

REACHING SIDEWAYS

A CONTINENTAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS
AND VIEWS

OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN AND MEN

EDITED AND COMPILED BY MEMBERS OF J.P. DISTRICT

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ED NOTE: THE FOLLOWING LETTER HAS BEEN EDITED FOR BREVITY.

January 15, 1988

Dear Friends:

1987 marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Women and Religion Resolution by the UU General Assembly. This resolution calls on us, as individuals and as a denomination, to avoid sexist assumptions and language and to examine the effects of gender stereotyping in our personal lives and religious practices.

Much remains to be done as well. We need to integrate women's experiences and spiritual perspectives into the lives of our local congregations. We need to include more of women's history, music, words and accomplishments in our services. We need to further acknowledge, honor and include the perspectives of those UUs who make up more than 60% of our churches, so that all of us . . . women and men . . . may be enriched and stimulated by a broader view of humanity.

For several years, it was the custom for many UU congregations to conduct a "Women and Religion Sunday" during the church year. We urge you to re-institute that custom if it has not continued in your society. If you can plan it for sometime in March, which is Women's History Month, you will join a continental network of UU congregations which is celebrating and acknowledging the women in our midst.

Resource materials that might help you in planning this Women and Religion Sunday are available from Mary Andrus-Overley of the UUA Department for Social Justice. If you hold a service, the UU Women's Federation would appreciate receiving information on how your congregation observed this Sunday so that we can share your program ideas with others.

We hope you will join us in this celebration of the role of women in our Unitarian Universalist movement. Over the past ten years we have gone far toward implementing the Women and Religion resolution. With your participation we can look forward to another ten years - - and more - - of progress.

Sincerely,

William Schulz
President, UUA

Phyllis Rickter
President, UUWF

Marilyn Gentile
Chair, W & R

EDITORIAL

Did your church conduct a W&R Sunday during March as suggested by the letter on the preceding page signed by the UUA President? Has it ever been the custom in your church to have a W&R Sunday sometime during the church year?

I can make a generalization from what I know about the churches in this area and tell you what happens in my own church, Cedar Lane. For the past few years, it has been the custom for The Women's Issues Task Force, which is our activist group in Women and Religion, to have one Sunday a year in June. The time varies according to the time of the General Assembly because our women's service always comes on the Sunday all three of our ministers are absent. Since having any kind of a lay service practically guarantees low attendance, those of us who plan this service have concentrated on getting a "name" speaker in our area. Sometimes we have had a newspaper columnist known for her feminism; other times we have had a college professor. We always have a full house for our "women's service" -- that is, most all of our seats are taken by women. There are, of course a few brave men, but in general the men stay away in droves.

This kind of a Sunday service is hardly what I can call a good women's service. Those of us who attend are sitting passively and receiving from the great. I like much better the kind of service sent to me by Mary Latham of the Arlington Va. UU church which was created collaboratively by the Cakes for the Queen of Heaven Study group. In this service the women of the church participated, and there was music and dance to help express the feelings of the congregation through other mediums besides words.

At this point I am sure you would like to say to me, "If you prefer a different kind of service, why don't you plan it that way." And I have our answer. We on the Women's Issues Task Force have made a conscious decision to concentrate on full attendance at our women's service. We are afraid that if we have a more participatory service involving the women of our church we will be tarred with the same brush as other attempts at lay services and have few attendees. When that low attendance is noticed by those who schedule services, the immediate presumption will be that few members of the congregation are interested in a woman's service -- and we women might lose the only Sunday we have.

But I do not mean to use this whole column for a discussion of

the way an individual church works. What concerns me is that the president of our denomination, the president of the UUWF, and the chair of the Women & Religion Committee found it necessary to write an official letter to all of the congregations in the denomination reminding them to have a Women's Sunday during the church year. Just one. No more considerations of women's special concerns need be made. Just one Sunday a year.

What this means to me is that once again all evidences of women's concerns, women's spirituality, women's issues are disappearing from our churches. If the churches in our denomination must be asked to have one Sunday a year for "Women and Religion," then all evidence of the work done during the past ten years by the women of this denomination is fast disappearing.

Going - - - - going -----gone.

Recently I was asked by a younger acquaintance during coffee hour at my church why I continued to work on women's concerns. "After all," she said, "women are doing much better now. We have all kinds of laws to make sure that women have equal rights and no sexual harassment and the right to have an abortion. Why don't you put your energies to working on some problems that

aren't solved. Like the homeless, for instance."

I must confess that I could not bear to begin at the beginning with this young woman. I moved away as fast as I could, pretending I needed to rush somewhere. What would you have said?

And all of this is leading me to my next topic-----a theme for the next issue

A THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

As you go through this issue you will notice that there is no material ----absolutely none--- on the announced topic. We had suggested that you might wish to examine a copy of LIVING THE INDEPENDENT WEB, which is the leader's manual done by Tom Owen-Towle for an eight part adult education series on "What Unitarian Universalists Believe: Living Principles for a Living Faith," and write a critique of the material from the perspective of one who knows what women have accomplished in the past ten years.

I did receive some commentary from Betty Anastos at 25 Beacon St. Betty informed me that the above mentioned material, which was mailed to

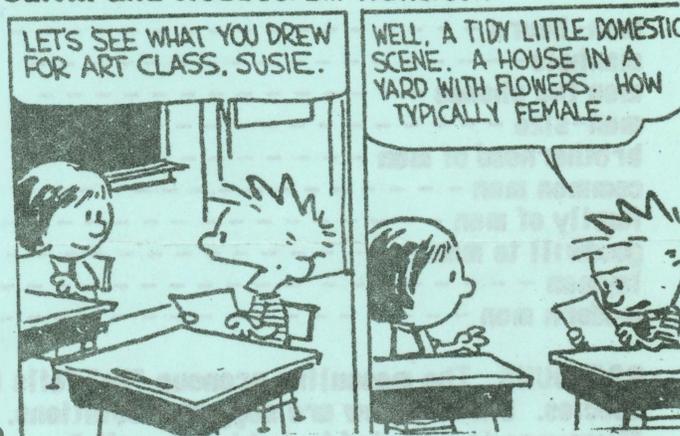
congregations and ministers last summer on our UU Purposes and Principles is **NOT** a UUA published program. Instead this material is a project of a group recruited by and chaired by Forrester Church and funded by the Grants Panel at the time Forester was chairing the panel.

Betty was also kind enough to forward the material on "Living the Independent Web" to me from the UUA library. I have also received a letter from Lucile Schuck Longview who is planning to write on this topic herself for our next issue. I will, therefore, consider this theme idea a carryover for next time.

