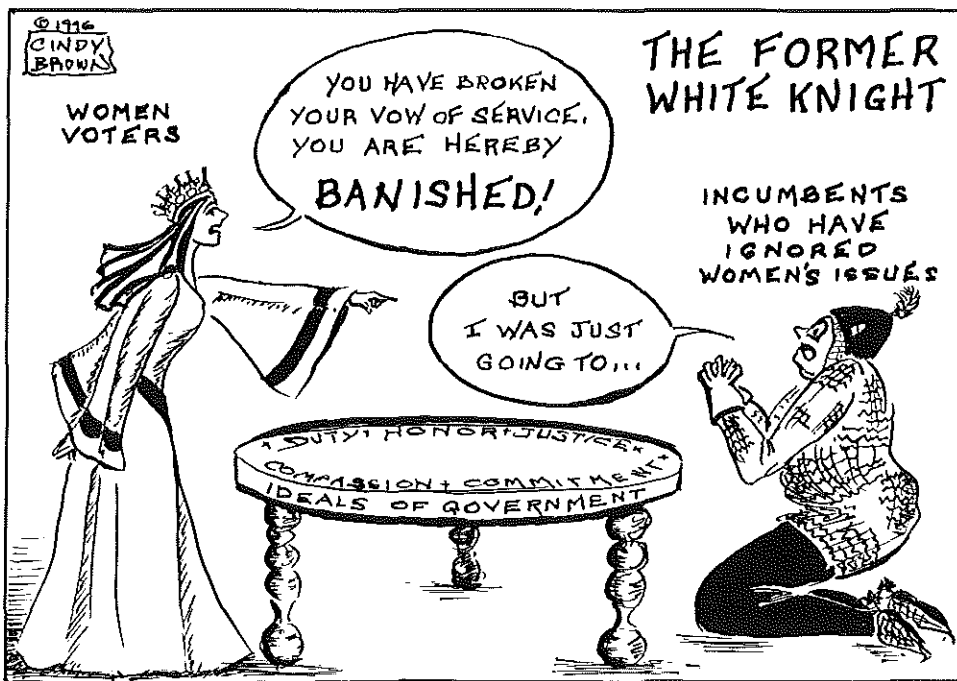


Photo by Gerald Holly



“NEWS QUOTES”

...a compilation of news excerpts from the national press on issues of special interest to women...

Man's sex life linked to cancer in wife

Unfaithful husbands may give their wives cancer, a study conducted by a researcher from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine has concluded.

The study found that women are five to 11 times as likely to develop cervical cancer if their male partners frequent prostitutes or have many sexual partners. The cancer is directly linked to human papilloma virus, or HPV, a virus that is spread by sexual intercourse.

"Male behavior is the important thing in this cancer," said Dr. Keerti V. Shah, a professor at Johns Hopkins. "In effect, the husband takes the cancer home to his wife." Dr. Shah said any woman could put herself at increased risk by having many sexual partners.

New York Times
August 7, 1996

Women and minority faculty on the increase

The new generation of professors is much more likely to be women and somewhat more likely to be minority than their colleagues who are senior professors, according to a new study based on data collected in 1992.

Almost 41 percent of the new faculty generation are women, compared to about 28 percent of the senior faculty. Nearly 17 percent of new academics are people of color, compared to 11 percent among their senior colleagues.

About Women on Campus
Summer 1996

Pat Pierce to receive Werthan Award

Patricia Pierce, director of Vanderbilt's Opportunity Development Center, is the 1996 recipient of the Mary Jane Werthan Award, to be presented Oct. 10 prior to the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture.



The award is given each year to recognize "extraordinary contributions to the advancement of women at Vanderbilt." Established in 1988 by the Advisory Board of the Women's Center, the award is named for its first recipient, who was Vanderbilt's first female trustee.

Pierce is known as a mentor to women students and staff members, including two of her former assistant directors who have gone on to head the equal employment opportunity programs at other universities.

She attended the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing last year and has since made more than 15 presentations about her trip, sharing her experiences with many groups in Middle Tennessee.

Pierce came to Vanderbilt in 1978 as assistant director of the ODC, which monitors the university's compliance with affirmative action requirements. Prior to that, she served as compliance director of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission.



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@ctvax.Vanderbilt.edu.

