

Women's VU

Margaret
Cunningim
Women's Center

V A N D E R B I L T U N I V E R S I T Y

VOLUME XXIII:4 DECEMBER 2000

PART TWO OF THREE

"Following the faces of Western China"



Stacey Irvin *In this second part of a three-part series, Women's VU invites you to travel with Stacey Irvin as she continues her trek across Western China. Irvin's exhibit, "Photo Nomad: Following the Faces of Western China" will be on display January 11-February 1 at the Fine Arts Center, Vanderbilt University.*

4-15-00 Now I'm in Xiahe, home of the Tibetan Labrang Monastery (yellow hat sect). Pilgrims come from all over to complete clockwise circuits around every holy site in the huge monastery! Men, women, and children are dressed in thick coats with long sleeves almost touching the ground and neat little straw or felt hats! Everyone has a string



Pilgrim in the town of Moa holding Tibetan prayer beads

of prayer beads that is constantly in motion between their fingers. The Lamas wear deep pink robes and quietly make their way around town. There are over 1,800 monks in residence at the monastery.

During my first full day in Xiahe I was given a guided tour of the Labrang Monastery. Oh, the color, the detail, the beauty of the dimly-lit halls! Yak butter lamps glow under altars to the many forms of Buddha and other leaders of the yellow hat sect. The Lamas are so sweet, peaceful and serious, yet playful. What I've heard is true – the Tibetan people can win your heart with just one smile.

Inside the monastery's institute halls, bright embroidered cloth hangs from the ceiling in rows over the large square cushions used by the monks while studying or chanting. Light seeps through small windows near the center of the ceiling and sets these tapestries aglow. There are rows and rows (from floor to ceiling) of cubby holes housing brightly wrapped scriptures. There are also detailed paintings of thousands of Buddhas lining the walls. You can hear Lamas chatting or chanting with their deep guttural voices throughout the halls.

On my first free day in Xiahe, I walked up to the monastery again and wandered around the grounds. I set up my tripod to photograph pilgrims passing through a door to some prayer wheels. Several young Tibetan girls and men came over to look through my viewfinder – this is the simplest gift I can give to people.

During my second free day in Xiahe, I chose to go with a local Hui (Chinese



Tibetan woman on the road from Xiahe to Tongren in Qinghai Province

Muslim) guide/restaurant owner out to the grasslands where the semi-nomadic Tibetans live. This was a far less touristed area with endlessly beautiful scenery. We drove all day on rough dirt roads and I was able to meet with several people in their homes. Early in the day I stopped often to photograph Tibetans with their herds of sheep and yak. I even got to sit on a yak!

The first camp we stopped at consisted of several mud-walled homes with mud corrals for the animals. Two young Tibetan men greeted us and led us to one of their homes while protecting us from several very large barking dogs. The Tibetans are known for owning fierce guard dogs. The young man's home consisted of one room about 6' by 6' and a small storage hallway with

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Following the faces of Western China *continued from page 1*

shelves. The room is where he and his wife and 3-year-old daughter sleep and do all of their cooking.

The floor was raised so that they could burn dried yak dung underneath for warmth. A few matted layers of hide padded the floor and their thick bed rolls were stored up on a shelf. Our host heated a pot of water on the stove and served us green tea while he began to prepare some tsampa. Tsampa is a staple for Tibetans. First, a small amount of hot water is poured into a bowl, followed by a couple of spoonfuls of yak butter. Finally, a couple of large scoops of toasted barley flour are added and the mixture is kneaded into a dense, doughy mass. It is slightly damp to the touch, but quite dry to the taste. You definitely have to consume large amounts of tea with it! Tsampa sure isn't something I'd crave, but it works as food!

Several young men, a woman, and a young girl piled into the doorway of the small room where we sat. I got out my little Polaroid sticker camera and they loved seeing the images appear right before their eyes. Having this camera has been so helpful in allowing folks to open up to my photographing them!