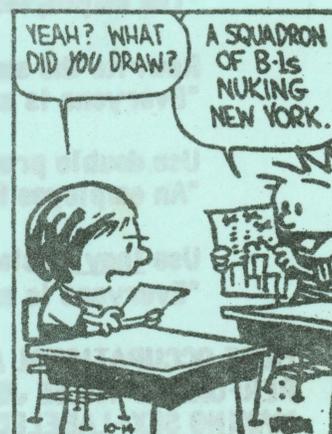
Meanwhile, to inspire some of you other writers, I ask that you consider writing an answer to the young woman I described in the editorial -- the one who asked me why I didn't leave the work on Women and Religion and concentrate on solving the problems of the homeless. I await your responses. **PUBLISHING DEADLINE IS MAY 18, 1988.** Mail to Sara Best at Chevy Chase, Md. 20815, or call at **delayed.**



Calvin and Hobbes/Bill Watterson



GIRLS THINK SMALL AND ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH PETTY DETAILS. BUT **BOYS** THINK **BIG!** BOYS THINK ABOUT ACTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENT! NO WONDER IT'S **MEN** WHO CHANGE THE WORLD!



PRACTICAL GUIDE TO NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE

(from a brochure, "Practical Guide to Non-Sexist Language," Produced and sold by South & West St. Louis County NOW)

The use of "man" or "mankind" to represent humanity collectively is ambiguous since it is not clear whether it means men only or includes women. It implies that the entire species is male. Suggested alternatives:

man's achievement - - - - -	human achievement
mankind - - - - -	humankind, humanity
manmade - - - - -	manufactured, artificial
manpower - - - - -	human resources, work force, staff
manned space flight - - - - -	human, with crew, staffed, piloted
unmanned space flight - - - - -	mission controlled, without crew, unstaffed, unpiloted
man-hours - - - - -	work hours
manhole - - - - -	conduit, sewer or drain hole opening
man the phones - - - - -	staff, operate
man-size - - - - -	big, large, enormous
brotherhood of man - - - - -	human community
common man - - - - -	average person
family of man - - - - -	human race, civilization
goodwill to man - - - - -	goodwill to people
laymen - - - - -	layperson, nonprofessional
modern man - - - - -	modern humanity

PRONOUNS. The masculine pronoun "he" fails to represent the female half of the human species. Shown below are suggested solutions. They have been applied to the sentence, "Everyone is expected to do his job well."

Pluralize to avoid gender specific pronoun

"The employees are expected to do their jobs well."

Rewrite the sentence without the pronoun

"Everyone is expected to do the job well."

Use double pronoun construction:

"An employee is expected to do her or his job well."

Use they as singular with indefinite pronouns.

"Everyone is expected to do their job well."

MOST OCCUPATIONAL AND PUBLIC OFFICE TITLES DATE FROM A TIME WHEN ONLY MEN PERFORMED THESE JOBS. CONTEMPORARY WOMEN ARE INVOLVED IN ALL OCCUPATIONS; MAKING SEX-LABELED TITLES DISCRIMINATORY. OCCUPATIONAL TITLES SHOULD DESCRIBE THE JOB AND NOT THE PERSON DOING THE JOB.

airline steward, -ess
alderman
anchor man
businessman
chairman

flight attendant
ward representative, aldermember
news anchor, anchor
business person
chair, head, chairperson

committeeman
congressman
councilman
craftsman
draftsman
fishermen
forman
handyman
journeyman
landlord
lineman
mailman
maintenance man
newsboy
newsman
policeman
salesman
spokesman
TV cameraman- girl
workmen
weatherman, -girl

committee member
representative, member of Congress
councilmember
crafter, artisan
drafter, designer
fisher, angler
supervisor, superintendent
odd-job worker
(certified crafter) specify carpenter, metal worker, etc.
owner
line installer, line worker
mail carrier
maintenance worker
newspaper carrier, newspaper vendor
newscaster, reporter
police officer
sales representative, salesperson
spokesperson, speaker
camera operator
weathercaster, reporter
weathercaster, reporter, meteorologist

NEITHER SEX HAS A MONOPOLY ON JOBS OR THE DESIGNATIONS THAT GO WITH THEM.

lady doctor
woman lawyer
male nurse
meter maid
female surgeon
housewife

doctor
lawyer
nurse
meter attendant
surgeon
homemaker

THERE ARE ONLY TWO JOBS THAT ARE GENDER SPECIFIC. AS ATTORNEY FLORYNCE KENNEDY POINTS OUT, "NEITHER SEX HAS A MONOPOLY ON JOBS . . . EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF WET NURSES AND SPERM DONORS."

WHEN THE DESCRIPTION INVOLVES TITLES, JOBS AND MARITAL STATUS, TREAT WOMEN AND MEN IN PARALLEL MANNER:

MAN AND WIFE

JAMES JONES AND MRS. JONES

DR. JOHN JONES AND MRS.

MARY SMITH (BOTH ARE DOCTORS)

HUSBAND AND WIFE

JAMES AND MARY JONES

**DR. JOHN JONES AND DR. MARY SMITH OR
DRS. JOHN JONES AND MARY SMITH**

"MAN" IN THE MIDDLE; THERE ARE SOME COMPOUND WORDS WITH THE SYLLABLE 'MAN' AT THE CENTER. HERE ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES:

craftsmanship
sportsmanship
penmanship
workmanlike

craftship, artisanship
sportship
scrip, handwriting
skillful, well executed

SOME PHRASES EXCLUDE FEMALES BY ASSUMING THAT ALL READERS OR LISTENERS ARE MALES. WRITE AND SPEAK TO INCLUDE BOTH SEXES WHEN APPLICABLE:

**blacktie gala
convention goes and their wives
you and your wife**

**semiformal
convention goes and their spouses
you and your spouse**

GENDER SPECIFIC WORDS THAT IMPLY MALES ONLY WHEN FEMALES ALSO ARE INCLUDED:

**city fathers
forefathers
founding fathers
gentlemen's agreement
freshman
bachelor's degree
master's degree**

**city leaders
forbears, ancestors
founders
honorable agreement
first year student
undergraduate degree
graduate degree**

GENDER SPECIFIC WORDS THAT CONVEY MYTHS AND ATTITUDES RATHER THAN PROMOTE HONEST COMMUNICATION:

**lady luck
old wives' tale
woman's intuition
master bedroom
tomboy
maiden name
maiden voyage**

**luck
superstitious folklore
intuition, hunch
large bedroom
active child
surname, family name
first voyage**

"FEMININE" SUFFIXES. Most English agent-nouns which signify the performer of an action have common gender and can be used for a person of either sex. Feminine gender suffixes such as -ess, -trix or -ine often imply that the feminine gender is a substandard variation of the masculine.