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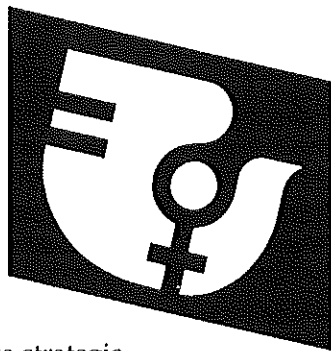
U.N. Women's Conference: one year later

On Saturday, September 28, Tennessee will join all states in hosting mini-conferences to discuss the Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in China last year. These conferences offer women a chance to address the twelve strategic objectives in terms of local and state strategies. Nancy Ransom, director of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center, is state contact for the conferences.

A two-hour television link will showcase successful projects for women in communities around the country. The telecast begins at 1 p.m. Central time (2 p.m. Eastern time).

The conferences will be held in Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Memphis, and at state colleges in several smaller towns. The Nashville site coordinator is Ruthie Cowan.

Everyone who is interested in working to improve the lives of women is welcome to attend a conference. Individuals can contact the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center for current information about each site's schedule.



Marching against violence

Nashvillians will march Saturday, Sept. 28 to protest domestic violence, one of the areas of concern in the U.N. Platform for Action.

Registration for the second annual Walk to End Domestic Violence begins at 9 a.m. at Legislative Plaza, with the 2.5 mile march starting at 9:30. The entrance fee is \$15 per person. The march ends at War Memorial Auditorium where Dr. Henry Foster will speak at 12:30 p.m.

Participants in the walk are invited to attend the afternoon session of the Beijing Teleconference (*see article, left*).

Registration forms are available at the Women's Center, which is a co-sponsor of the walk. Those who pre-register by Sept. 13 with pledges of \$60 or more will receive a free t-shirt. The walk benefits Peace, Inc., a treatment and education program for batterers. For information, contact the offices of Peace at 255-0711.

VU grad student receives AAUW dissertation grant

Mary Karpos, a doctoral candidate in sociology at Vanderbilt, has been awarded a prestigious fellowship from the American Association of University Women to support the completion of her dissertation.

The grant of \$14,500 from the AAUW's Educational Foundation Dissertation Fellowship provides funds for personal use and enables the recipient to spend a year focused on writing the dissertation.

Karpos, who holds master's degrees in sociology and criminology, is a lecturer in the sociology department. She teaches a popular sociology course, "Prison Life," in which the class visits correctional institutions throughout Middle Tennessee, including death row at the Riverbend Maximum Security Prison in Nashville.

Her dissertation topic is "Determinance of the Uniform Crime Report Rape Rates: Organizational Influences on the Founding Process." Karpos says she is examining the discrepancy

between rape as reported in official crime statistics and in victim studies.

Although the disparity has long been assumed to result from a failure by women to report rape to the police, Karpos believes it is linked instead to the "founding process," in which a police officer decides whether to include a reported rape in the uniform crime statistics.

"If the police don't believe you, they don't include it in the crime report," Karpos says, explaining that she will look at this "discretionary behavior" by the police as a key factor in the reliability of rape statistics.

Karpos says planning ahead helped her to secure the AAUW fellowship, one of 50 awarded nationally to women pursuing a Ph.D. She credits Kay Hancock, Information Officer at the Graduate School, for helping to make her aware of the grants available and Nancy Ransom, AAUW's Vanderbilt representative, for aiding in the application process.

After receiving her doctorate next May, Karpos hopes to find a teaching position in her specialty of Deviance and Social Control. In future work, she says she would like to focus on the special problems of incarcerating women, noting that 10 babies are born each week to women imprisoned in the U.S.

AAUW to meet at University Club

The Nashville branch of the American Association of University Women will hold its September meeting on Saturday, Sept. 14 at the University Club. Nancy Ransom will speak about the Vanderbilt Women's Center. Non-members are welcome. For information call Mary Ruth Coffman, 292-8829.

Photographer's work examines body image conflicts

A recent Vanderbilt graduate examines the relationship between culture and body image in "Eying the Beholder," an exhibit on display at the Cuninggim Center through Oct. 11.

Marni Jo Lessa combines photography and text to "focus on how we see ourselves and how society sees us." Her photographs are scanned into a computer, where words are added to help convey a message. Lessa says this digital imaging process has given her a powerful way to explore society's fixation with ideals of beauty.

