

# Leading Issues Journal

February 2001

## In this Issue

### Section 1:

#### **"The Becoming of a Sceptical Optimist" By Heather Crosby**

The Centre for Leadership for Women profiles Heather Crosby, a well-known and highly respected woman in South Australia. Relating her journey in a chapter, "The Becoming of a Sceptical Optimist" in "Glorious Age" by Jocelyne Scutt, Heather's story speaks of courage and a personal determination to define and achieve a vision for the betterment of others, in particular for women. Turning 77 in 2000, Heather is still active in supporting women and in speaking out against the portrayal of women in the media and in advertising.

Heather's close friend, Shirley Stott Despoja, says of her, "Heather Crosby is a great supporter of women. Her support sometimes follows them through their careers, which is the support we need but we are so privileged if we get it. She is a role model for women of all ages. For her there is no divide between feminists. She reads everything and seems to know everything that goes on. She is respected far and wide, but particularly for her determination to eradicate demeaning portrayals and images of women. She is a great speaker and debater, a woman of great charm, tolerance and reason who is also an activist as all good feminists must be to safeguard the gains that women like Heather secured for us."

In her concluding remarks Heather states boldly and unequivocally her choice to be "a self-identified woman" rather than a "male-identified" or a "woman-identified" woman, positions from which she has moved on.

Born in Oxford, England on 25 April 1923, Heather Crosby has lived in England, India, New South Wales and Adelaide, South Australia, where she has lived since her marriage. She lives by the sea with her husband of 57 years, a cat and a variety of goldfish. She maintains her equilibrium by enjoying her ten and six year old granddaughters, reading, beachcombing and cat worshipping.

## THE BECOMING OF A SCEPTICAL OPTIMIST



**By Heather Crosby**

*Think before you speak; Have a generous and kindly mind; Be a lady always.*

At the age of 12, I acquired an autograph book in which my mother wrote those words. It has taken a long time to learn to do the first, I try to have the second, and have failed dismally with the third.

'Woman' was not a word used easily then, but I'm sure that my independent, energetic mother, who died at the early age of 56, would approve of today's Women's Movement. Growing up on a property in western New South Wales, she left to train as a nurse in Sydney. After graduation she 'joined up' with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and in 1917 found herself in a field hospital in Salonica, Greece.

It was in Salonica that she met my father, then working as a stretcher-bearer in the British army. When I visited Salonica in 1979 I had a strange feeling about that long-ago encounter and its significance for me.

Mum was an excellent role model for me and my sisters - she was the busy wife of a busy clergyman (really an unpaid curate) with a life of her own, separate from her domestic responsibilities and us. We took this for granted. We had a father who worked from home, so enjoyed a childhood shared with both parents. My own daughters had the same experience with a father who ran his medical practice from home and who was very much involved with their early upbringing.

Being grown-up was my dearest wish in my early teens. I menstruated early (at 10), a shock for both my mother and myself, and by my mid-teens was physically mature. I was the eldest of four and always 'looked old for my age'. At the age of 15 I appeared to be a sober young woman and must have been something of a prig with wanting to be thought well read and knowledgeable. Boyfriends were dreamed of but never attained. My heroes and heroines came out of books. An omnivorous reader, I left a trail of apple cores around the house, testimony to my all absorbing passion. Books remain my main extravagance.

My parents encouraged us to be responsible and independent and it was assumed that each of us would have a career. After having a stab at nursing in my mother's old hospital in Sydney, I returned 12 months later to Adelaide, where I began a diploma in social studies at the Adelaide University.

Amy Wheaton, another wonderful role model, had begun the first School of Social Work in Adelaide several years earlier and the school was now incorporated into the university, with a two-year diploma course. In 1943 Amy Wheaton was the head. There were no male students, and I suspect that social studies was the only department with a female in charge at that time.

At the age of 20, and halfway through my course, my parents gave me permission to marry, provided I completed my diploma. This I did and went on to a short-term job as relieving social worker at the Crippled Children's Association (CCA), then a small organisation with three staff. It was at this time that the CCA initiated an educational programme for cerebral palsied children. It began in a tiny room at the Adelaide Children's Hospital. Under the inspired guidance of Daphne Gum the programme grew into Ashford House, the first school in Adelaide for children with cerebral palsy.

At the end of the 1940s my husband established a medical practice in a new Housing Trust area north of Adelaide and I settled down to the traditional role of wife, mother and community worker which was the expectation of society at that time for women who 'did not have to work'. Like my mother, I had my first daughter at the age of 29, my second when I was 32. I can see facets of myself in both of them, just as I see echoes of my mother in myself - energetic, organising, practical. And all of us great readers. I have always regretted that my mother did not live long enough to enjoy her granddaughters or be available with her wise advice about raising children.