**actress
authoress
executrix
governess
heroine
poetess
priestess
waitress**

**actor
author
executor (administrator)
instructor
hero
poet
priest
waiter**

The suffix -ette is a diminutive signify imitation (flannelette), small size (dinette), or less important (operetta) and should not be used to refer to women. Use the main form for women and men.

**bachelorette
farmerette
majorette
suffragette
usherette**

**single
farmer
drum major
suffragist
usher**

For copies of this brochure, write to South & West St. Louis Country Chapter, National Organization for Women, 1025 Barry Court, St. Louis MO 63122. Brochures are \$1.75/10; \$3.50/25; \$6.00/50; \$10/100; \$15/150.

MORE ON "CAKES"

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"I would characterize the central theme of "Cakes" as the pure unbridled lust for power: the self is worshiped as God/Goddess, no authority or standard is recognized as holding human behavior accountable, and the distinction between good and evil, so central to the Judeo-Christian tradition, is blurred and even disavowed. All of this confusion and malevolence is sheltered under 1) polytheism. . . 2) the idolatry of the self. . . and 3) witchcraft" - - The Rev. Barbara W. Merritt in the Fall, 1987 issue of REACHING SIDEWAYS, originally written in GOOD NEWS, May/June 1987.

Barbara Merritt's article, "An Open Letter to the UUA President," raised some serious objections to the new UUA adult education curriculum, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven." It also brought forth several responses. The Nov./June 1987 GOOD NEWS printed the following response from the author of "CAKES," Rev. Shirley Rensch.

In response to Ms Merritt's letter there are two major points I wish to make concerning "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven," one having to do with my understanding of liberal Christianity, the other having to do with my understanding of the inclusiveness of Unitarian Universalism.

As a UU who was raised in the Protestant Episcopal Church by liberal Christian parents, I went through a process common to many

UUs, that of deciding what aspects of my religious upbringing I would leave behind and what I would bring with me into this new denomination. I feel that certain aspects of the Christian position are part of my bones and that despite the protestations of Ms. Merritt to the contrary, these elements are incorporated into the "Cakes" curriculum.

For the first forty years of my life I learned and accepted a liberal Christian theology. Indeed I spent four years studying that theology in a liberal Methodist theological school. I do not see in Ms. Merritt's simplistic authoritarian view any resemblance to the neo-orthodox Christianity of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, nor to the older liberal Christianity of Mildred Moody Eakin. And I see absolutely no understanding on Rev. Merritt's part of the historical and cultural relativism of a theologian such as Ernst Troeltsch. The liberal Christianity I espoused for many years was based upon commitment to a leader, Jesus, who broke the rigid laws of his time in order to meet human needs and to restore the self-respect of publicans and sinners. It was based upon His recognizing goodness where it was found, even in the behavior of the outsider, the Samaritan. There is nothing violent in "Cakes," but there is an openness to traditions which historically have been cast in the role of outsider, i.e. the pagan traditions where they exalt woman.

Jesus respected women, but the churches which bear his name have failed to do so. Thus I see nothing truly Christian in Ms. Merritt's angry rejection of all things pagan: I see only the perpetuation of the most uncharitable attitudes put forth by so-called Christian churches over the centuries.

Jesus respected individual selves. He said repeatedly, "It is your own faith which has made you whole." It is not self but SELF, the divine immanent in all of life, Ultimate Reality if you will, that "Cakes" is urging people to experience. Nothing could be more Christian than that if one wishes to put that label on the experience. It is that experience that transforms our personal lives and energizes us to take responsibility for social justice. Liberal Christians are not transformed by slavish obedience to authority but rather by transformation of the self. Feminist wicca would not label such an experience as Christian because the term Christian has over the centuries become so deeply enmeshed in sexist patriarchal practices. For many women today a new label is needed, is liberating, but the basic experience of self-affirmation and connectedness with Life is the same. In "Cakes" I tried to provide women with information about their special religious history, Biblical and non-Biblical, so that they might experience the value and positive power of their own roots. Such an effort could, I believe, be labeled Christian. The wonderful thing about Unitarian Universalism is that we don't have to use that label. We can draw on

many resources in addition to the Bible and call them by their own names.

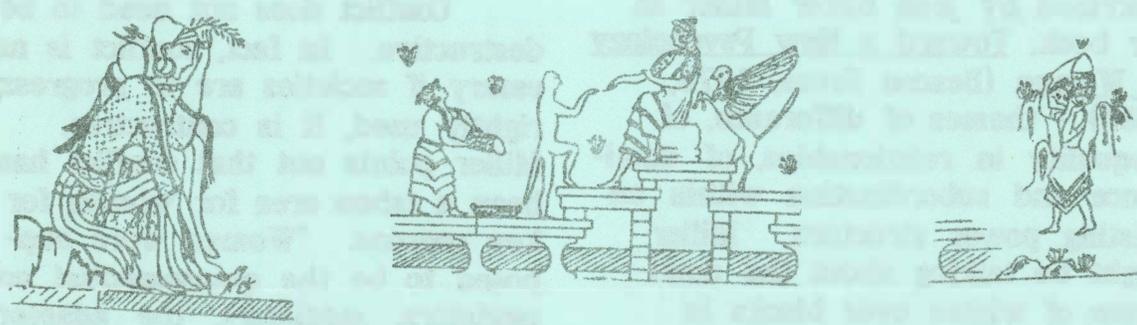
That brings me to my second response. One of the most exciting aspects of UUism for me has been the freedom to draw on a wide range of religious and secular writings for spiritual nourishment. I remember vividly my first visit to a UU congregation in New Jersey and the impact on me of seeing the symbols of all the major world religions carved into the lectern. I have found this inclusiveness tremendously liberating for me as a woman. It has meant that my religious roots, both pagan and Christian, can be brought into this community and accepted. Of course I do with witchcraft and the Old Religion what I did with my Christian heritage. I take from it what is meaningful to me in living my life. If there are pagans who practice human sacrifice, I would of course reject that aspect of paganism, just as I would reject in Christianity the excesses of the Inquisition, the torture and burning at the stake of millions of people, mostly women. The pagans I have met have been singularly non-violent, peaceful and loving. The inclusiveness of UUism is a basic premise of "Cakes." Feminist scholars in any of the Christian denominations can focus on the Bible. But as UUs, we are free to go beyond the Bible, to look at Sumerian and Greek myths and even at witchcraft in our search for resources meaningful to women. I am intensely proud that his denomination has the prophetic courage to proclaim this inclusiveness before the world.