There was a little bit of light coming through the door with most coming in through the room's small window. The window light was so subtle and beauti-



Tibetan man in Qinghai Province in the small town of Moa holding a prayer wheel. Inside the prayer wheel are Buddhist scriptures and prayers.

ful and I took many pictures using just this light. I sure hope I was able to hold my camera still enough!

Then, everyone piled outside and I photographed them in brighter surroundings. They seemed to have fun with it and I hope I was able to capture their beauty! I told them that people all over the world admire the Tibetan people – something they modestly seemed to already be well aware of.

From there we drove a long while past many other Tibetan encampments and arrived in the town of Moa. We lunched at a Hui restaurant and then drove to the secluded Moa monastery. This monastery was even older than the Labrang Monastery and had been pretty much demolished during the Cultural Revolution. Today there are around 200 monks in residence and a gradual recovery continues. I asked a monk (in his late 60s) about that time period and the look on his face said it all. He said that they do not speak about it, and added only that they were forced to memorize something along the lines of, "there is no god but the Communist Party."

4-20-00 I met a couple from San Francisco (the first Americans I've run

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This article contains selections from Stacey's travels through Western China beginning with the Tibetan town of Xiahe in Qinghai Province

into in Mainland China) and we made plans to hike in the Sand Mountains one night under the full moon. Oh, it was so incredible! I felt like I was on another planet or in heaven or someplace surreal. The air wasn't too cold, the wind had died down and the sand was cool and soft. The moon was clear and high in the sky with an occasional passing cloud. Closer to the horizon, the dunes faded into a misty layer of settling sandy air. We climbed all the way up to the highest peak nearby and sat in the sand staring off into the distance. God! It was heavenly! I could have slept out there! The moon's silver muted light cast shadows on the dark sides of the wavy dunes. I can't believe I was really there having one of the coolest experiences of my life with two people I barely knew. It was really special and will always stand out in my memory.

Now I have moved on to the town of Hami in Xinjiang Province.

This is the first portion of my journey where I've come in contact with Uighur people. Uighurs are of Turkish descent and their physical features are an interesting mix of European, Middle Eastern, and Asian. The Uighur food is great: special handmade flour noodles, fresh vegetables, lots of spices and yummy sauces and there is a rice dish (kind of like pilaf) that they call "finger food." I really wouldn't want to eat it with my fingers, but gosh, was it delicious. It was kind of sweet with cooked carrot chunks in it. My only concern is that I may get tired of all the mutton! Then there are the raisins! Hami is actually famous for sweet melons, but the raisins were a fine substitute due to the season. mmmmm... little light greenish yellow raisins that are just meaty enough to drench your mouth with the *sweetest* taste! Oh! I'm addicted!

During my first full day in Hami, we went up to the Tian Shan snow-covered mountains. What a nice escape this must be in the hot summer! Our SUV got stuck in some fresh snow and I was able to photograph an icy stream in the bright sun.

On our way back from the mountains, we stopped by some farm houses to buy some bread from a Uighur woman. We ended up going into her house and in the main room there was a window in the ceiling that illuminated the wooden crate of freshly baked round bread. Oh! It smelled so good and the light was so beautiful.

Outside, the sun was bright and the sky was deep blue

with fluffy white clouds. Gosh, the adobe homes were so crisp in the sun and the trees were brilliant green. We left with some fresh warm bread and I proceeded to gobble it up and spoil my lunch!

Although the sun isn't out today – the odd cloud cover sure makes it comfortable for walks. This is also nice portrait light. My primary camera has been acting a little funny for the last two rolls, so today I wandered around with my trusty back-up, the Nikon FM2, and photographed a huge family gathering in celebration of a young boy (6 or 7) being circumcised. This morning I also went to visit the digging of one of the Karez wells and it is quite something! I just can't imagine all of the work that went into digging and tunneling. These wells make such a paradise grow here! Oh, I *really* want to come back and live

here for a while! The Uighur people are so cool! I love everything! The food, the language, the homes, the dress, the music, the farms! I just have to come back here when the grapes and apricots and mulberries are ripe!

