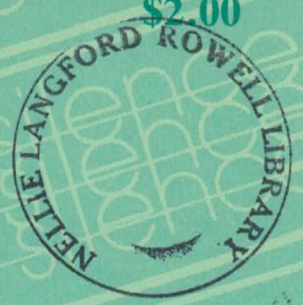


September 1988

Vol 7: 1

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breaking the SILENCE

a feminist quarterly

THE JOY OF SWEAT

Women and physical activity

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about Breaking the Silence

For too long women's voices — our struggles and our joys — have been silenced. Living in a patriarchal world, we are separated from each other, isolated and silent.

The *Breaking the Silence* collective is committed to providing a voice for women.

A feminist alternative to the mainstream media, *Breaking the Silence: A Feminist Quarterly* covers a wide range of social, political and cultural topics written by and for women, and encourages them to act on Canadian and international issues.

we love hearing from you

We invite all women to write about their experiences or to submit original graphics. Please send us letters, too. Include your name, address and phone number and just tell us if you don't want us to use your name. We can't return unsolicited manuscripts, so be sure to keep a copy. Submissions should be typed and doubled spaced, if possible.

Send material to:

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from the collective

When we decided to do an issue on women and sport, not everyone in the collective was enthusiastic. Some of us considered sport to be an irretrievably male activity, with little to offer women who are unwilling to play the game the way it is. Even at this point, feminism largely ignores sport as an area where change is possible or crucial to our broader aims. Why are women not exposed to the "joy of sweat" as men are, and how can feminists change this trend?

By nature, feminist theory is intellectual, and we forget that our connections with our bodies are as important as our states of mind. If we are to heal this mind/body split, we must reclaim and remake sport outside its present male-defined parameters.

As the articles in this issue show, sport for women isn't always competitive games. Physical activity of any sort can provide women with a sense of personal empowerment. And it's this positive empowerment that we've been denied and that we've denied ourselves.

Not surprisingly, personal accounts figure prominently in this issue. These accounts span a broad range. In "Tired of Wheeling with the Boys," Susan Buchanan details her disillusionment with male-dominated wheelchair competition, and her search for some more fulfilling physical activity.

The personal challenge and psychological gain that many women find in sport can contribute to well-being in other aspects of their lives. "Finding Feminism Through Sport" explores this relationship by showing how one young woman came to express and accept her lesbianism. The discrimination that she and her teammates faced as female athletes, and her recognition of it as such, also formed the breeding ground for her feminism.

Other women have chosen to make physical activity an integral part of their lives. Carol Judd tells how she overcame the pervasive myths surrounding activity for women, and discovered the joy of sweat. Outdoor activity for women is offered as another alternative in "Women in Wilderness: Discovering Ourselves." In this interview Carol Rendell relates her experiences in outdoor groups such as Outward Bound, and her move towards leading women on such adventures.

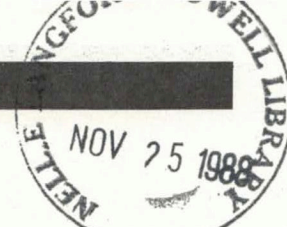
"Cutting Figures" and "The Gender Gap in Sports Ads" give two different critiques of how sport is used in the media. In the former Penny McCann analyzes February's Olympic figure skating competition and the need for constructive change. "Gender Gap" is a light-hearted look at advertising that uses images of physical activity.

In "Changing Sport," Pamela Bentley avoids writing another article simply about the under-representation and underfunding of women's sports, asking instead about the possibility of changing mainstream sport.

Some positive gains have been made through such efforts as the City of Ottawa's Women and Sport program. "Blueprint for Participation" tells how this organization is acting upon research done on the nature of women's sport, and relates the success of the program in helping young women overcome the barriers to empowerment through physical activity.

Many of the articles in this issue tell how women's definition or experience of sport is often not like that of men. The dynamics are different. Perhaps we can change the nature of sport by exploring this difference. And because of the importance of sport in socializing traditional male behaviour, this could go a long way to facilitating even more profound societal changes.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided for this issue by the City of Ottawa.



On Becoming a Jock



by Carol Judd

The world I grew up in believed girls and women had certain physical limitations we must not try to exceed. Girls were not allowed to run more than once around a 400-metre track, and we had to high jump using the scissor kick while the boys did the Western roll. There were special, simplified rules for girls' volleyball and basketball, and we weren't allowed to play hockey or other contact sports.