If Rev. Merritt wishes to espouse an authoritarian form of Christianity and finds that position meaningful, that is her privilege. If she calls herself a Unitarian Universalist I hope she will learn to accord liberal Christian UU's, Jewish UUs and Pagan UUs the same freedom.

of what is necessary and sacred to life on this planet. Another theme is that, for many women, the feminine experience in the religious sphere is different from the patriarchal masculine experience, and that we are encouraging it to emerge and be honored among women and men

REV. SHIRLEY RANCK

(Cont'd below)



Rev. Elizabeth Anastas, Coordinator of Curriculum Development for the UUA, made this response to Rev. Barbara Merritt in May of 1987.

Bill Schulz has asked me to respond to your recent letter expressing your concerns about our adult seminar in feminist theology, Cakes for the Queen of Heaven. I am probably the UUA staff person most knowledgeable about this program, having worked with the author, Shirley Ranck, in preparing it for publication.

The central theme of Cakes is that of helping women to become aware of their intrinsic importance, of their existence at the very center

Since the decline of the Goddess religions, women have lacked religious models and spiritual systems that speak to female needs and experience. Male images of divinity characterize both Western and Eastern religions. Regardless of how abstract the underlying concept of God may be, the symbols, avatars, preachers, prophets, gurus, and Buddhas are overwhelmingly male. Women have not been encouraged to explore their own strengths and realizations; they have been taught to submit to male authority, to identify masculine perceptions as their spiritual ideals, to deny their bodies and sexuality, to fit their insights into a male mold.

The reemergence of the goddess serves not to "set up"

a competing deity or a polytheistic theological system, but to reclaim the feminine in religious experience, to validate it, and to enable women to claim their rightful place alongside men in relationships of equality and complementarity. In that sense, power is a dominant theme in the program.

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven draws on the themes of power as described by Jean Baker Miller in her book, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Beacon Press, 1976, 1987) - themes of difference, of inequality in relationships, of dominance and subordination within an existing power structure. Miller might be talking about the dominance of whites over blacks in South Africa, but she is, of course, talking about the dominance of men over women. The Cakes program is saying that the rationale for male dominance in our culture is primarily due to the prevailing, power-filled, image of a patriarchal god. In acknowledging that, it then leads women through a process designed to help them recognize and realize their own power, not in "pure, unbridled lust," but to perceive their strengths and break the bonds of subordination, without isolating themselves and without diminishing men.

There are many ways in which women may recognize and build on their specific strengths. Some of these strengths are those that have been perceived to be weaknesses rather than strengths;

their vulnerability and their emotions. But, as Miller says, women can learn to work productively with feelings of weakness and vulnerability and can realize the power inherent in being closely attuned to their emotions. These are strengths to be used creatively. As women change, however, they will create severe challenges to the status quo. As old images are shattered, conflict will arise. And conflict makes us uncomfortable.

Conflict does not need to be destructive. In fact, conflict is necessary if societies are to progress; rightly used, it is constructive. Miller points out that conflict has been a taboo area for women for key reasons. "Women were supposed to be the quintessential accommodators, mediators, the adapters, and soothers. Yet conflict is a necessity if women are to build for the future."

Yes, in taking responsibility for their own future and their own lives, women will be assuming power for themselves. Power has generally meant the ability to advance oneself and to limit or destroy the power of others. Yet this is not a valid use of power. True power is that of power for oneself, and in developing such power for oneself the more able, the more effective each individual becomes, and the less needy she or he will be of limiting or restricting others. This is not the way power has usually been used in our culture. It has been power exerted over others, of dominating others, instead of power shared. To share power is to realize

each person's full potential for a life-enhancing, earth-enhancing existence.

Contemporary witchcraft is but one example of a way in which some women and a few men are expressing their spirituality today. It affirms the Goddess, not as a supreme deity but as an expression of the feminine within the divine; of a world in which divinity is immanent in all of nature including human beings. This affirmation expresses itself through an ethical system of justice that acknowledges that evil exists and that we humans must work to create a just social and ecological balance on our small planet. We must try to live harmoniously with others and nurture the web of all existence. As such, contemporary witchcraft has many similarities to the values and principals of Unitarian Universalism.

I submit to you that this is not a religious philosophy that is demonic or violent. It does assume that divinity is within each of us. It also assumes that evil exists and that we each bear a responsibility to change those practices that destroy or damage the lives of individuals or the earth's natural resources. Perhaps our differences lie in differing interpretations of the material that is presented in Cakes.

Sincerely, in appreciation of our Unitarian Universalist diversity.

Elizabeth Anastos
Coordinator of
Curriculum
Development.

REPORT OF THE CONTINENTAL 1990

COMMITTEE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF LAST TWO YEARS

1. * Launched the Sexism Audit.
2. Began joint meetings and collaboration with UUWF.
3. Carried out programming at G.A., including tenth anniversary celebration and other joint events with UUWF.
4. Continued watchdog function.
5. Initiated feminist theology pamphlet.
6. Reproduced sexist language pamphlet.
- 7.**Began planning a district W&R Chair gathering.
8. Formulated a W&R Sunday packet.
9. Facilitated publication of MA-TRIX.

*FINAL REPORT AT GA '88.

**DISTRICT CHAIRS WILL SOON BE NOTIFIED OF THE TIME AND PLACE (somewhere in the Boston area.)

FUTURE PROJECTS.

- 1.Promote Feminist leadership process and education.
- 2.Support development of Feminist Theology.
- 3.Strengthen relationships with district chairs and committees.
- 4.Initiate new discussion with theological schools.
- 5.Plan GA programming alone and with UUWF and districts.
- 6.Build better working relationships with UUA Board and staff.
- 7.Continue work with UUWF
- 8.Facilitate implementation of recommendations of Sexism Audit.

"I watched the psychic surgeon,
stern, skilled, adroit,
Cut deep into the heart and yet
not hurt.

I watched it happen --
Old failures, old obsessions
Cut away
So blood could flow
A clean course through
Choked arteries again . . .

With you all green things
flourish,
All flowers may be freely
given,
All fears can be expressed
No childish need is sneered at,
No adult gift unrecognized."