This afternoon I was able to visit a Uighur wedding and they got me dancing... you just have to dance to the music! I took a bunch of photographs of the band and people dancing and I'm going to send them copies. My favorite thing was watching this little boy dance and dance – he was dancing just like the adult men and it was sooooo cute!!

4-25-00 Well, I'm homesick again. China is different. I don't speak the language and people like to stare at me. What is my photo theme going to be? Am I really taking good photos? Will the E100VS work? Will I be able to leave the country with all my film? What the heck will I do next? Why does it take so long for simple things to get done in China? Why does every restaurant have soooooo many extra waitresses just standing at the door? I want to see my family.

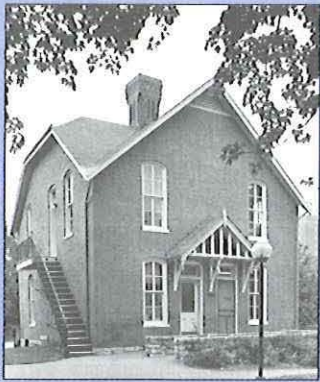
4-29-00 I was tired this morning and hadn't been feeling well, but managed to stop the car a couple of times and climb around for a while.

The Buddhist caves were interesting as always, but I don't have a great desire to see any more on this trip. On the way back to Kuqa I watched the land take many different shapes and suspected there was a small canyon not too far from the road. So I trekked out into the bright sandy land and sure enough, I discovered a scenic canyon! The sandy ground was baked and broken off in dark chunks almost like bricks as I neared the gorge. It was so wonderful standing there in the bright sun staring off into such a beautiful expanse of silent earth. I followed crevices along the rim and imagined how they might have been formed by great flash floods from storms in the mountains...

Join us for the conclusion of Stacey's adventure in the January issue of "Women's VU"...



Tibetan in grasslands outside Xiahe where Stacey tasted tsampa



Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center

Calendar of Events

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

DECEMBER

Monday – Friday, December 1 - 31, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

The Clothesline Project exhibit by Students for Women's Concerns. *See article below*

Tuesday, December 5, 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm

Creative Life Planning Group – Issues week for personal sharing

Wednesday, December 6, 7:15 pm

Clothesline Project reception – Students for Women's Concerns is exhibiting their clothesline project at the Women's Center during December. Please join us tonight to learn more about the exhibit..

Monday, December 11, 5:30 pm, at Elaine Goleski's house

Book Group - *An Unfortunate Prairie Occurrence* by Jamie Harrison. Discussion facilitated by Jane DuBose. Call 322-4843 for directions..

Tuesday, December 12, 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm

Creative Life Planning Group – Potluck lunch

Wednesday, December 13, 5:15 pm

Women, Spirit & Poetry – Jan Rosemergy and Linda Manning will lead this discussion on "Generations" from *Cries of the Spirit: A Celebration of Women's Spirituality*. This group is open to the public and the book is available in the VU Bookstore.

Friday, December 15, 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Commodore S'Mores – Study break at the Women's Center for all students. Co-sponsored by International Student Services.

Tuesday, December 19, 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm

Creative Life Planning Group – Bring your favorite holiday books and stories.

No meeting December 26.

Thursday, December 21, 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm

Reading Sisters – *Ugly Ways* by Tina McElroy Ansa. Students, staff, and faculty are welcome to participate. Books available at the VU bookstore. Contact Hilary Forbes at 322-6518 or hilary.forbes@vanderbilt.edu with any questions.