The reasons we were given for this were that girls were designed for making babies, that we had smaller hearts and lungs, and that we were generally more fragile than boys. Plus, and this was critical, a girl's uterus sat precariously above the gaping breadth of her pelvic bone and was susceptible to being jiggled out of place. At the very least we risked being rendered sterile if we insisted upon exceeding the physical limits nature had imposed on us.

I don't know of anyone who gave a moment's thought to challenging these notions. They were simply part of the social mores of our culture.

Nevertheless, I have always enjoyed physical activity. As a

child I loved to run and to play all types of unorganized sport. Lacking opportunities for organized sport, I often played with boys and was known as a "tomboy." My mother was determined to dress me like a girl even if I refused to act like one. One afternoon I established a record by ripping three dresses in as many hours.

As an adult, long before cycling became a socially accepted activity, I owned and rode a bike. I rode my bike not to become physically fit but for transportation and because it was cheap and fun. Sometimes on a warm spring day I even ran for the sheer joy of it — not far, of course. I understood that such activity was not only frivolous but also potentially dangerous to my health.

When I moved to Ottawa 14 years ago, I decided that cross-country skiing would be fun, so I tried it. I discovered that it was fun, especially on a sunny, crisp day, but it was also hard work and I couldn't go far without feeling exhausted. Somehow I never considered skiing to be potentially damaging to my fragile, female body.

At that time I was involved with a man who was a runner. Being associated with a runner, I learned, had its problems. A large chunk of nearly every day was taken up with his "run," which included dressing in special clothes, stretching and going off to run. When he came back covered with sweat, he showered, hung his sweaty clothes someplace to dry and then talked about whether the run had been good or bad, how far he had gone and how long he had taken. I found it all rather tedious. Almost in self defence, I started to think maybe I should try it. He, too, thought it was a good idea, and added that it would probably improve my stamina for skiing the following winter.

So off I went. Actually, I doubt I ever would have started without his (or someone else's) encouragement, support and company. Before laying out huge sums of money on special shorts, tee shirts and shoes, I decided to see whether I liked it. I ran with my friend for about half a mile and then sat on a bench while he continued. He picked me up on his way back and we ran home.