May Sarton was writing
about my needs and my hopes, I
felt; yet somehow the book did
not make it back with me to D.C.
-- perhaps because it touched
too close to home.

I next heard of May Sarton
in June of 1982 after she spoke
at the UUA General Assembly in
Bowdoin, Maine. I wasn't at GA
that year, but I heard stories of
how moving her poetry reading
had been and of how she identi-
fied herself as a Unitarian, and I
remembered those poems I had
read at my mother's house. I
thought to myself, "I really want
to get to know this woman's
work." But somehow other books,
other projects were more
insistent; and I never got around

to reading May Sarton as I
wished.

But, as will often happen,
life presented me with a golden
opportunity to get to know May
Sarton's work last year. My
friend and colleague, Rev. Sydney
Wilde Nugent, organizes the
Theology Through Biography
series at the UU Camp and Con-
ference Center, the Mountain,
every summer. Last March she
called to tell me that one of her
presenters had cancelled and
asked if I would like to spend a
week at the Mountain, free of
charge. All I had to do was
present a paper on May Sarton's
life and theology. Quite a bar-
gain it seemed!

The program had already
been advertised, so there was no
choice about my topic. After
only a moments hesitation, I said
yes. After all, hadn't I been in-
terested in May Sarton? What a
wonderful opportunity! So I
began reading May Sarton -- her
poetry, her novels, her autobio-
graphical journals. Seventeen
volumes later, many of which I
had to special order, one might
have wondered who got the
bargain.

Bargain or no, May Sarton's
writing began to weave itself
into my psyche, ineluctably
affecting my dreams and my wak-
ing thoughts. She touched re-

sponsive chords. She gave voice to many of my inner yearnings. She clarified issues and dynamics of my personality. Not all of her writing is of the same caliber -- with such a prolific writer one would hardly expect it to be so (at last count May Sarton had written seven journals, seventeen novels, and fourteen volumes of poetry.) But I did feel as if I had been given a gift with this opportunity to study her work so intensely. I had been given a gift because May Sarton's writing taught me about myself, about my gifts. I think May Sarton can teach us all about our lives and what we have to offer each other.

May Sarton says that she believes "if you go deep enough into the personal, you hit the universal." It is the universal in her writings that speaks to me and that I hope will speak to you.

My first reading today was from the novel MRS. STEVENS HEARS THE MERMAIDS SINGING and comes at the point where Hilary, the protagonist, is reflecting on "that appalling complex of people who had entered deeply into her life, who had influenced, and changed, and enriched her." This novel was published in 1964, fourteen years after the death of May Sarton's mother and eight years after her father's death. May Sarton writes that it was only after both of her parents

died that she felt free to be wholly herself. The character Hilary also is a poet. She is May Sarton reworked into art. In the novel Hilary has to come to terms with what she has become and her relationship with her parents.

The examination of the influences on her life is a continuing theme in May Sarton's writings. She says, "So you put everything together finally into something which is yourself, which you've made out of the other people who have affected you. Other peoples' lives get built into our lives and finally the transference is complete."

What more lasting influence is there on any of us than that of our parents. Indeed, May Sarton says of her parents, "we become what we have loved."

I would like to tell you about May Sarton and her parents because I believe that when she struggles with how they have influenced her life, both positively and negatively, she reflects a struggle that we all must confront. She is telling us about ourselves.

May Sarton's mother, Mabel Elwas, was born in 1885 near London, of an old Suffolk family. Her father, May's grandfather, was a civil engineer who spent years away in India, Canada, and

Spain building bridges. His wife always accompanied him on these trips. Mabel and her brother were farmed out to various relatives and Mabel, consequently, developed a solitary personality and a love of natural beauty - qualities that May Sarton was to inherit. Mabel's father died when she was 19, leaving the family penniless. Mabel was just able to manage for herself by designing furniture in Ghent where she had gone to school and befriended a family who owned a design firm.

May Sarton describes her mother as "first of all and always an artist." In addition to designing furniture professionally, she earned money throughout her life by designing textiles and embroidered dresses and by teaching applied design and painting miniatures. May Sarton says of her mother: "She might have been successful had she not married and become responsible for someone else's creation."

The man she married was George Sarton and the "creation" she became responsible for was George's unprecedented work in the history of science. George Sarton came from a conventional Flemish family. He was an only child and he was alternately pampered and neglected by the maids who essentially raised

him. His father was a high civil servant, often distant or absent. May Sarton describes her father as "emotionally immature, (one) who suffered all his life from the lack of a mother's care when he was an infant." He had developed a reputation as an eccentric by the age of twenty - he was a vegetarian and a socialist. And he wrote poetry under a pseudonym.

George Sarton and Mabel Elwas met through mutual friends. Their courtship was stormy, lasting four years, and might not have led to marriage had Mabel not finally asked George to marry her. True love was there on both sides, however. Mabel would not listen when a friend tried to dissuade her from the marriage by outlining what being married to George Sarton would be like, how little understanding George had of human relations, how immature he was.

Mabel and George married in 1910. May was born a year and a half later. They moved to "Wondelgem," a house in the country. Wondelgem was part of that faraway paradise that existed in Europe before the First World War. It's very name evokes the image of a house and garden filled with light and love and the beautiful intricate furniture designed by Mabel. In that house, George dedicated himself to his

life project -- the writing of a monumental history of science. After four years, paradise was ruptured by the ensuing war and the Sartons were, as May puts it, "forced into exile." They moved to America, a move that proved propitious for George Sarton because very soon he received an appointment at Harvard and a grant from the Carnegie Institute to pursue his life's project. But for Mabel, it was a major disruption that ended her career in furniture design. Never again would her life be focused with such clarity and intensity.

The move to American affected May deeply as well. Although she was educated in America, first at the progressive Shady Hill School in Cambridge and later at the Cambridge High and Latin, May would spend two influential years in London in her twenties and would develop friendships there with such literary lights as James Stephens, Virginia and Leonard Wolff, and Elizabeth Bowen. May writes that she felt for the first time that she was a "half breed, an exile, both at home and a stranger in Europe." Until recently, May Sarton made frequent and extended visits to Europe, cultivating not only her own friendships, but extending relationships with people her parents had known there. One gets the feeling that by becoming intimate with her parent's

friends, May was searching for her roots and for a way of knowing her parents that was not possible as their child.

