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Women's Studies Newsletter December 1978

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women's studies newsletter

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Elizabeth Borishansky, Music Department, conducted two pieces by Elliot Borishansky, "Am I In It?" and "Revue," in Burke Recital Hall on October 11.

Bethany Beardslee, acclaimed soprano vocalist, performed at Swasey Chapel on November 8 as part of Denison's Events in the Arts Series.

Kris Garrigan, English Department, presented a paper entitled "Ruskin on Venetian Architecture" for the Ruskin Association's International Conference at Louisville, Kentucky on October 13-15.

Professor Robin Bartlett of the Economics Department has been awarded a second place prize in the annual International Paper Foundation competition for innovative ways of teaching economics. Robin received a \$500 award. Her essay discussed the pedagogical innovations she has undertaken for her "Money and Banking" course here at Denison. The award was presented at the annual meeting of the Ohio Council on Economic Education on October 25 at the Ohio State University. Robin was one of only two persons teaching undergraduates in the entire United States to receive recognition by this foundation this year.

Naomi Garrett, English Department, spoke on "The Poetry of Negritude" at the Common Hour on October 12.

Cynthia Thompson of the Classics Program presented a paper, "Women on a Pedestal: The Worship of Demeter," on October 20 at the Ohio Classical Conference. On November 25, she addressed a national association of biblical scholars--the Society of Biblical Literature--in New Orleans. Her topic was "Thessalonica in Hellenistic and Roman Times." At Denison Thompson participated in the November 30 Common Hour in a presentation in conjunction with four other professors from various disciplines. The group's topic was "Betrayed by Tongues: Problems of Translation."

The Office of Psychological Services, in cooperation with Denison's Pan-hellenic and Inter-Fraternity Councils, sponsored "Sexuality: A Conference on Personal and Interpersonal Issues." The conference began with a keynote address by Dr. James W. Maddock of the University of Minnesota Medical School. During the next three days, presentations were made on a variety of issues concerning sexuality. Dr. Judith Clementson-Mohr, staff psychologist, said that the Office of Psychological Services was "generally very pleased with the conference." They are now in the process of planning future events, possibly for next semester.

Dr. Constance K. Barsky, a geochemist at Owens-Corning and a 1966 Denison graduate, spoke on the topic "Geoscience at Owens-Corning Fiberglass," for the Geology/Geography Department's Common Hour on October 19.

By Lynne Turner

Twenty-two students, faculty, and professional staff members from Denison attended the Fourth Annual GLCA Women's Studies Conference in Rochester, Indiana last November 10-12. The theme of the conference this year was "The Structure of Knowledge: A Feminist Perspective." Student representatives from Denison were Deb Baer, Linda Braley, Bridget Bacon, Suzanne Case, Mary Beth Hepner, M.J. Hampel, John Marshall, and Lynne Turner. Faculty and staff representatives included Eileen Boris, Ann Fitzgerald, Elizabeth Freyberg, Amy Gordon, John Miller, Julie Mulroy, Nancy Nowik, Julie Panchura, Marti Rawlings, Anne Shaver, Joan Straumanis, and Lorraine Wales.

Several films were shown as participants arrived on Friday afternoon, with discussions following. Friday night, Florence Howe, the GLCA Visiting Scholar in Women's Studies who will teach at Denison next semester, presented the keynote address, "Breaking the Disciplines." Her major point was that science in the 19th century was in the same position 100 years ago as women's studies is today--just as suspect to the faculty teaching traditional subjects. She reminds us that most of the majors or departments we have today are less than 50 years old.

Through the weekend concurrent sessions were held dealing with a variety of women's studies topics. Some of them were: "Black Women's Studies--Where Are Black Women in Women's Studies? Where are Women in Black Studies?" "Glimpses of Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective," "Men's Responsibility to Women Faculty and Students," "Racism/Sexism Workshop," "'The Curse': A Cultural History of Menstruation," "Re-Visions: New Research in Social Science and Philosophy," and "Examining Bias in Content, Process, and Practice."