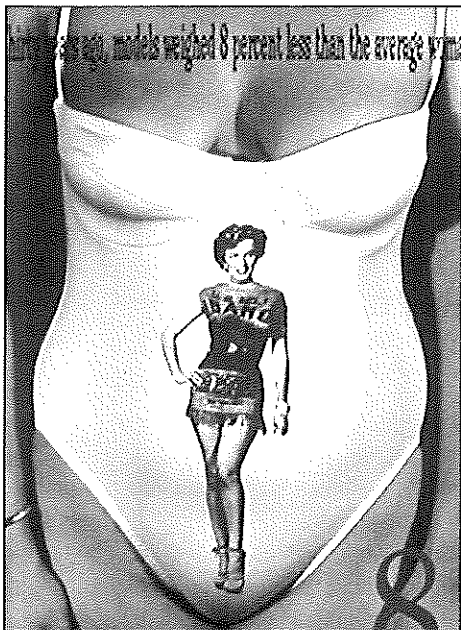
Lessa graduated in 1992 from Vanderbilt, where she served as photo editor of the *Vanderbilt Hustler* and *Versus*. An economics major, she also took art classes while at Vanderbilt and credits Donald Evans and Michael Aurbach, associate professors of fine arts, with encouraging her to pursue her passion for photography and art. She received a master of fine arts degree in photography from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 1995.

Lessa says her experiences at Vanderbilt triggered her interest in the subject of body image.

"I had several friends at Vanderbilt who had eating disorders. These were women who had everything going for them — active in organizations, smart, beautiful — but if they gained five

pounds they thought of themselves as fat and ugly," Lessa recalled in a recent interview. "I saw that and I thought, 'Something's wrong here.'"

Lessa sees her photographic pieces as "advertisements," through which she hopes to challenge the constant media presentation of unattainable beauty ideals. Her previous exhibi-

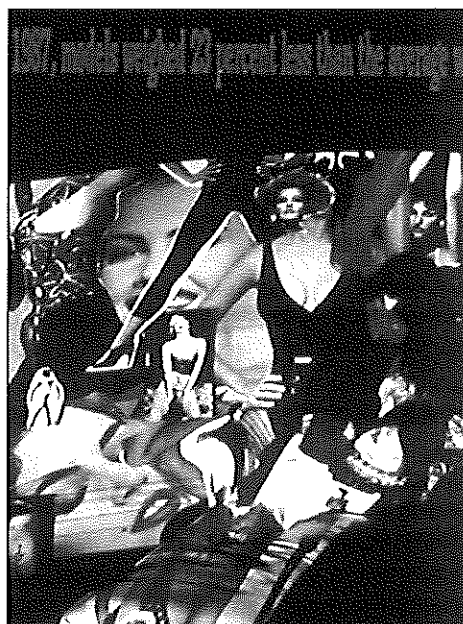


In this pair of photographs, Lessa compares the images of models 30 years ago (above) with the recent trend toward super-thin models (right).

tions include a 1995 showing at the University of Toledo and a best of show award for a juried exhibition at Eastern New Mexico University in 1993.

Lessa, who lives in Vienna, Virginia, currently uses her knowledge of graphic design as an employee of the Defense Mapping Agency, where her job entails using computers to place type and images on maps.

A reception for the artist is scheduled at the Women's Center Aug. 29.



Getting involved: Political Caucus to meet on campus

Women students from Vanderbilt and other colleges who want to get involved in the political process are invited to a reception sponsored by the Nashville Women's Political Caucus and the Women's Center Sept. 17 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the University Club.

The caucus is a non-partisan organization whose efforts are geared toward encouraging women to increase their political involvement — as candidates for public office and as voters. Several membership scholarships are available for students who would like to join.

Speakers at the Tuesday night meeting will include local women serving in elected and appointed offices. One of the topics to be addressed is the Tennessee Women's Vote Project '96, which aims to register more women in the state and encourage them to vote in November.

A recent evaluation revealed that Tennessee women's rate of voter participation is lower than almost any other state in the nation. Tennessee ranks 49th among the states in the percentage of women who voted in the last three national elections, according to an analysis by Women's Vote.