What was her parents' relationship like? In many ways, May Sarton's mother subsumed her life to her husband's. Mabel was George's mother as well as his wife. Except in her final illness, George was never very attentive to Mabel or to her health, although she suffered from migraines and depression throughout their life together. George was always resistant to anything that distracted him from his work, often working eighteen hour days. He was naive when it came to money and was never aware of all the ways in which Mabel worked to make ends meet. May writes that her mother buried her anger at her father because she felt he had to be protected for the sake of his work. Were her mother's illnesses the cost of such protection?

Perhaps George Sarton's inattentiveness is best illustrated by his behavior when Mabel gave birth at the age of 42 to a son, who died five days later. May writes of this experience: "When my mother was over 40 she became pregnant. The Limbosches (family friends) never forgave my father for allowing this to happen since he had been warned that the birth would be a

risky business for his wife. Nevertheless, when the time came for her to go to the hospital, he contrived to be in New York. I find this almost unbelievable, but his letters from a New York club welcoming little Alfred into the world prove it to be true . . . My mother did not come home for a month. She went to stay with friends. It is clear to me now that she was fighting serious depression. It was no doubt a time of agonizing reappraisal for her -- of her marriage, of her life itself."

But, despite experiences such as this, May Sarton believes that her parents shared a true companionship about all the things that mattered most to them -- art, music literature, gardening, and May herself. "My happiest vision of these parents of mine," she writes, "is of my mother lying in the garden at teatime on a chaise longue, a white shawl flung rather elegantly round her shoulders, a cat on her lap, looking at her husband with a slightly quizzical tender expression, and of my father, a battered straw hat tilted down over his eyes, smoking a cigar and enjoying her creation, the garden: I sometimes think this hour was the only relaxed one of his day. The journal notes more than once, 'A blessed day -- thanks as always to Mabel.'"

How did May make sense of all this? How do any of us make sense of the competing images and conflicting experiences we have of our parents, of all their "rich living and dying in a hundred ways?" Do we ever really know our parents as they really were and are?

In May Sarton's case, her parents are a puzzle, a puzzle to which she returns again and again, for the puzzle is really herself, herself as her parents internalized. Much of May Sarton's poetry and many of her novels are ways of expressing and discovering her parents' influence.

During the first years of her life, May was snatched away from her mother for weeks at a time because of her mother's illnesses. May learned to put out roots very quickly to survive, yet she too suffers from depressions as an adult, periods when she descends to a "raging infant," as she describes it. She also has a nostalgia for families rooted in one place. One of her earliest novels, THE BRIDGE OF YEARS, is about a Belgian family that not only survives the first World War, but faces the second intact and determined not to be moved. The mother in this fictional family runs a furniture design firm and the father is absorbed in a great work of philosophy--

May Sarton's own parents thinly disguised.

May Sarton writes of her father that he was not a father in the usual sense. He was absorbed totally in his work. For her birthday, he usually gave her a book he wanted -- for example, when she was eleven, a two volume French-English/English-French dictionary, which quickly disappeared into his own library. From her father, May learned that work justifies inhuman behavior. "It was his example as a scholar, not as a human being, that molded me," she says. May identified with her mother and only came to love her father after her mother's death.

May thought of her mother as her dearest friend, an equal, "the person with whom I could discuss anything and everything." Yet, Mabel Sarton also was May's best critic, carefully challenging the budding poet in her daughter.

From her father, May Sarton learned that "talent is something given, that it opens like a flower, but without energy, discipline, and persistence it will not bear fruit." It is her father in her that drives May Sarton to a perfection of form -- revising a poem sometimes as many as sixty times before it is complete. From her mother, May learned the realm of feeling, an awareness of all forms of beauty and sensi-

tivity to human beings and relationships. It is her mother in her that gives May Sarton the ability to describe the poignancy of a Japanese landscape: "We regretted the rain, until we saw the mists, floating the mountains on their dragon tails."

May Sarton writes that, very early on, she began to experience the conflict implied in an effort to be as human as her mother and as dedicated as her father. She describes it as "a lifelong struggle between life and art."

Both of May Sarton's parents died before May was 45 -- her mother of cancer in 1950; her father of a heart attack in 1956. When her mother died, May felt that the worst thing that could happen had happened. This is the hard death of the poem . . .

A HARD DEATH

We have seen how dignity can be
torn
From the naked dying or the
newly born
By a loud voice or an ungentle
presence,
Harshness of haste or lack of
reverence;
How the hospital nurse may
casually unbind
The suffering body from the lucid
mind.
The spirit enclosed in that
fragile shell

Cannot defend itself, must endure
all.

And not only the dying, helpless
in a bed,

Ask for a little pillow for the
head,

A sip of water, a cool hand to
bless:

The living have their lonely
agonies.

"Is there compassion?" a friend
asked me.

"Does it exist in another
country?"--

I saw my mother die and now I
know

The spirit cannot be defended. It
must go

Naked even of love at the very
end.

"Take the flowers away" (Oh, she
had been their friend!),

And we who ached could do
nothing more --

She was detached and distant as
a star.

Let us be gentle to each other
this brief time

For we shall die in exile far
far from home,

Where even the flowers can no
longer save.

Only the living can be healed by
love.

When her father died, May
felt relief at no longer having to
be a child, finally free to be
wholly herself. The poem, "My
Father's Death," describes the
release

MY FATHER'S DEATH

After the laboring birth, the
clean stripped hull

Gildes down the ways and is
gently set free,

The landlocked, launched; the
cramped made bountiful --

Oh, grave great moment when
ships take the seal

Alone now in my life, no longer
child,

This hour and its flood of
mystery,

Where death and love are wholly
reconciled,

Launches the ship of all my
history.

Accomplished now is the last
struggling birth,

I have slipped out from the
embracing shore

Nor look for comfort to maternal
earth.

I shall not be a daughter any
more,

But through this final parting,
all stripped down,

Launched on the tide of love, go
out full grown.

I am fascinated by May
Sarton's portrayal of her parents,
perhaps because I, too, feel that
I internalized a conflict of two
different personalities. In me,
the war between my parents goes
on -- the war between a father
who dreamed impossible dreams;
who often lived in a fantasy
world of what might be accom-
plished if one only had the

resources; a fantasy world of success and love and fame; - and, between a mother who also dreamed dreams, but of a more sober sort; of educating herself and her children; who, often quite pessimistically, was steeped in the brutal realities of how hard life can be; who with ingenuity and determination kept my father from wrecking the family, either emotionally or financially; a mother who was often given to spells of depression and a sense of futility. I too feel as May Sarton does, that it is only through a process of self-analysis that a reconciliation of the conflict in me has occurred, so that, hopefully, now I dream dreams of a realistic sort, yet avoid the shoals of depression. I took a measure of creativity and imagination from my father, a measure of persistence and discipline from my mother.