The final session of the conference centered on "The Feminist Critique: Plans and Prospects." At this time students voiced a summary of ideas and concerns which they had formed during several student caucuses held during the weekend. Students were disturbed by what they considered a separation between students and faculty in lodging, in dining room arrangements, and in workshops themselves. They questioned why most of the sessions seemed faculty oriented and showed disappointment at the poor faculty attendance at student-related workshops. In order to have input about the format and structure of women's studies conferences in the future, they would like to have one or two students on the W.S. Committee at each GLCA college. Students would also like to have the chance to present papers and be on the various panels. Students also discussed the creation of a GLCA student newsletter which would focus on women's issues at each school.

Many students were very excited about what they had learned and shared during the weekend. They were enthusiastic about relating their experiences to their schools and also felt it was important for those present at the conference to keep in touch with each other.

Those of us who went to the conference are particularly grateful this year to DCGA and the Panhellenic Council for creating scholarships that permitted two students to attend the Rochester Conference. Kris Poole was the recipient of the Panhel award, while John Marshall received the DCLA scholarship. What these monetary awards demonstrate is that women's studies concerns all of us at Denison.

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DECROW DISAPPOINTS DENISON

by

Becky Grattan and Caroline Balzarini

The scheduled appearance on November 13 of former NOW president Karen DeCrow raised great expectations among many members of the Denison community. One of the most influential women in the United States today, attorney DeCrow was to speak on "The Masculine Mystique and American Foreign Policy." Her lecture, however, left many students and faculty disappointed.

Her visit began with an informal discussion that afternoon in the Faculty Lounge. Because the meeting was attended by approximately 25 women and one Denison male, DeCrow commented that this absence of men was in itself indicative of a general "masculine mystique" on campus.

DeCrow discussed the role changes that women have undergone in recent years, but she decried the lack of underlying attitudinal changes among the sexes. The role of "homemaker" is still largely accepted as an exclusively woman's duty, she felt, and she said that as long as this pervades, a real stumbling-block exists for women. A woman who attempts to pursue any career will be handicapped by her traditional role as mother and homemaker. DeCrow felt that until these underlying assumptions regarding "female" duties could be overcome, the notion of equality will remain elusive.

DeCrow said, "If the college kids of today chose equality, they could obtain it. . . . But it must be a unified decision on the part of both sexes." She added that "you can't make individual solutions for social problems" and still hope to effect meaningful change.

In the convocation address that evening DeCrow referred to some examples of the "masculine mystique" she had found in modern society, citing in particular the male tendency to equate sexual activity with "scoring" or "winning," much as one would refer to a football game or a battle. She related the manner in which Webster's dictionary defined males in terms like "masterfulness, strength and forthrightness" and females in terms of "jealousy, weakness and indecision," pointing out that these definitions are also illustrative of a "masculine mystique" in America. She condemned the traditional sex roles and the manner of action they produce as "unnatural." "We live in two cultures," she said. "I feel each culture (male and female) is absolutely ludicrous in its own way." DeCrow then added, "I think the 'female' way of action is silly. . . very few of us act that way naturally--it takes a lot of study. And the 'male' way of action doesn't come naturally either."

When a member of the audience asked for her plan of action to carry out radical change, she said, "I have no real program. The passing of the ERA is like kindergarten and the elimination of sex discrimination in the law is like first grade. . . ." She stressed the fact that only the education of the people in terms of a truly gender-free society will effect change.

In the faculty lounge discussion that followed, DeCrow was attacked by several Denison students disappointed at her failure to talk specifically on the subject she had agreed to speak on, "The Masculine Mystique and American Foreign Policy." The students felt that she skirted those issues she did discuss, gave no definitive evidence of a "masculine mystique," and was vague and disorganized in her presentation.

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DENISON'S FIELD HOCKEY TEAM

by
Jane Cavanaugh

The Denison women's field hockey team finished its season with a 9-4-1 record this year, placing Denison fifth among Ohio teams according to coach Jo Rosenberger. The team came away from the state tournament as consolation champions, having lost the crucial game to Ohio University--a loss Rosenberger described as one of the most frustrating she has seen her team suffer.