"It is disturbing that 75 years after Tennessee made it possible for women to have the right to vote that 47% of eligible Tennessee did not vote," said Yvonne Wood, coordinator of the Tennessee Women's Vote Project and past president of the caucus. Wood said the project will reach out to register women at YWCAs and job training centers. The Women's Vote Project is a joint effort of the Women's Political Caucus and the YWCA.

For information or reservations for the campus reception, call 322-4843 or e-mail helferjt@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu. Space is limited.

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*Calendar
of Events*

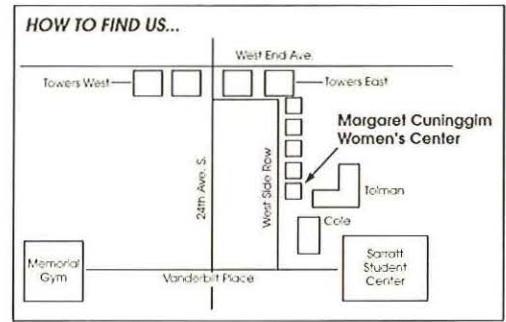
Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's Center



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

AUGUST 29 / THURSDAY

Photography Exhibit by Marni Jo Lessa, "Eying the Beholder," opens at the Women's Center and runs through October 11. Lessa, a 1992 Vanderbilt graduate, looks at the relationship between culture and body image, and how it affects self-image. Reception for artist today from 5 to 6 p.m. *See article, page 7.*



SEPTEMBER 3 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group meets weekly to focus on ways to improve problem-solving skills and make life changes, noon to 1 p.m. New members welcome. Call Judy Helfer at 322-6518 for more information.

SEPTEMBER 6 / FRIDAY

Women's Center Advisory Board Picnic, Centennial Park, 5 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 9 / MONDAY

Book Group meets to discuss *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story* by Katherine Clark and Onnie L. Logan. Facilitator is Janet Colbran. New members welcome. 5:15-6:15 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 10 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group, noon to 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 11 / WEDNESDAY

Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects. Meeting of CABLE, a Nashville women's networking organization, will focus on the experiences of executive women. Co-sponsored by the Women's Center. 11:30 a.m., Vanderbilt Plaza. Reservations are required and may be made by calling the YWCA, 269-9922.

SEPTEMBER 12 / THURSDAY

Women's Center Reception for Women Faculty, 4-6 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 16 / MONDAY

Dissertation Writers Group Organizational Meeting. Group provides problem solving and moral support for women beyond the proposal. Meets monthly. Nancy Ransom facilitates. New members admitted at the beginning of each semester only.

SEPTEMBER 17 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group, noon to 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 17 / TUESDAY

Reception hosted by the Nashville Women's Political Caucus and the Women's Center for students interested in political involvement. 5 to 7 p.m. University Club. For reservations and information, contact the Women's Center. *See article, page 4.*

SEPTEMBER 17 / TUESDAY

West End Women's Investment Club has reached its maximum of 20 members. Openings may become available in the future. 5:15 to 6:15 p.m.

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

Calendar of Events

continued from page 5

SEPTEMBER 23 / MONDAY

Proposal Writers Group Organizational Meeting, 4-5 p.m. Problem solving and moral support for women writing a dissertation proposal. New members are admitted only at the beginning of each semester. Nancy Ransom facilitates.

SEPTEMBER 24 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group. Dr. Cynthia K. Briggs, M.D., Department of Psychiatry, discusses "Women and Depression," noon to 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 24 / TUESDAY

Budgeting for Graduate Student Couples led by Katrin Bean, certified financial planner, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Individuals as well as couples are welcome to attend. Reservations are required by September 23 to Janet Dillard at the Graduate School Office, 343-2727. Co-sponsored by the Graduate School.

SEPTEMBER 24 / TUESDAY

Freelance Writers Group, a group of women writers who meet monthly to get feedback from other writers and share information about how to get published. Beth Grantham facilitates the group. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. New members welcome.