It was worse than skiing! At

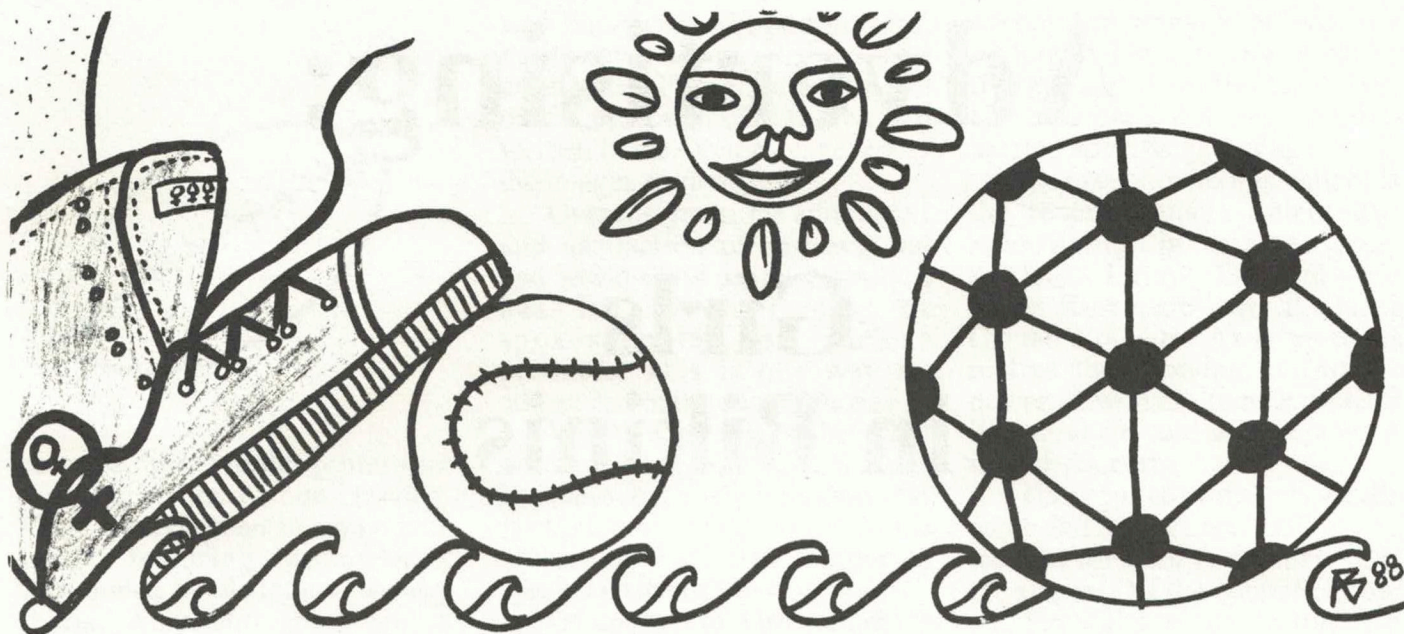


Illustration and Design: Ann M. Brady

least on skis there was snow everywhere and often quiet trails to compensate for the hard work. Running, the way we did it, was in the city and with little scenery.

But I could talk about my running with him, I sweated with him and my sweaty clothes also had to be dried. In other words, it gave us something else to share. And my uterus didn't feel like it was going to fall out — besides, I didn't want any more children anyway.

Before I knew it, I was buying real running shoes, real running shorts and a skimpy little singlet. As my running improved, we even started to run on quiet trails in the woods. I grew to understand why someone would want to devote well over an hour a day to stretching, running, sweating, showering, and talking about distances and times.

It was also true that running helped my skiing. The next winter I found I could ski longer distances without getting tired and hence I was able to enjoy it more. Being able to ski well made winter worthwhile, even a season to look forward to. I also felt healthier and more vigorous. I

noticed, however, that although my legs and my lungs were now strong, my upper body was still weak. Cross-country skiers need strong upper bodies to pole well.

I decided to start swimming as a means of strengthening my upper body. Although I had learned to swim as a child, I hadn't even owned a bathing suit as an adult. Before long, I was not only enjoying a refreshing swim, but was applying the training principles I had learned for running to my pool activities.

I enjoyed the challenge so much that I joined a "masters' " — meaning adult — swimming club. Soon I mastered new strokes and distances and competed in swimming meets.

I even embarked on an eight-year stint of coaching swimming. I became knowledgeable about the bio-mechanics of good swimming strokes and drills to reinforce learning. I learned how to run swimming meets and how to prepare swimmers to perform well in a meet.

I changed my profession from historian to sport administrator. In short, swimming changed my life.

It also changed my body. I

very quickly gained the upper body strength I had been looking for, which did indeed help my skiing. Contrary to all the admonitions I had heard in my youth, I found physical activity, even intense activity, made me feel stronger, calmer and more sure of myself.

It was at this point that I really began to look at physical activity as something more than fun.

As I learned more about the importance of aerobic fitness and the significance of proper nutrition to overall health, I became more interested in physical activity as an aspect of a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity was also giving me a sense of power and confidence I had never felt before. It gave me the feeling that if I tried hard enough and worked long enough I could do absolutely anything.

At about that time, buoyed by the surge of mental power and strength physical activity gave me, I began to overdo it.

I was training for my first marathon when I was injured. At first I couldn't believe that my body had let me down, but eventually I came to understand that I had let my body down.

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Advertising:

Girls in Bikinis

by *Pamela Bentley*

In the fantasy world of advertising, men are active on the playing field while women are left on the sidelines. It is men who go out on Saturday afternoons for a pick-up game of football or baseball or basketball. The women are excited to stay home and make munchies to serve with the beer after these exhilarating instances of male bonding are over. Or, they are happy to serve beer to the sweaty jocks in the local bar, and bask in this lingering male camaraderie.

When women do get to participate in these good-times-had-by-all, it is on the beach playing volleyball in bikinis, so much more fun than getting sweaty throwing a football around with the boys or (heaven forbid) with a group of female friends.

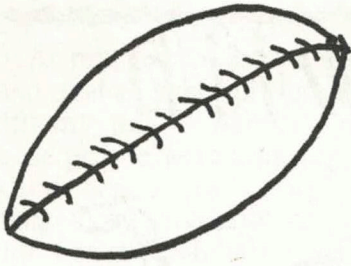
Images of men and sports are used to sell everything from beer to cologne. When a company wants to sell a man's cologne, it can make use of macho images of men, strong and virile, participating in their chosen sport.