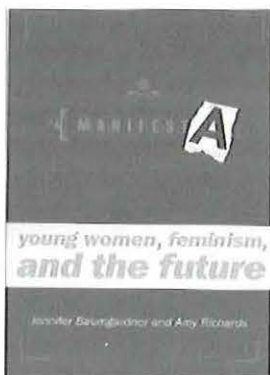
Come view the Clothesline Project December 1st through 31st at the Women's Center

On Wednesday October 25th, Vanderbilt students took time out to decorate t-shirts as part of the Clothesline Project, a grassroots movement which bears witness to the violence women experience simply because they are women. "It provides a clothesline on which women can air out their 'dirty laundry' in the form of a shirt describing the violence they have experienced or witnessed," said Jennifer Garrette, President of Students for Women's Concerns. **These shirts will be displayed in the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center December 1st through December 31st.** The goal of the project is thus not only to provide a safe forum for women to speak out about abuse, but also to educate the public about the severity, prevalence and impact of violence against women in our communities.



"Manifesta" targets women of the Third Wave

Two young feminists, who met through their work for Ms., have collaborated on *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000). Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards were both born in 1970, when women's lives and expectations were very different from what they are today. Like most of their contemporaries, the writers barely identify with the feminist politics of older women or with the feminist press. They focus mainly on women of the Third Wave, their generation of feminists, who seem more concerned with personal empowerment than with a political women's movement. The authors hope that this volume might help to rejuvenate the women's movement.



Young women, even those who profess not to be feminists, simply take for granted most of the benefits of the women's movement. Baumgardner and Richards believe that females who are angry about the injustices, discrimination and harassment they frequently encounter often do not realize that there is a movement that continues to work for women's rights. They feel that young women "need to transform our confidence into a plan for actually attaining women's equality. We were born into a feminist history. What we need is a Third Wave feminist manifesta."

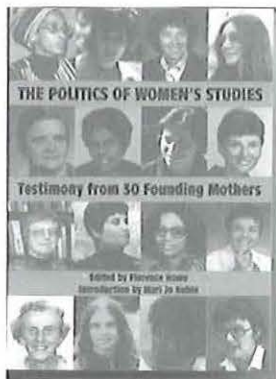
Their manifesta includes a 13-point agenda designed to help bring about gender equality. Following their analysis

of feminism through the years, they suggest how it could be made more relevant to Third Wave women and how it might become a stronger political movement.

Florence Howe, long considered one of the founding mothers of the women's studies movement, realized that first-person accounts by the founders of women's studies programs were largely unwritten and would be of great interest to future generations. In *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from Thirty Founding Mothers* (Feminist Press, 2000) she presents the stories of 30 of these pioneering women, now middle-aged or elderly.

The first women's studies programs commenced in 1970, as a result of feminist consciousness and of the growing awareness among academic women that the study and experiences of women needed to be integrated into the curriculum. On many campuses there was strong resistance to the establishment of women's studies courses and departments, as the subject was often thought to dilute or trivialize the curriculum.

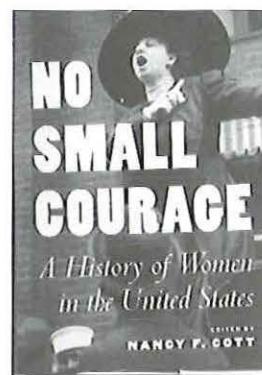
The first teachers had to unearth their own data, compile bibliographies, produce textbooks, and establish suitable curricula. Most used a participatory teaching style that came to be known as feminist pedagogy.



Among the women discussing their pioneering struggles and achievements are Sheila Tobias, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Johnnetta B. Cole, Kathryn Kish Sklar

and Myra Dinnerstein. Women's studies has grown to the extent that today about 12 percent of undergraduates take at least one course in the field, which is offered at about 615 American colleges and universities.

Nancy F. Cott, a professor of history and American studies at Yale University, has collected ten comprehensive new essays tracing the history of American women in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2000). In the 1960s the emergence of the women's movement coincided with a growing emphasis on social history rather than on men of the ruling classes. This



led to a growing body of research into women's history.

The nine contributors, all noted historians, include women from diverse backgrounds and analyze women's many roles at home and in society, using wherever possible documents and writings left by females over the ages. The first chapter details how Native American women of different tribes were affected by contact with early European settlers and missionaries. Later sections bring the story of American women up to the present day, covering such topics as colonial life; slave women; women's political activities; education; women and war; suffrage; racism and civil rights; and the changes in society resulting from the women's movement.