Coach Rosenberger believes she has some of the best players in Ohio, despite the fact that Denison does not award athletic scholarships. Because of the large numbers of East Coast and prep school students Denison attracts, Rosenberger is able to work with experienced players.

Rosenberger considers half-back Sheila Noonan and full-back Nan Carney two of the finest playing backs in Ohio. Sheila, along with wing Peggy Bardes, inner Beth Willis and top scorer Patty Quinn, will graduate this year. But Rosenberger is confident freshman Riisa Steinhardt will take over Noonan's place as half-back, and she also hopes to have the strength of returning juniors and sophomores Susie Goodale, Leslie Lincoln, Nan Carney, Susie Bartlett, Hillary Robinson, Chris Hammond, Kim Bourne, Jennifer Owen, Belinda Veno, and freshman Kate Ashforth.

Field hockey at Denison is much less intensely competitive than at many schools. Sheila Noonan, one of the team's captains, described athletics here as much more low-keyed; women can participate in and enjoy sports and still allow studying to come first. The school helps by limiting the number of games and the travel distance and by refusing to offer athletic scholarships. As a coach, Rosenberger tries to suggest strategies rather than demand their execution, allowing her players a great deal of independence on the field. Her coaching philosophy also places emphasis on the group working well together and on the enjoyment of the game rather than the winning.

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"A CLEAN INTENSITY"

by
Nancy Nowik

"As the life of the race is larger, longer, and in all respects more to be considered than that of the individual, so is the life we live in others larger and more important than the one we live in ourselves. This appears nowhere perhaps more plainly than in the case of great teachers, who often in the lives of their pupils produce an effect that reaches far beyond anything produced while their single lives were yet unsupplemented by those other lives into which they infused their own."

--Samuel Butler

On October 14, 1978, Joan Malory Webber died in a climbing accident near Mt. Rainier. She was a renowned Renaissance scholar and a professor of English at the University of Washington, and for several years she was my teacher and mentor. When one of my colleagues, Tony Stoneburner, asked me to write about Joan for the

Newsletter, I couldn't see at first how her death would be relevant to our students since only those of us teaching in the English Department knew Joan. But Tony pointed out that her death gives me an invaluable opportunity to say something about influences and about student/teacher relationships in general, and I am grateful for that chance, though I wish another circumstance had provided me with the opportunity.

I was Joan Webber's student at the University of Washington when she was a visiting professor there in the summer of 1967, and later at the Ohio State University where I became her husband's doctoral candidate, their daughter Rachel's babysitter, and a kind of family friend. I think I am representative of all her students in some ways--we were fascinated and inspired by her and we were better for having studied with her. At her funeral service, people spoke of Joan's two great passions--her students and her climbing, and I'd like to mention both. But first the passion for students. Yes, she cared greatly about the quality of our work; she had very high expectations for us; she was the most uncondescending teacher I've known. She gave us rich and elegant lectures, delivered as she watched some fixed point in space. She gave us thorough responses to our papers--they came back heavily annotated with frequent marginal notes along the way and lengthy comments at the end. Those comments are often filled with the encouragement and praise she seemed to find hard to give in person. They're also conversational, demonstrating a lovely give and take. Once she wrote, "I don't like this paper much, and I partly blame myself for the way in which I suggested the report. But I don't absolve you."

Sometimes Joan wouldn't see you in the halls, wouldn't say hello if she did see you. That was hard to read at first--until we recognized that she was a person who didn't believe in amenities, hated small talk, ignored what we call social skills. She didn't show her caring by public attention, yet when you next went to her office you'd find that she had been thinking about a grant you should apply for or a topic you might want to pursue for your dissertation or an idea you'd mentioned to her weeks before. What we thought of as her vagueness, then, could be explained when you knew her better--could be attributed to her always working mind, her extraordinary intensity, her sometime shyness.