Last year, for instance, when Perry Ellis launched a new



Design: Suzanne Davidson

Illustration: Virginia Howard



cologne, the whole promotion campaign centred around rowing. There were displays in department stores, featuring the cologne surrounded by blades and rowing shells. A macho sport and a macho scent. You would never know that rowing is a sport in which there is a corresponding women's event for every men's. In some regattas there are now even mixed events. Perry Ellis needed a male sport for guys who want to smell good, so rowing became a male sport.

Curiously, women's perfumes are never promoted using images of women in a particular sport. Instead, the scent's user is shown striding down the street femininely attired, followed admiringly by numerous male gazes and noses. You can't smell good if you're sweating, ladies. But let's be serious, can men?

Individual spokespersons are used in advertising as symbols of excellence and, in a society where so much emphasis is placed on economic worth or value, a subject's advertising potential is a direct measure of perceived cultural value.

During the winter Olympic hoopla, many companies used athletic images to promote their products. In a special Maclean's issue published in February 1988, unidentified or stylized male figures speed skating, playing hockey, skiing and running were used to link specific companies

with buzzwords like performance, endurance, competition and excellence. Though often the text of the ad spoke of the men and women in the Olympics, generally the images were male.

Over the years, the admiration and idolization of professional and world-class amateur athletes has led to their use as spokespeople for various products. This is one way an athlete can make a lot of money.

Wayne Gretzky is the most obvious example. In his career he has promoted everything from life insurance to soft drinks. (To his credit, he has also supported various charities.)

Of course, to earn money in this way, athletes must be acceptable to the public as symbols of a product. If they do not fit the clean-cut, acceptable, all-American or all-Canadian image of an athlete, they will not be chosen — no matter how good they are.

Martina Navratilova explains this phenomenon in a recent *Ms.* interview. Referring to her sexuality, she says, "Oh, I've lost so many endorsements because of that. It's sad. It gets to the highest level and then it's 'Oh, isn't she gay?' Or, 'hasn't she had relationships with women?' Or, 'isn't she living with a woman?' The president of a corporation may be my best friend, but he still won't take that chance, because of the public" (1).

Of course, in the eyes of advertising executives, women do not have to be lesbians to be ruled out as serious advertising contenders. Just being a woman seems to be enough to disqualify one as the traditional image of an athlete of excellence and performance.

Women are left selling shampoo like Dorothy Hamill with Short 'n' Sassy, "feminine protection" like Mary Lou Retton, or Chapstick like Suzy Chaffey. These are all feminine, cute and

acceptable images of women athletes. The strong-woman image of someone like Navratilova is not for the faint-hearted advertising world.

An exception to this pattern is the recent Canada Select Fur advertising in magazines. Athletes Laurie Graham and Helen Kelesi are used alongside Gaetan Boucher. As advertisers realize the growing economic power of women, female athletes like Graham and Kelesi appear more frequently.

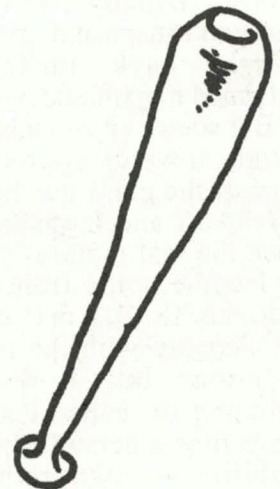
These fur ads rely only on the name and fame of each athlete and the text for each is parallel: "Off the slopes/ Off the courts/ Off the ice, I'm still a winner in fur." No bikinis in sight.

bts

Notes

(1) *Ms.*, Feb. 1988: 61-62.

Pamela Bentley is an Ottawa feminist who spends some of her spare time playing football and watching beer ads.