At this time I was, I suppose, aware of growing older and very concerned about how I looked. I used make-up, shaved my legs and armpits, worried about my figure and took an active interest in fashion. I liked to be told that I didn't look my age. When I was about 38, a young friend, all of 18 years-of-age, mentioned that someone was quite old: 'At least 38.' I was taken aback. I made a great effort to persuade myself that 'life begins at 40', and so it proved in spite of my misgivings.

I had been developing a life for myself separate from the family. As the wife of a busy doctor this was absolutely necessary for my continued well-being, and turning 40 seemed to be the springboard catapulting me into new and rich experiences. The 1960s were times of ferment. Our involvement in the anti-Vietnam war movement was a consciousness raising experience. For many women it led to the questioning of the role of women in society just as, 100 years earlier, women in the anti-slavery movement went on to become suffragettes. Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, was published in 1963 and for many of us it was the first introduction to feminism. I decided to return to paid work, as I wished to use the training and skills I had kept under wraps for so long. It was with some trepidation that I became a part-time social worker for a children's home.

These were my menopausal years. For as long as I could remember I had considered menopause to be a natural part of a woman's life and refused to treat it as an illness. Because I was busy, it took a backseat and I did not think much about it except when I had an occasional hot flush.

I had few problems and felt glad when it was over - who wants to go on bleeding forever? Some women are not as fortunate. However, I am concerned about pressure in the community for post-menopausal women to have hormonal replacement therapy (HRT). Much of the pressure comes from the pharmaceutical companies, and from members of the medical profession who have vested interests. I am particularly concerned about the touting

of HRT as an antiageing agent. This plays on women's fears of growing older and being no longer attractive, and that it is somehow shaming to show signs of aging.

The 1970s were the years of the growth of what has often been called 'the second wave' of the Women's Movement. International Women's Year in 1975 was a turning point. I was executive director of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) of Adelaide, which was asking itself what it meant to be a Women's Movement. Programmes were implemented to develop women's life-skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. The YWCA was on its way to becoming a feminist organisation, and it was exciting to be part of the change. From 1971 to 1979 I was a member of the World YWCA executive committee, which gave me the privilege of visiting many YWCAs around the world and making significant and long-lasting friendships.

In 1980 I made a decision which was to change my life. I resigned from my job, enrolling as a *very* mature age student with the South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE) to do the graduate diploma in Women's Studies. The next three years were spent in bringing together a slowly developing consciousness and experience about the position of women and a theoretical framework. I learnt the theory of what I had been practising. Feminist theory and practice which informs everything I do - it influences my choice of what I do with my time, my reactions to community issues, the language I use, how I spend my money and the organisations with which I work.

Throughout all this, I have been growing older - to the point where in 2000 the age of 77 came upon me. I have found that the older I get, the more interesting life becomes. I never regret not being young any more. On the whole I have enjoyed growing older - you never know what is around the corner, and I still have that probably unreal expectation of being delightfully surprised. There is so much to do and not enough time to do it. Boredom is something I have never enjoyed! I believe that my best age is now. Age has had little to do with what I have done. Going back to paid work, and then study as a mature-age student were wonderful bonuses in my middle-life which became exciting, stimulating and enlightening. I have ceased to worry about what others think - this is a freeing experience. I dress to please myself, leading to some raised eyebrows. I was once criticised to a mutual friend by a prominent young businessman for not dressing suitably for my age or for my position. (I had attended a 1970s luncheon in trousers and sandals.) Another man suggested I should look more feminine and asked why I always wore trousers when I had 'such a good pair of legs'!

In 50 years I have gone from size 12 to 14 -16, my hair is grey and have well-earned wrinkles. I refuse to go along with society's definition of how I should dress and behave. I have moved from being a male-identified woman, to a woman-identified woman, to a self-identified woman. Only I may say who I am.

My involvement with women's groups began early and has been an important part of my life. First was the local committee of the Mothers and Babies Health Association then a variety of community groups. I was particularly active in the YWCA and the Participation of Women Group in the Uniting Church. I was born into the church and it was a powerful influence in my life. With my commitment to feminism came a questioning of the Christian faith and its significance for women. I no longer subscribe to the basic tenets of Christianity or the patriarchal hierarchical institution of the church, but I continue to be interested in the whole area of feminist spirituality. The YWCA has also been a powerful influence. It gave my life a focus at a time of questioning and I have been glad to be a part of its development. I

am a less active member of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and the United Nations Status of Women Committee. Recently I have been most active with a new group, Women Against Demeaning Images (WADI), which mounted a successful campaign in 1992 against People magazine, for a pornographic cover depicting a woman on all fours with a 'dog collar' around her throat. The images of women, and the unreal and damaging stereotypes promoted in the media which are destructive toward women, has become a priority for future action. It is encouraging to have widespread support from many groups and individuals in the community.