SEPTEMBER 25 / WEDNESDAY

Women's Center Advisory Board, chair Joel Covington, Branscomb Private Dining Room, 4:10 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 26 / THURSDAY

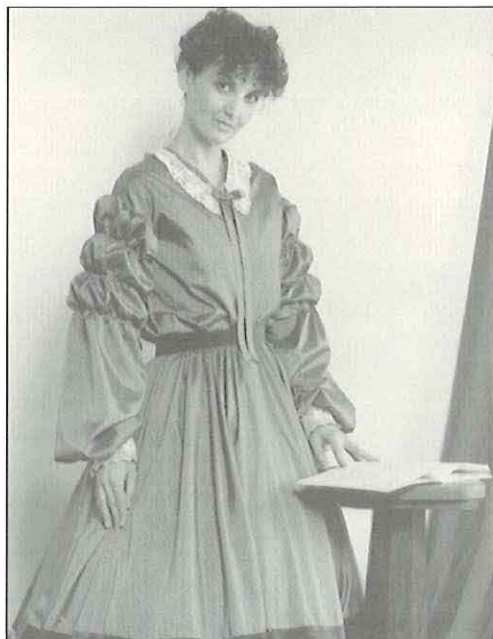
Through a Woman's Voice: Ten Women from Tennessee. Written and performed by Candace Anderson. Co-sponsors with the Women's Center are Sarratt Student Center, Women's Studies Program, Tennessee Arts Commission and Nashville Branch of AAUW. 7:30 p.m., Sarratt Cinema. Free. *See article below.*

SEPTEMBER 28 / SATURDAY

Domestic Violence Walk, Legislative Plaza, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information call Mary Liz Nish at 352-4856. *See article, page 3.*

SEPTEMBER 28 / SATURDAY

The U.N. Women's Conference: One Year Later. Mini-conferences across the state will gather to discuss the platform of the Fourth World Conference on Women. *See article, page 3.*



Women's voices tell story of Tennessee history

A collection of stories and ballads illuminates 200 years of state history in "Through a Woman's Voice: Ten Women from Tennessee," to be presented at 7:30 p.m., Sept. 26 at Sarratt Cinema.

Candace Anderson, an award-winning writer-producer (*shown in photo at left*), will perform in period costume as she portrays women from "different eras, different regions of the state, and different cultures in Tennessee's past." Anderson's ballads about the women were inspired by diaries, poems and other material written by her subjects.

The women portrayed in song range from the famous, including blues singer Bessie Smith, to the unknown. Featured are women like pioneer Anne Robertson Cockrill, former slave Ella Sheppard and women's rights activist Lizzie Crozier. By placing their stories together, "Through a Woman's Voice" gives a panoramic view of Tennessee history from a woman's perspective.

Anderson's earlier projects include "The Perfect 36," a public television special on the battle in Tennessee to secure voting rights for women.

Financial workshop, writers groups set for grad students

Graduate students struggling to survive on a tight budget can get advice from a financial professional in a new fall program co-sponsored by the Women's Center and the Graduate School.

"Budgeting for Graduate Student Couples" will be held Tuesday, Sept. 24 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in Sarratt 118. Individuals as well as couples are welcome to attend.

The workshop will be led by Katrin Bean, a certified financial planner who has conducted other popular money management programs on campus.

Reservations are required by Sept. 23 and can be made by calling Janet Dillard at the Graduate School Office, 343-2727.

The Women's Center also sponsors two ongoing groups for graduate students, a Dissertation Writers Group for Women and a Proposal Writing Group for Women. Both groups are organized at the beginning of each semester, and no additional participants are admitted after the first meeting. Nancy Ransom, Cuninggim Center director, facilitates the groups.

These groups serve the same purpose for women at different stages of their doctoral research: They provide problem solving, trouble-shooting and moral support for women who are writing a proposal or who have begun their dissertations. An organizational meeting will be held Monday, Sept. 16 from 4 to 5 p.m. at the Women's Center for dissertation writers. Women interested in participating should send a written request to the center by Sept. 13. The Proposal Writing Group will have its organizational meeting on Monday Sept. 23 from 4 to 5 p.m. For more information, contact Ransom at 322-4843.

Letter from Washington

Editor's Note: Kathy Mead (GPC '98), one of two students sponsored by the Women's Center, attended the Conference for College Women Student Leaders in June. In the letter below, she recounts some of her experiences and impressions. Laura DeVilbiss (A&S '99) will share her opinions of the meeting in a future issue. Students interested in attending the 1997 conference should contact Nancy Ransom, director of the Women's Center.