We didn't yet use the expression "role model" in the late sixties, but Joan was that--a scholar/teacher of such luminous intelligence that in everything she did there was an implicit demand for excellence. In the first course I took from her she was so shy and short of words in the classroom that we would have to wait until the papers came back with their copious comments before we really knew where we stood. At the end of that term, each of us had to deliver a long paper before the group--the culmination of our work in the course. Mine was on Richard Baxter, seventeenth century Puritan (Joan would call him a Puritan Anglican), and I had worked harder on it than on anything I'd done in my life. On the given day I read it aloud to the group, all thirty pages (it had taken fifty minutes to read). And when I'd read the last page and put it down and looked up at her, she said, "Good." That was all--just "good." But it was the greatest praise I'd ever received, and she'd drawn from me the best work I'd ever done.

Joan Webber was the first woman professional I knew who kept her own name when she married; in addition, she was the first to make me aware of the peculiar difficulties of the woman scholar, especially if she was a wife and mother as well. In the preface to her second book Joan wrote, "For a woman scholar, in particular, non-intellectual debts may be crucially important." Then she thanked her daughter Rachel for showing so little jealousy of typewriters and for keeping her parents cheerful through the most desperate authorial crises. She mentioned her husband Julian, of course, and the intellectual and emotional debts she owed him. But most surprising to me was her profound expression of gratitude to her housekeeper--whose services were made possible by a Guggenheim Foundation grant that enabled Joan to take a year off from both teaching and housekeeping. I needed that lesson and we need it still--

without encouragement and the leisure bought by money, and without freedom from domestic chores, none of us can write books or do serious scholarship.

Given the intensity that made Joan a great teacher, we would look for it as well in her scholarship--and we find it there too. Her first two books are fine contributions to her field: Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne and The Eloquent "I": Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose. Her third book went to press just as she died, a feminist reading entitled Milton and His Epic Tradition. That same intensity of which I spoke is also found in her poetry, and what surprised us most was that as a person who came to the writing of poetry in her maturity, she developed very quickly and had a firm touch from the beginning.

But it was climbing more than teaching or scholarship or poetry that best demonstrated her singleminded intensity. Plagued in recent years by arthritic-like pain that at times almost debilitated her, told by doctors that she would probably never climb again or that she had only a few more years to climb, she said that if she couldn't climb, her life wouldn't be worth living. Somehow she made a psychic adjustment to her pain.

When she died, people wondered whether she courted death. Certainly Joan knew she was statistically increasing her chances for accident or death by climbing as frequently as she did, and we know that she'd witnessed other people's accidents and, in one case, another climber's death. Yet I don't think that she was haunted or that she had a death wish. Bill Dennis's Common Hour earlier this semester, with its beautiful slides and text, brought us to at least a second-hand awareness of the beauty and power of mountain climbing, and in the eulogy he wrote for her funeral service, one of Joan's fellow climbers, John Coldewey, helps further to explain for those of us who do not climb something of its lure and its connections with life: "I think I can suggest that endurance, effort, risk, a need for balance, a summit, nature as adversary and friend, are all elements familiar in our own lives; in climbing they take on a larger-than-life form, a purity and a clean intensity which she understood. It was not a game, or a hobby, or a sport for Joan. She climbed passionately to discover truths and mysteries about herself and about the world she was a part of. That is, she climbed to live, not to die."

These days I think about Joan a great deal. I recall how I needed her approval, how I worried when she ignored me, how I never rang her doorbell even after I'd been staying with Rachel for months without feeling a certain nervousness and sense of intrusion on someone who was always essentially solitary. And I wonder--do our students ever feel that nervousness? Do they ever fear us and speculate about us as we did about Joan? Do they need more approval and praise than we give them? Are we challenging them sufficiently? Do they ever feel anxious as they approach us, while we sit here imagining ourselves to be all kindly and approachable? Joan's death reminds me that we need to think more about what we as teachers want to be remembered for. Her death reminds me too that, to have avoided the regret that comes from having waited too late to say thank you, I should have let her know years ago how much she mattered.

(Every month, the Denison University Women's Newsletter interviews a female faculty member, student, administrator, or supportive staff member. This month's interview is with Rita Snyder, Assistant Professor of Psychology.)

by
Suzanne Case

Rita Snyder is in the midst of a dual career: she is an assistant professor in psychology as well as the mother of a four-month-old infant. This past summer Rita gave birth to her first child, and now she shares her office with her daughter, Lea.