I have arrived at the point in my journey where everything is questioned, but everything is possible. I could be called a sceptical optimist!

Mary Daly wrote: 'Take courage to step into the unknown leaving all that is familiar behind.' I'll subscribe to that. The only risk is in taking the first step.

"Glorious Age" By Jocelyne Scutt was published by Artemis Publishing, Melbourne in 1993. Rainbow, Melbourne Victoria - Distributors.

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## **Section 2:**

### **United Nations' Statistics on World's Women**

#### **A Comprehensive Report on Available Data Shows Gains But Persistent Disparities Between Women and Men Worldwide**

The United Nations released in the middle of last year, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, a one-of-a-kind compilation of the latest data, documenting progress for women worldwide in six areas: health, human rights and political decision-making, work, education and communication, population, and families.

"This report attempts to answer the urgent but complex question of what real progress are the world's women making in their lives," said Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. "Available data show that women are making gains, but persistent disparities exist between women and men. We can see that the gender gap in enrolment in primary and secondary levels of schooling is closing, but it is unlikely this gap will be closed by the target date of 2005. While the gender gap in rates of economic activity is narrowing, women still must reconcile their family responsibilities with employment outside the home. Recent declines in early marriage and early childbearing in most regions show real change in the quality of women's lives, but in 3 of 5 countries in Southern Asia and in 11 of 30 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, at least 30 percent of young women aged 15 to 19 have been married."

Citing progress in collecting gender statistics, the report also stresses that new data is needed on issues unique to women, such as violence against women and maternal health.

*The World's Women 2000* is the third in a series of reports that has broken new ground. The information and data in the present publication are intended to provide a "snapshot" of some of the more salient statistical findings since 1995, while also drawing out recent changes and long-term trends.

In the last seven years, governments, institutions and non-governmental organizations have worked at every level to implement and incorporate the agendas of a series of UN conferences into national programmes for action. The success---or lack of success---of these efforts is the subject of *The World's Women 2000*. The topics within each field of concern were shaped both by the availability of data and by the calls for action emerging from the global conferences.

Highlights and important findings in *The World's Women 2000* include:

## **Health, Work, Human Rights and Political Decision-Making, Education and Communication, Women and Men in Families and Population**

### **Section 2:**

#### ***The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics***

**Released by the United Nations in mid 2000, this comprehensive, ground-breaking Report includes the latest data, documenting progress for women worldwide in six areas: health, human rights and political decision-making, work, education and communication, population, and families. Below is a summary of the highlights and important findings in each area.**

#### **Health**

- There are continuing differences in lifetime risk of maternal mortality between developed and developing countries. An African woman's lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes is 1 in 16; in Asia, 1 in 65; and in Europe, 1 in 1,400.
- Women now account for almost half of all cases of HIV/AIDS, and in countries with high HIV prevalence, young women are at higher risk of contracting HIV than young men.
- Life expectancy continues to increase for women and men in most developing regions but has decreased dramatically in Southern Africa as a result of AIDS.

#### **Work**

- Women now comprise an increasing share of the world's labor force---at least one third in all regions except in northern Africa and western Asia.
- Self-employment and part-time and home-based work have expanded opportunities for women's participation in the labor force but are characterized by lack of security, lack of benefits and low income.
- More women than before are in the labor force throughout their reproductive years, though obstacles to combining family responsibilities with employment persist.

#### **Human Rights and Political Decision-Making**

- Physical and sexual abuse affect millions of girls and women worldwide---yet are known to be seriously under-reported.
- In some African countries, more than half of all women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation and its prevalence is not declining.

- Women and girls comprise half of the world's refugees and, as refugees, are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence while in flight, in refugee camps and/or during resettlement.
- Despite calls for gender and equality, women are significantly under-represented in Governments, political parties and at the United Nations.

### **Education and Communication**

- The gender gap in primary and secondary schooling is closing, but women still lag behind men in some countries in Africa and Southern Asia.
- Two thirds of the world's 876 million illiterates are women, and the number of illiterates is not expected to decrease significantly in the next twenty years.
- More women than men lack the basic literacy and computer skills needed to enter "new media" professions.