June 6, 1996

Dear Women's VI,

Today I arrived home from the Conference for College Women Student Leaders at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The trip was fantastic! I'm not sure if that was because I finally got to ride in a taxi or because I was presented with a free conference t-shirt by the friendly volunteers upon registering. I got to the conference a little early, so I decided to explore the beautiful area surrounding the university. Not only were the brownstones surrounding the campus picturesque, nearby M Street was shopping heaven.

After a little touring, I went back to my room to get ready for my first conference session: "Finding Your Own Voice." This session was held in gothic Gaston Hall, which was soon filled with the chatter of hundreds of excited women. We were introduced to the conference leaders and led in a discussion of current events, with audience participation welcomed. Next, I attended "Networking: How to Work a Conference," where female entrepreneurs advised us how to network with people we meet every day.

Finally, after sitting in the same room together for hours, we were sent to dinner and got the chance to meet each other. I met women from Maine, Arizona, Florida, and Michigan, to name a few. In a way, it reminded me of Vanderbilt, where people from different areas and backgrounds come together for one purpose. After socializing and eating for an hour, we were sent back to Gaston Hall for the Women of Distinction Awards Ceremony. Honestly, I thought this was going to be the most boring part of the conference, but I was dead wrong. The seven women honored at this ceremony were varied individuals, but they had one thing in common: Their lives were models for women everywhere. They were strong and inspiring women in fields ranging from astronomy to the corporate world. This was definitely an awesome ceremony, where I was introduced to women who gave me hope for the future. After the ceremony, a dessert reception was held, at which we could meet the award recipients and socialize with other students. I ended up talking for at least an hour with a woman who is studying for her degree in midwifery about the pros and cons of having a baby in a hospital versus a birthing center. I guess you never know what you might learn when you open your mind.

After some sleep and a scenic walk the next morning, I was ready to go again. My first session of the day was "Saying Yes or No to Intimacy," led by Victoria Balender, a counseling psychologist from George Mason University. During this packed session, we discussed assertiveness and communication skills pertaining to romantic/sexual relationships. All the women were welcome to share their own experiences and ask questions. It was not only interesting, but incredibly enlightening and entertaining. I also attended sessions on "Women's Body Image and the American Popular Media," and "HIV, AIDS and You" and spent the final night seeing the sights of Washington with my new friends.

I want to thank the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center for this opportunity. The women I've met have given me a renewed sense of hope for the future. Upon returning in the fall, I plan to bring some of this optimism back to Vanderbilt.

Sincerely,
Kathy Mead

In the library...

Sociologist documents fanatical pursuit of thin ideal

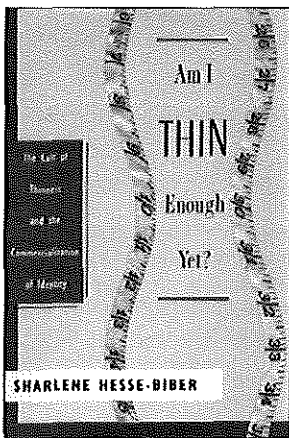
Barbara Clarke,
Women's Center
librarian



A new work on body image and eating disorders is Sharlene Hesse-Biber's *Am I Thin Enough Yet? The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity* (Oxford University Press, 1996). The writer, an associate professor of sociology at Boston College, shows why American girls and women are ob-

essed with thinness and how this leads to disordered eating. Girls receive messages from every sphere of society - from their parents to the media - that slenderness is good and that a woman's body is more important than her mind. Fatness is considered a moral failure in women and is associated with a lack of self-control and self-restraint. The pervasive message is: "If you want to be valued, as a potential spouse, as a coworker, as a friend, then get thin."

Hesse-Biber surveyed a large group of college students, both women and men, as well as a group of college-aged women. College life contributes greatly to the incidence of anorexia and bulimia, which traditionally have been more common among middle- and upper-class white adolescents and women. The writer shows how there are many similarities between the intense pursuit of slenderness and a religious cult.

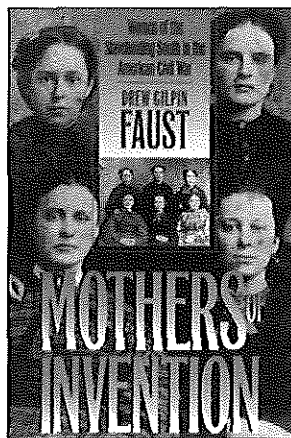


Americans are bombarded with messages about thinness from the media because of the enormous profits being made by the multifaceted diet, exercise and beauty industries, Hesse-Biber contends. These messages are reaching a wider audience, and eating disorders are becoming more common among men and among poor and minority women and girls.