Tired of Wheelin' with the Boys

by Susan Buchanan

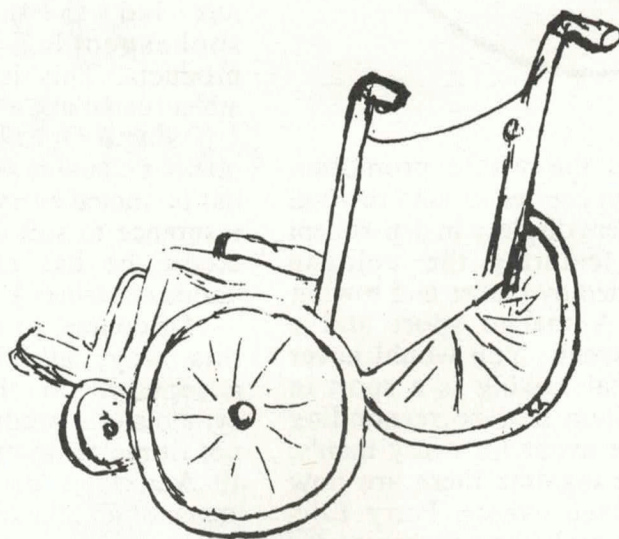


Illustration and Design: Lucie Lafrance

It surprises me to think that only a few years ago I referred to myself as a wheelchair athlete.

The last set of National Games I attended, in Sault Ste. Marie in 1983, marked the beginning of a period of disenchantment. Until then competing in wheelchair sports had always been a positive experience for me. I would return home reaffirmed of my ability and better able to handle the world in general. Usually I would be in extra-good shape and quite often I brought back medals that confirmed my athletic prowess.

But something changed in my attitude towards sports events. Some of the gloss was beginning to wear off and I was beginning to see the real picture. Not only did I come home from my last Nationals to find that my lover was sleeping with the next-door neighbour but I was also beginning to realize that gender affects how a person experiences disability — two rather eye-opening events, both of which spurred me on towards taking more control of my own reality.

Ten years ago I was in a car accident. I ended up paralyzed from below my collarbones down. Medically, that makes me a C5/C6 quadriplegic and competitively, in wheelchair sports, I'm a Class 1B athlete. There aren't many of us in Canada, especially 1B women athletes. A lack of competitive women is one of the reasons I no longer compete. The other is that I ended up really tired of wheeling with the boys.

Those who compete in wheelchair sports are mostly men, men who are constantly proving to themselves that they didn't lose their manhood when they lost movement and sensation. As a result, these guys spend a lot of time acting like jerks. And the women who compete in wheelchair sports quite often overcompensate for their

perceived sexless state by becoming rolling fashion models.

But it took me a while to realize this and in the meantime I did benefit from my experience of competing nationally and internationally in track and field, and table tennis.

I have always been athletic but I haven't always been particularly competitive. I enjoy the way I feel when I am in good physical condition and I take the responsibility of keeping my body healthy quite seriously. Following my spinal cord injury I turned into a scrawny little wimp; I was weak and really out of shape. When offered the opportunity to compete in wheelchair sports I was hesitant. However, I decided to see what all the fuss was about and, to quote my favorite New Yorker, to

"give it the old college try." So I headed out to beautiful Vancouver to my first Nationals.

At my first Games, I spent a great deal of time rolling around with my mouth hanging open. These people were amazing. My experience there completely changed my perception of people who use wheelchairs. These people rolled with dignity. They were confident. They had their piece of the pie and they were enjoying it with gusto.

Even though I left Vancouver soundly trounced in every event I had entered, I gained valuable insights into my new world — a world defined by ability, not disability. My confidence soared, my entire outlook brightened.

Now, don't start thinking I had plunged into the deepest darkest depression following the car accident. I hadn't. But I also didn't see a lot of wheelers on P.E.I. who could be role models. As a result I was setting about to define my new reality and I was doing it alone.

The people I met at my first Nationals gave me a great deal of direction. Some of them became good friends. And some of them became the reasons I sweated and trained for the next set of games. I was going to prove I was just as good as the next jock on the block.

I did win medals and I had a lot of fun doing it. I travelled and competed throughout Canada and in 1981 I was part of the Canadian team competing in England at the Stoke-Mandeville Wheelchair Games.

But eventually I got really tired of fending off the floppy-fingered grapes of quad men.

These guys seemed to assume that I was so desperate for sex I would sleep with anyone. Sex for the wheelies was like another sport — highly competitive and a great way to prove their manly abilities.

It seemed to me that everything they had learned in rehab reinforced the idea that if they became "real" men again this would indicate to the rest of society that they had "overcome" their disability. A flashy young woman on the arm or in the bed of a flashy young man is a status symbol. And a flashy young woman on the lap of a wheelie is no less and maybe even more prestigious. Can you see how wearisome this all gets?

The glamour was beginning to lose its appeal, I was a little disenchanted, a little disillusioned. Not only did the men drive me crazy but I was also realizing that wheelchair athletes were just another "cause."