"I did not want to have her here with me when I first got pregnant. But as I got more and more pregnant--basically about the first time I felt her move inside of me--I realized it was going to be very difficult to give her up to anyone. By the time I had her, I couldn't part with her. There was absolutely no way I was going to let someone else raise my child."

Rita decided to have her daughter by the Lamaze Method. Prior to the birth, she attended classes sponsored by the Licking County Child Birth Education Association and learned a series of breathing and relaxation exercises. These instructions prepared her for the actual delivery.

"I had a nice short labor--only four hours long. And it was a wonderful experience because I was alert and aware of what was happening. I thoroughly enjoyed the birth experience. Lamaze is wonderful."

The Lamaze Method is designed so that the father can participate in the delivery process. Rita's husband chose not to be present, but since the birth he has become very involved, taking care of Lea's assorted needs: "He runs to her when she cries, changes her diaper, entertains her, and helps make decisions whether she needs something or what it is that she needs."

Rita's desire to have a baby goes back to her early life. As a child, she participated in the care and upbringing of her baby brother, ten years younger. "I loved it," she said. "He was an absolutely delightful character. And that made me think kids would be sort of fun to have around."

Consequently, she joined an informal Head Start Program while she was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan. Rita was a science teacher, and she worked closely with preschool children. Then towards the end of college, she decided to attend graduate school in psychology. "But at the time," Rita explained, "women were not welcomed with open arms into the profession."

"My advisor wanted to recommend me to graduate schools but said women aren't welcome because they tend to drop out to have families. Or if they finish, then they have families and never do anything with the degree. That really made me think about how I was going to lead an active professional life--which I wanted--and have a family at the same time."

Rita went on to graduate school at Indiana University. During her third year of study, she had to take qualifying exams for her doctorate. She passed, but she did not experience the satisfaction she had anticipated. "All at once I felt so empty--like I knew I was on the threshold of accomplishing an objective that I had

had for years yet somehow it didn't seem quite as special as I thought it would feel." As a result, Rita began to look into adoption procedures for single persons. "I always loved children, and I was beginning to wonder if perhaps I wasn't waiting too long," Rita said. But while she was considering adoption, she met her future husband and decided not to follow through with the procedure.

Today Rita is pleased with her situation. "I am very fortunate to be in a profession and in a position physically to have Lea with me and be able to work full time as well."

As her daughter grows older, Rita plans to "play it by ear." "I'm sure there's going to be a point where it's going to be difficult for both her and me if we spend the day in my office. But when that time comes, I'll be a different person. I hope I'll understand her needs well enough that I'll be able to make the appropriate decision. I love teaching more than anything else in the whole world. I would never want to give it up."

Along with teaching, research is important to Rita. Presently, she is working with a reading device used by the blind. The optacon is a small camera that takes pictures as the reader moves it across the printed page. It translates the image of each letter into a specific pattern of vibrations expressed as tingling sensations on the reader's index finger. Rita is researching ways to improve this device. She wants to make the letters easier to discriminate in order to increase the user's reading speed.

Rita admits that the amount of time she can spend on her research is limited. "I'm not getting as much work done--there is no question about it. But for three or four months. . .I'll write the paper that I'd like to write over Christmas instead of now. It's not all that long of a delay in my career."

Concerning the future, Rita said, "I would like to have one more child. My two brothers are very important to me--they have made my life fuller. I want my daughter to have that same richness."

This year professors and students continually drop by Rita's office to visit and play with her daughter. A few individuals do not support Rita and her new arrangement. Regardless, Rita is following with obvious satisfaction a precedent established by one of her own psychology colleagues, Esther Thorson, and the former Director of the January Term Office, Anne Kessler, both of whom brought their babies to Denison as they continued their careers.

The Denison Women's Studies Newsletter--

Women's Coordinator:	Nancy Nowik
Assistant Editor:	Suzanne Case