The writer suggests that public education and activism, new visions of femininity, therapy and self-help literature may help individuals break free from the cult of thinness.

Drew Gilpin Faust's latest book is *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996). She uses the diaries, letters and memoirs of the women, as well as contemporary poetry and fiction, to present a picture of the lives of the half-million elite women who lived through the Civil War in the South.

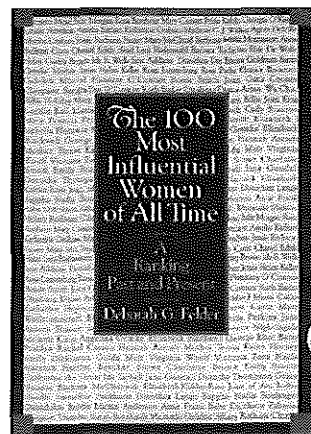
Most of the men who owned slaves felt that they could leave their homes for the battlefield; their wives were left in charge of their plantations or farms. These women had been privileged because of their whiteness and their social class, but as the war progressed their lives changed drastically. Many women found it very difficult to run their farms and to supervise their slaves and their children; many felt that females should not be doing such work. Women were not supposed to be particularly interested in politics,



yet many diaries and letters reveal that the writers had a great knowledge of and interest in the war and in political affairs.

As the war drew at a close women faced new sets of problems, including those of identity. Their slaves had either escaped or been freed and many farms and homes had been destroyed. The wealth and status based on the oppression of others had disappeared. Many of the women "invented new selves designed in large measure to resist change, to fashion the new out of as much of the old as could survive in the altered postwar world of defeated Confederates, regional poverty, and black freedom."

Deborah G. Felder's *The 100 Most Influential Women of All Time: A Ranking Past and Present* (Citadel Press, 1996) consists of two-to-four page biographies of outstanding women. The writer selected the hundred women with the assistance of scholars in the field of women's studies, and she realized that the selections would be sure to generate controversy. Included are influential and inspiring women of all eras and in all fields: political leaders, social reformers, artists, labor leaders, religious figures, scientists, writers and sports figures. The top five women are: Eleanor Roosevelt, Marie Curie, Margaret Sanger, Margaret Mead and Jane Addams. Among the other influential women are the Virgin Mary, Coco Chanel, Queen Victoria and Lucille Ball.



Emergency contraception

Birth control pills authorized as "morning after" pregnancy prevention

by Ann Greenwood, RN, MSN

On June 28, a federal advisory committee to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) unanimously approved the use of oral contraceptive pills as "morning after pills." Actually, emergency contraception has been available as long as birth control pills have been, but they had never been officially authorized to be used in this way. Although many providers have known about this highly effective method for preventing unwanted pregnancy, the topic has been a taboo, seldom mentioned to clients.

Emergency contraception involves taking four combined estrogen/progestin pills within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. One dose of two pills is taken as soon as possible and then a dose is repeated 12 hours later. The most common side effect is nausea, and if vomiting occurs, the dose may need to be repeated. Although women with migraine headaches or clotting disorders may not be good candidates for emergency contraceptive use, women who can safely take the pill can prevent unwanted pregnancy in this way.

Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) work in several ways to interrupt the menstrual cycle depending upon the time they are taken. Women are at highest risk of pregnancy for several days before ovulation, but the date of ovulation is not always predictable even for women with regular cycles. One way emergency contraception works is by inhibiting ovulation so that the ovary never releases an egg. Alternately, high estrogen dosage disrupts the surface of the uterus so that implantation cannot occur. Because of the way it works, taking ECPs does not constitute an abortion under terms of the medical definition of pregnancy.

The main problem that has surfaced concerning use of morning after pills is the lack of knowledge by many women that the option is available. Even women who know about emergency contraception may be uninformed about where to go for the treatment and how to pay for the prescription.

FDA approval of oral contraceptive pills for emergency contraceptive use means that the manufacturers of the pills may now advertise or promote pills for this alternate use. It is not clear that any of the pharmaceutical companies will want to do this. For one thing, additional uses of the pill will mean additional liability for the manufacturers. Furthermore, right to life groups are adamantly opposed to the use of pills as emergency contraception. Ironically, some experts speculate that use of emergency



contraception could decrease the number of abortions in the United States by as much as 50 percent.