I, too, feel as if my father was often distant, never really able to see me as myself, but only as a reflection of his own fantasies. I also feel as if my mother was and is my best friend and confidante, even if she also is my most severe critic, whose standards of intelligence and learnedness I might never attain.

So it makes sense that I should be fascinated with May Sarton's portrayal of her parents. But I think, and hope, that if we

go deep enough into the personal, we hit the universal. Don't we all inherit the best and worst of our parents? Isn't there some sense in which we all become what we have loved and hated in our parents, a mirror of their conflict of personalities?

What May Sarton teaches us is the incredible debt that we owe to those we have loved and who have influenced us. Not only debts of love, and nurture, and of time and money. But debts of personality - debts that go deep down into the fiber of our being. We are what we are because of the people we have known and, primarily because of our parents. May Sarton teaches us that every nuance, both positive and negative, of our relationship with our parents is essential for becoming the persons we are. May Sarton allows us to appreciate what originally gave us pain and to experience anew the gratitude for what we remember lovingly.

May Sarton's appreciation of the influences on her life does not rest only with her parents, of course. Her books are filled with loving portraits of people whose lives have been plaited into her own - - from poets such as Elizabeth Bowen, to teachers such as Agnes Hocking, neighbors such as Perly Cole - - "that appalling complex of people who had entered deeply into her life." Part of

May Sarton's gift is her openness to others, to the possibility of being changed by relationships. She knows that she is who she is because of who she has known; and, she calls us to acknowledge the same in our own lives. Describing years of solitude in Maine, when writing some of her best poetry, May Sarton recognizes that her days were still peopled:

"I did not come here for society
In these years
When every meeting is a
collision,
The impact huge,
Yet what I have done here
I have not done alone
I am always a lover here
Seized and shaken by love . . .
I meet no one here who does not
change me."

May Sarton teaches us that relationships may be deep collisions -- that indeed they must be so if soul really touches soul, that to open oneself to another is to open ourselves to relationship and to acknowledge the gifts of people we know and have known who have influenced our lives and entered into the fiber of our being.

I would like to conclude by reading one of May Sarton's poems, "All Souls." It sounds, at first, as the title would suggest, that it is mournful, that it is only about those who have died.

But, upon reflection, I believe the poem is also about those alive in the present whose voices speak through us and whose influence we cherish.

ALL SOULS

Did someone say that there would
be an end,
An end, Oh, and end, to love and
mourning?
Such voices speak when sleep and
waking blend,
The cold bleak voices of the early
morning
When all the birds are dumb in
dark November --
Remember and forget, forget,
remember.
After the false night, warm true
voices, waken
Voice of the dead that touches
the cold living,
Through the pale sunlight once
more gravely speak.
Tell me again, while the last
leaves are falling;
"Dear child, what has been once
so interwoven
Cannot be raveled, nor the gift
ungiven."

Now the dead move through all of
us still glowing,
Mother and child, lover and lover
mated,
Are wound and bound together and
enflowing.
What has been plaited cannot be
unplaited--
Only the memory makes kings and

queens of us.
 Dark into light, light into dark-
 ness, spin.
 When all the birds have flown to
 some real haven,
 We who find shelter in the
 warmth within,
 Listen, and feel new-cherished
 new-forgiven,
 As the lost human voices speak
 through us and blend
 Our complex love, our mourning
 without end.

As May Sarton says, "So you put everything together finally into something which is yourself." Who are the souls who inhabit your soul, whose lives are platted into your own, without whose influence you would not be who you are? Who are those you have loved in the past and love in the present whom you would become? I invite you to speak silently their names in your hearts as we listen to one of May Sarton's favorite musical works, the BENEDICTUS of Ralph Vaughn Williams' "Mass."

ED. NOTE: *THE ABOVE SERMON BY REV. REBECCA EDMISTON WON THE 1987 MSUU SERMON AWARD FOR THE BEST SERMON ON THE SUBJECT OF A UU WOMAN OR UU GROUP OF WOMEN.*

THE FIVE R's of FEMINIST THEOLOGY

1. REACTIONARY non-feminist theology with authors and spokespersons such as Marybelle Morgan and Phyllis Schafly.
2. REFORMIST feminist theology with Phyllis Tribble, (early Mary Daly*, Rosemary R. Reuther and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza who explore the early church fathers' corruption of the language and culture.
3. RADICAL feminist theology with (later) Mary Daly, Pases, Judith Plaskow, Carol Ochs, Merlin Stone, Elaine Pagels, and E. Bolen who go back to the "roots" of language and spirituality, pre-scriptural, the early cults.
4. REVOLUTIONARY feminist theology with (still later) Mary Daly, Carol Christ, Naomi Goldenberg, Susanna Budapest and Starhawk who explore dream analysis, myths and rituals.
5. RECALCITRANT feminist theology with those who are outside the general camp of churches, i. e. existentialist and Marxist, and thinkers who write more history and philosophy than theology, including (recent) Mary Daly, Sonia Johnson and Barbara G. Walker.

*Note that the brilliant Mary Daly illustrates a feminist spiritual journey through each category. Of course, categories overlap and few of these writers can be precisely pigeon-holed.

CLANNING'S SISTERS AND BROTHERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Began several years ago at the suggestion of Lucille Schuck Longview, this column is intended to be a means of sharing both information and news of activities of women and men all over the country who are involved in implementing the Women and Religion Resolutions of 1977, 1979, and 1980. In this way we can each discover that we are not alone, that there are other UUs all over the continent who are working with us even though great distance separates our work.*

In the winter a woman's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of Spring and opportunities for spiritual nourishment.

The Chapin-Crane Women & Religion Team have sent out flyers to announce their annual Spring conference which features a workshop by Starhawk. This conference will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Flint, Michigan, G-2427 Ballenger Highway. The date is April 22, 1988, from 8-11:00 and April 23 from 8-4:00 pm. The keynote address on Friday night is called "Healing the Dismembered World" The Saturday workshop is titled "Women's Mysteries" and is for women only. Cost of the week-end is \$35-\$45 with the following note "To enable women of lower income to attend it is necessary that all women who can afford to pay the \$45 fee do so." The contact is Catherine Niesiak, Kalamazoo MI

On Friday through Sunday, April 8-10, 1988, The Women and Religion Task Force of the Pacific Central District will have their eleventh annual retreat with the theme of "Creating Sisterhood" here and around the world. The retreat will be held at the Rakwon White Retreat, Mill Valley. Total cost for the weekend is \$95. \$35 (min) is payable with registration, and the balance due by March 15. Please mail your checks to Shirley White, Registrar, 1585 Zolezzi Lane, Reno, Nevada 89511.