Take time to grieve to ease transition into college life

by **ARIAN ELFANT, M.S.** Psychological and Counseling Center, Vanderbilt University

Freedom!! This is the mantra for many high school seniors as they make the transition from high school into college. The idea goes something like this: going to college represents a time when one is free of curfews, free of mowing the lawn, free of washing the dishes and so on. The images we see in college brochures and in the popular media are usually of smiling students hanging out with friends on a big green lawn. It looks fun, right? But, somehow, in the hustle and bustle of preparing for "The Big Day," many forget that the final goodbye to home, friends and family is more difficult than anticipated. Once the dorm room is decorated, the bookstore is found, and classes finally begin, a quiet of sorts sets in. For many, this quiet may result in feeling sad, lonely, isolated, and overwhelmed. Suddenly, the days of making your bed and being home by 11:00 seem appealing.

No matter how excited you were (or continue to be) about entering this time in your life, it does not erase the fact that you have experienced an undeniable loss. This is not a bad thing. In fact, these feelings of loss are an inevitable and acceptable part of making the transition into college. You may be most struck by the loss of predictability and structure that was present in high school; or maybe by the loss of a particular leadership role you played in your class; or perhaps you most miss the tight-knit group of friends who made school feel like a second home to you. Some find they even miss what was miserable about their old lives because they were, at the very least, waters they had learned to navigate. No matter what you left behind you, beginning your undergraduate career has changed your life.

Maybe you have been working all semester or longer trying to be like the smiling kid you saw in your college brochure and wondering why you are not succeeding. Chances are good that you have not granted yourself the permission to grieve. Suddenly, feelings you didn't even know were there may begin to bubble up. This "bubbling up" phenomenon is your body's way of signaling, "you skipped a big step!" Skipping this step may result in: self-criticism, irritability, unexplained sadness, difficulty eating and sleeping and/or an overall sense of disconnectedness and confusion. Over time, running away from or pushing

down important feelings such as these may manifest in more serious ways such as: a lingering depression, an eating disorder, or an anxiety attack.

If you are one of the many college students who have struggled a little or a lot since beginning your undergraduate career, try asking yourself a few questions:

- When you left for school, were you so distracted with packing and planning that you forgot to make the time to say goodbye to friends and family?
- Was the decision to go to college an automatic one for you? In other words, did you consider any other alternatives besides applying to college?
- When you begin to feel sad do you feel pressure to "put on a happy face" and make the best of things?
- Is it more difficult than you expected to stand out in your classes or in social situations?
- Is it hard to find a place where you feel like you fit in?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above, you are likely one of many thousands of college students across the country who are currently in the process of adjusting to the powerful changes experienced by leaving high school and beginning college. Answering "yes" to one or more of these questions also may mean that this adjustment is harder for you than it needs to be.

If you did not have the time or make the time to say goodbye to friends and family, the sadness can be doubly overwhelming because you never felt it in the first place. Make a few phone calls; it's not too late to tell someone how much you miss them..

If the decision to go to college was not a true choice for you but rather something that was automatic or obligatory, you may feel trapped. Think about what some of your other options might have been. Now that you're here, can you find a way to choose how to make this experience your own?

If for some reason you decided that you are "not allowed" to feel sad or lonely here at school, those feelings may become more intense than they were in the first place. Give yourself a chance to be bummed out. Take another step and share it with someone.

If you feel like you are suddenly a small fish in a big pond, take pause for a second. It was a *huge* accomplishment making



"Any big change in life is as worthy of grief as it is of celebration. Do yourself a favor and feel both the joy and the sadness."

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Take time... *continued from page 6*

it this far. Take a moment and think about what makes you different and unique from those around you (beyond good grades and a big vocabulary). Is it your sense of humor, your artistic talents, or your ability to stuff 20 olives in your mouth at once?