Emergency contraceptives have been used in England since 1984. In the United States high dosages of oral contraceptive pills have been used as morning after pills in emergency rooms for cases of rape. Planned Parenthood has also used morning after treatment in clinics throughout the country, including Nashville. Women can go to a Planned Parenthood clinic, where they are examined and given a pregnancy test to be sure there is no previously existing pregnancy before they are given the pills. The price includes a two week follow-up pregnancy test. The cost is \$75. For Vanderbilt students, emergency contraception is available at Student Health.

The recent approval of emergency contraception by the FDA is a major stride forward for women's health. Health care providers now should feel free to discuss this option with their patients. It has even been suggested that doctors and practitioners give or prescribe emergency contraceptive kits to all contraceptive users who may be at risk and those who may need emergency contraception in the future. This would not only enhance availability but also increase use in the necessary 72-hour time frame.

At the present time, getting information to women about the availability of an after-the-fact or morning after pill seems the major strategy for increasing its use. It will then be the role of the patients to request information about this form of birth control. Optimally, this will lift the taboo and the secret that has existed about a safe and legal method for preventing unintended pregnancies. ■

Ann Greenwood is an August, 1996 graduate of the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing women's health nurse practitioner program.

Emergency Contraception Hotline

A nationwide, toll-free, 24-hour hotline has been established to provide information about this important and underutilized contraceptive method. The hotline was established by a group of reproductive health leaders who were frustrated by the fact that most women, and some clinicians, don't know about the availability of morning after pills. The hotline gives callers information about the contraceptives and the names of three providers in their area who prescribe them. The hotline number is: **1-800-584-9911**.

Announcements

Meetings

Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects is the topic of the September meeting of CABLE, a Nashville women's networking organization. Speaking will be Mary Mattis, vice president of Catalyst, a New York company that helps employers capitalize on the talents of their women employees. Mattis will present the results of Catalyst's survey of more than 1,200 pioneering executive women. The meeting will be at 11:30 a.m. Sept. 11 at Vanderbilt Plaza, and reservations must be made through the YWCA, 269-9922. The Women's Center is a co-sponsor of the meeting.

Beyond Beijing: From Words to Action is the seventh annual forum of the Association for Women in Development (AWID), to be held Sept. 5-8 in Washington, D.C. Four plenary sessions will highlight major themes of the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women: women's human rights, economic empowerment, reproductive rights and political participation. The forum will also include 120 concurrent sessions on a variety of topics. Cost is \$195 for AWID members, \$230 for non-members. For information, call 703-642-3628.

The **1996 Annual Conference for Women in Higher Education in Tennessee** will be held October 3-4 at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville. The conference provides a forum for women in academics and administration to network, attend workshops, and learn about issues affecting higher education in Tennessee. For information, contact Pat Pierce at 322-4705.

Calls for Papers

Women's Studies in the 21st Century: Re-Examining Race, Class and Gender, is the topic of the 20th annual conference of the Southeastern Women's Studies Association. The conference will be held April 18-20 at the University of Georgia in Athens. Proposals for papers, panel discussions and workshops are due by Dec. 15. For more information about the conference, contact Dr. Patricia Del Rey at the University of Georgia, 706-542-2846.

A Women's Studies Conference on **Women and Power** will be held at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro Feb. 21-22. Proposals for papers, panels and presentations are due by Oct. 1. For information, contact program chair Dr. Nancy Rupprecht at 615-898-2645.

Job Opportunity

The Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center is seeking a **student reporter** for the staff of its monthly newsletter, *Women's VU*. Writing experience and interest in women's issues preferred. Flexible schedule, up to 10 hours per week. For more information, contact the editor, Lynn Green, at 343-4367.

Awards

Women's Research Awards of \$750 each are being offered by the National Association of Women in Education for research on any topic relevant to the education and personal and professional development of women and girls. Two awards are given annually; one to a graduate student and one to a person at any career/professional level. Entries are due by Oct. 1 to be considered for an award in the current academic year. For information, contact Anna Roman-Koller, assistant chair of the awards committee, at 412-648-9466.



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