### **Women and Men in Families**

- Women are generally marrying later but more than a quarter of women aged 15 to 19 are married in 22 countries---all in developing regions.
- Informal unions are common in developed regions and in some countries of the developing regions.

### **Population**

- Women are having fewer children on average but with more women of reproductive age, world population continues to grow.
- Women represent a large proportion of international migrants---an estimated 56 million women out of a total of 118 million migrants.

"Despite the fact that considerable progress has been made in the development of gender statistics, anecdote and misperception abound in measuring women's progress," said Mr. Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. "On many issues of particular concern, there is no data collected anywhere. On other relevant issues, data are collected but only in a few countries. Even basic statistical series on women are not collected routinely in many countries. The improvement of national statistical capacity---the ability to provide timely and reliable statistics---is essential for improving gender statistics. The United Nations Economic and Social Council has recognized the importance of statistical capacity building for the implementation and follow-up of the global conferences. It has urged countries, international and regional agencies to work together to create effective systems, especially in developing countries, to produce vital and necessary data so that we may truly understand women's advancement around the world."

Source: Press release on The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics

***The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics is available from United Nations Publications, Two UN Plaza, Room DC2-853, Dept. PRES, New York, NY 10017 Telephone: 800-253-9646 or 212-963-8302 Fax: 212-963-3489***



Source: Press release on The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/ww2000/ww2000pr.htm>

### Section 3:

#### Hot Courses for Careers By Morgan & Banks Ltd

- Why should one consider doing post-graduate study?
- What are the benefits of on-the-job training?
- Are qualifications alone enough to enhance career and earning potential?
- and what are the hot courses for careers?

These are the key questions addressed in this article by Morgan & Banks Ltd, a leading international professional services organisation specialising in recruitment, human resources and consulting.

#### Hot Courses for Careers

##### By Morgan & Banks Ltd

Selecting a smart post graduate course does enhance your career and earning capacity. This is true whether you are a doctor, lawyer, engineer or accountant, or working in hospitality and tourism, IT, healthcare or a call center.

*Learning a living*, or more literally, learning as a way to increase career opportunities and rewards has well and truly gripped the market place. And it is happening through formal and informal study either face to face or Online.

The first essential is to know how to learn quickly and constantly as the requirements within jobs change. A competent person is likely to find their responsibilities expand substantially within the first 6 to 12 months providing they can rise to the opportunities and keep changing after that.

For example, IT and Computer Science graduates who add a quality project management qualification will be able to move a couple of steps ahead because so much IT work is project based. Lawyers who complete finance courses open up career opportunities in that fast moving, well-paying sector. Security Institute courses are an obvious way into banking and it is worth aiming for distinctions with a couple of credits.

Many other professionals open up promotion opportunities through courses to do with marketing and client management on the one hand and ecommerce on the other. MBAs and MBTs are popular with employers as current trends are seeing people become more commercially minded, regardless of occupation.

In terms of short courses, RMIT's range of courses to do with ecommerce and the web are particularly popular including web design and 'putting your business on the web'. Anyone in an occupation that does not require keyboard and Internet navigation skills will have more opportunities if they first get the skills. The courses are widely available through universities, colleges and adult education centers.



Post graduate courses such as the Masters in International Business Administration and graduate studies in health and nursing at Flinders University are increasingly designed to meet specialist market needs and are used exclusively by individuals to advance and change careers. Most universities offer courses such as these and one of the latest editions is the new International Masters in Hospitality and Catering at the Cordon Bleu school at the University of South Australia.

On the job training such as Front Line Manager courses offer a quick foot up the ladder for customer service operators with an aptitude for leadership. These courses can be administered on line and provide the framework to structure workplace experience into learning outcomes.

Under-graduate students are following the same trend and voting with their feet in terms of linking qualifications and career opportunities. They are choosing double degrees as, quoting Wollongong University brochures, " they let you specialise twice". This is confirmed by UTS where combined business and IT courses are 'going bananas'. They have established new courses in TelCam - Telecommunications, content and application management - where the emphasis is off the wires and components and on the use. This was established in response to a push from industry and employers such as NEC, IBM and CISCO Systems.

But there is a catch, while post graduate study and increasing skills in areas of high demand will increase opportunities, qualifications alone are not enough. Stamina is essential in many jobs today and unless you are one of our Olympic athletes, this is not usually acquired through training. Interpersonal skills and attitude play a big role in careers, illustrated by more than one employer who has said "...and please don't send me any monosyllabic nerd". Thus the trick is to keep your skills up to date and expanding while honing generic attribute.

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