The Women's Issues Task Force is sponsoring a lecture by Sonia Johnson entitled "Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation" on Thurs. April 28, 1988 at 8:00pm at Cedar Lane Unitarian Church in Bethesda, Md. This lecture is the first planned in a series entitled "Women and Society." Admission is \$5.00 and a reception is planned immediately following the lecture.

From WOMANSPIRIT the newsletter of the Florida UU Women & Religion Task Force comes the report of a retreat held last November and another planned in April at the Sarasota Church. We also learn from their newsletter of a novel fund raising project in support of the UUWF Feminist Theology Award. The UU women in Jacksonville are sponsoring a six part film series of films particularly chosen for their "emphasis on the relationships among women who are engaged in active self development and in growing, supportive roles." The

first three films are "Gal 'Young'un" "Extra News," and "The Trip to Beautiful." What a great Meal!

We have also received from Rosemary Matson of the Women and Religion Task Force of the Pacific Central District a copy of a letter sent by that district's co-chairs, Elizabeth Fisher and Betty Ortiz, to the Editor of the UU WORLD, David Peake, which strongly urges the March issue of the WORLD to consider acknowledging and highlighting UU women and their role in UU history. The letter continues as follows:

"The first week of March is traditionally designated NAT'L WOMEN'S HISTORY WEEK. Each year during this week women's accomplishments are celebrated throughout the nation with many activities and in many aspects of community life."

The letter goes on to comment on the fact that the U. S. Senate in 1981 proclaimed NAT'L WOMEN'S HISTORY WEEK officially.

The PCD reports that as of Mar. 1, they had received no answer to this letter written in Nov. of 1987. Is this what our denomination thinks of our concerns— that women need not even be answered with a yes or no? Isn't our hierarchy aware of how many other religious organizations observed WOMEN'S HISTORY WEEK? Why must our denomination be so lacking in responsiveness to women?

Meanwhile, I have learned that Rosemary Matson herself will be named one of the Ten Outstanding Women of Monterey County for 1988

because of her work in Peace Issues. Congratulations, Rosemary!

FROM MSUU GLEANINGS we have an answer to the perennial question of "what about women in the ministry?" Two Harvard divinity students, Deborah Raible and Elizabeth Parish, answered this question in an interview with Nancy Engels for the Church of the Larger Fellowship. Liz and Deborah stated, "As more and more women enter the ministry, the ministry changes." During hospital chaplaincies they felt favorably received, especially by women patients (less so by older men). However they do see there are different expectations for men and women ministers. "A woman is supposed to be the loving pastor who pats you on the shoulder and says, 'There, there, everything's going to be better.' It is not all right for a woman minister to be powerful and assertive. It is ironic that some of the special qualities women bring to the ministry may also be the only ones they are expected to bring. Many feel that as more and more women enter the ministry, ministry will become defined as women's profession and be less valued by our culture, with the result that fewer and fewer men will be willing to enter it. This is a problem."

What these two Harvard divinity students didn't say is that if ministry becomes defined as a women's profession, the income for ministers will go down accordingly. Wasn't there once a time when the majority of teachers were men? Look what happened to both salary and status as women entered the field and became the majority. Must the same history be written for ministers?

One of my favorite features in any of the women's newsletters I receive is the section called 'OUR COMMON LEGACY; PORTRAITS FROM THE PAST,' which appears in the NEARLY THERE NEWSLETTER of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Chapter of the UUWF at the UU church in Seattle, Wash. The articles have the signature of Debra Stockler Travis, and very often she gives us her sources. The following quotation is an edited version of Debra's portrait of the origins of Legal Restrictions on Planned Parenthood:

"Up until 1829, abortion - - or the clearing of 'menstrual blockages' was considered legal in most areas of the country, as long as it was performed before quickening, or movement of the fetus, which confirmed life. Many women sought the services of medical entrepreneurs who could assist them in limiting the sizes of their families. Thus, the birth rate dropped, especially among the native born white middle class, which alarmed many social scientists and medical professionals (most of them men), and led to the first legal restrictions against abortion under the New York revised statutes of 1829. Other states followed suit over the next two decades."

"By the 1840's the crackdown on services for planned parenthood resulted in doctors ceasing to openly dispense safe methods of controlling fertility. In the 1850's, medical men went a step further and launched a crusade against all contraceptive devices, resulting in the 1873 Comstock Law (named for its creator.) This law was added to the already existing postal

obscenity act of 1865 and made it a federal offense to trade in or circulate obscene literature and articles of immoral use including "any article or thing designed or intended for the prevention of conception or procuring of abortion."

Debra lists her source on this one as WOMEN IN AMERICA by C. R. Berklin and M. B. Norton.

ABIGAIL ADAMS
(1744-1818)

A First Lady, feminist and patriot, she counseled her husband, John Adams, to "Remember the Ladies" in the Declaration of Independence in the late 18th century, planting the seeds of the 19th century women's rights movement.



DR. ELIZABETH BLACKWELL
(1821-1910)

Against all opposition, she was the first woman to gain a medical degree, in 1849. Later she established the first women's hospital and medical college.



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A THANK YOU NOTE

The cost of this issue has been met by the contributions which we have received from friends of REACHING SIDEWAYS. All of the diligent labor of the publishing crew does save money, but the cost of printing and postage must still be paid.

To every one of you who have contributed to REACHING SIDEWAYS, we say thank you. The date on the address label shows the time of your last contribution. We deeply appreciate your support.

If there is no date on your address, then we have not received a contribution from you. You are receiving REACHING SIDEWAYS because we believe the issues in this journal are important to you. But we cannot continue indefinitely to send your copy. We need contributions from each reader who now receives REACHING SIDEWAYS. There is no other source of revenue or assistance which enables us to continue to send our journal to all who receive this issue. We will certainly fulfill our commitment to those who contribute.

Our suggestions for amount of contribution are:

- \$4.00 covers the direct cost of three issues
- \$10.00 enables copies to be sent to Unitarian Universalist officials who may not subscribe, but to whom we wish to send our message.

Please notify us by check in the mail of your wishes. If you have friends who might be interested in our journal, send us their names too and we will mail them a complimentary copy.

PLEASE WRITE YOUR CHECK as follows:

REACHING SIDEWAYS, JPD
% Tom McHugh, Treasurer

Potomac, Md.