If you've decided that you don't fit in, it might be that you don't. It can be hard to find your niche in a new place. Rather than changing yourself, maybe you need to redefine your concept of fitting in. If you think you need to look and act like those around you, you'll either continue to feel like a failure or become something you're not. Try thinking about what you want from your college experience and find a way to get it. It doesn't hurt to be open to new stuff too.

Consider that you might need some help and support figuring all of this out for yourself. It is precisely for this reason that you have an R.A., an A.D., and resources on campus such as the Student Health Center and the Psychological and Counseling Center. No one will be able to "fix" all of this, and it would rob you of an important process if they could. But it's remarkable what a difference it can make just to be heard and understood, even by someone you don't know yet.

About the time that you begin to be more comfortable with the lifestyle you have carved out for yourself here, you could be anticipating your first trip home. Guess what? The changes that apply to going to school also apply to going home. Things may look and feel differently. Excitement at seeing friends and family may turn into emptiness if it is not exactly as you remember or envision it to be. Drop the expectations, be patient, and trust life a little. There are bound to be wrinkles as you all get used to what's new, but try replacing your anxiety with curiosity. One day you'll look back with great fondness on what is now just around the corner.

Any big change in life is as worthy of grief as it is of celebration. Do yourself a favor, and feel both the joy and the sadness. In allowing yourself some balance, you will find the transition infinitely more rich, authentic, and satisfying.

Audition Announcement

The Actors Bridge Ensemble, with campus support from Students for Women's Concerns, the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center and the Women's Studies Program announces auditions for its upcoming production of "The Vagina Monologues" by Eve Ensler. Auditions will be held December 2, 2000 at 11 am at St. Augustine's Chapel on the Vanderbilt Campus, 200 24th Avenue South. Those auditioning should come prepared to tell a personal narrative entitled "The first time I..." of at least 3 minutes in length. There will be no reading from the script. No appointments are necessary. Roles are available for women of all ages. Those interested in helping on a crew please attend at this time to receive information. Performance dates are February 8, 9 and 10, 2001 as part of the National V-day Celebration. For further information please call 341-0300.

IN THE OLD DAYS
GIRLS WERE



NAMED CHARITY,
PRUDENCE,



GRACE AND
FELICITY.



OUR NAMES
ARE JUSTICIA
AND EQUITY.



DON'T MESS WITH
US!

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A N N O U N C E M E N T S

• **RAWA** (see www.rawa.org), a grassroots project that is raising money for women's organizations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda, and the U.S. needs your help in promoting "**Octaves Beyond Silence**" (www.octavesbeyondsilence.com), a benefit CD which combines "donated" tracks from well-known and emerging U.S. women artists with original narratives and songs from the international women's groups it benefits. Featured artists include: Indigo Girls, Me'Shell Ndegeocello, Ani DiFranco, Betty, Eve Ensler, and others who are up-and-coming. Created by Washington D.C. activist Inger Brinck and other volunteers, all proceeds go directly to these women's groups (see www.octavesbeyondsilence.com for a list). Makes a great gift. Tell your friends!

• The Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center's Patient and Family Care Program has an **Autumn Wish List** for its clients. The Center needs colored pencils, bottled water, individually wrapped hard candy, canned soft drinks, hot chocolate or apple cider packets, easy listening CDs, or turbans, hats and scarves (new). Please call 343-9734 or 343-7776 for more information.

• **Call for Participation** The Tenth Annual Wilma E. Grote Symposium for the Advancement of Women will focus on Kentucky women's contributions to all areas of the arts. The conference will take place March 22-24 2001 at Morehead State University. They invite scholars, students and other individuals to submit critical papers and panels, creative productions and exhibits, and roundtable discussions centering on Kentucky women. The

keynote speaker will be Kentucky writer Bobbie Ann Mason. **For more information visit www.moreheadstate.edu/womensymposium**

• Buy all of your holiday gifts at the Sarratt Gallery's Tenth Annual **Holiday Arts Festival!** Featuring contemporary crafts by Tennessee artists, the festival will take place from 11 am to 6 pm December 9-14 in the Sarratt Student Center.



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