I stopped competing and along about this time started getting involved in the women's movement. My exposure in that particular milieu helped clarify my beliefs about gender differences and disability. Access to the women's community hasn't always been easy but it has been worthwhile.

Since I wasn't competing anymore I had to find other ways to stay in shape. I'm convinced that one of the secrets to happiness is a healthy fit body, mind and soul.

I recently discovered Aikido and I think I may have found the place in which to take care of all of me.

My initial interest in a martial art is the result of wanting to become less of a victim, less

vulnerable, and more confident and able to protect myself in a potentially dangerous situation.

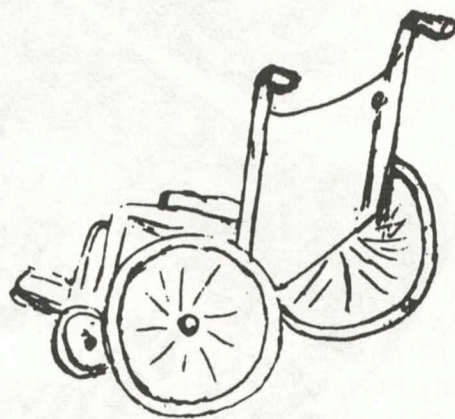
There is a link between involvement in the women's movement, Aikido, control over my own life, gaining confidence and strength, and not competing but I'm not quite sure what that link is!

Aikido utilizes the natural flow of energy and movement, and for me this is very important. It allows me to be in control but it doesn't force me to compete. Not only is this beautiful art a means to keep in shape but it is a source of empowerment.

And I need both those things.

bts

Originally from P.E.I., Susan Buchanan is a feminist who now lives in Ottawa. She has previously written for Women's News and Common Ground.



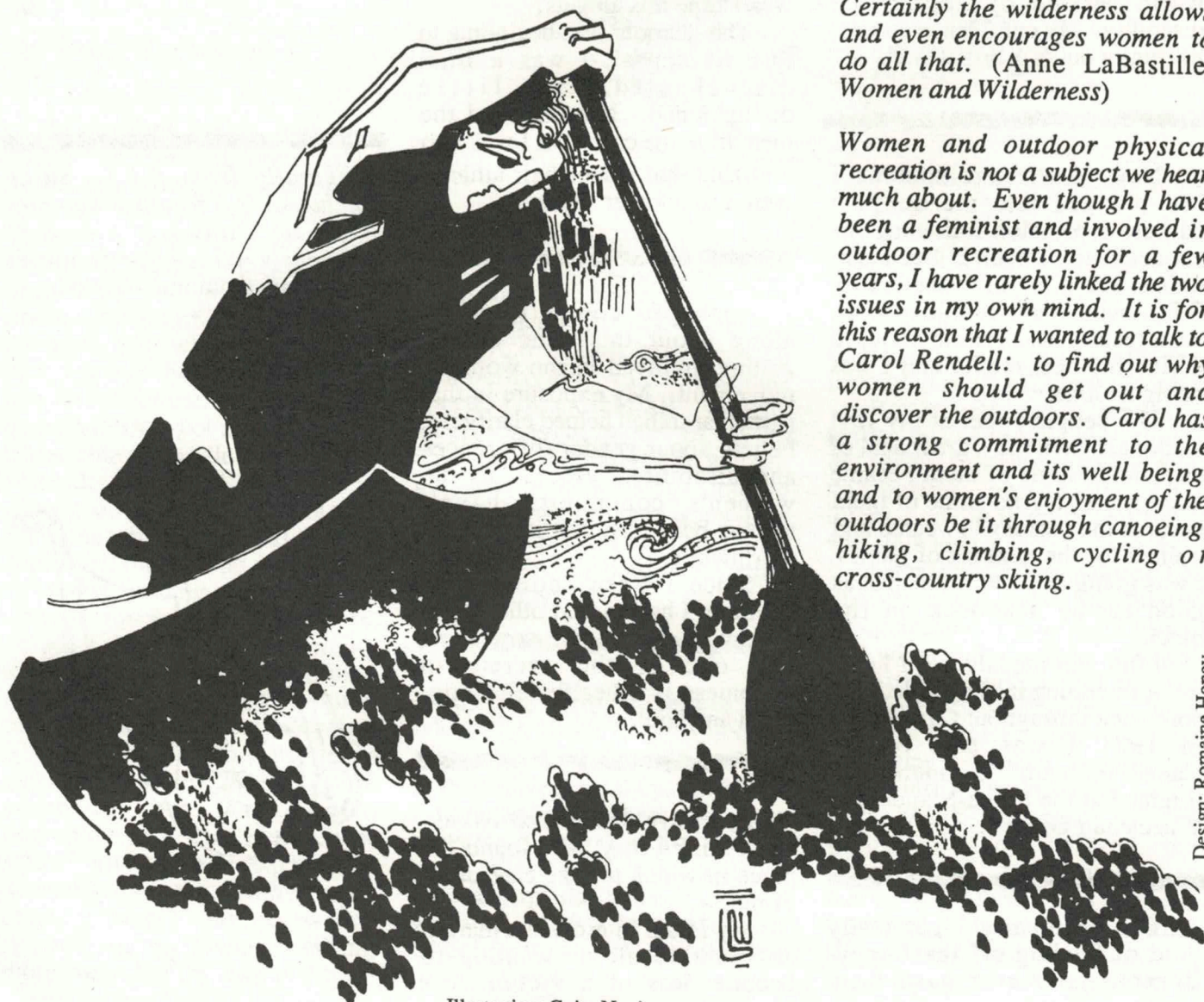
Women in Wilderness:

Discovering Ourselves

Interview by Louise Guénette

Feminism is getting in touch with your own values, intelligence, resourcefulness, physical capacities and general ability to live a rich and satisfying life of your own, not only with but apart from friends and loved ones. Certainly the wilderness allows and even encourages women to do all that. (Anne LaBastille, Women and Wilderness)

Women and outdoor physical recreation is not a subject we hear much about. Even though I have been a feminist and involved in outdoor recreation for a few years, I have rarely linked the two issues in my own mind. It is for this reason that I wanted to talk to Carol Rendell: to find out why women should get out and discover the outdoors. Carol has a strong commitment to the environment and its well being, and to women's enjoyment of the outdoors be it through canoeing, hiking, climbing, cycling or cross-country skiing.



Design: Romaine Honey

Illustration: Guity Novin

BTS: *What have your experiences been in the outdoors?*

Carol: Since I was young, I have had considerable exposure to the outdoors. We had a cottage north of Belleville, near Bancroft, and I used to do a lot of things with my dad like fishing and canoeing.

For as long as I can remember I have always wanted to be a marine biologist, so I did a degree in marine biology at the University of Guelph. After graduating in 1978, I went to the west coast. That's where I started to get actively involved in more wilderness outdoor activities such as canoe expeditions and ocean kayaking.

My career in oceanography took me to some of the most beautiful settings in B.C. and as far north as Alaska. I got involved in ocean kayaking and hiking in the Pacific coast region both in B.C. and Washington, on the West Coast Trail and on glaciers in the Pacific north west.

As well, I did a number of long cycle tours and coached cycling and a triathlon in Victoria. A great deal of my interest in the outdoors has grown as a result of my career as a marine biologist/oceanographer. The challenges, risks and benefits I experienced in my work developed an inner strength and determination.

In the summer of 1987, I got involved with the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School in Thunder Bay and participated in a two-week program for human service professionals and educators.



BTS: *Can you give a brief description of Outward Bound?*

Carol: The purpose of Outward Bound is to develop respect for self, caring for others, responsibility towards the community and sensitivity to the environment. Outward Bound offers a variety of courses that combine wilderness skills training, challenges and problem solving. There is always a rock climbing session, a canoe expedition and a two- to three-day solo where you're completely on your own but still within sight of instructors.

The Outward Bound philosophy is based on cooperation and sharing. The school is community oriented and focuses very much on group process and collective decision-making.

The briefing before and debriefing following each session are important components of each Outward Bound experience. After finishing a full day of rock climbing, we would sit around in a circle and talk about what had happened, both in terms of group experience and how it was for each of us: Did you learn anything about yourself? How do you feel? The facilitators and the group together determined how the two weeks developed.

It's hard to explain to someone who has not gone through it. It's something you really have to go through yourself because everyone experiences something very different. It wasn't nearly physically challenging enough for me, but it was very emotionally challenging in terms of how the group lived and worked together. Having to live with eight people whom you know nothing about can lead to some pretty incredible experiences.

Outward Bound courses are empowering because they renew your sense of self-confidence and self-esteem in a physically

challenging, yet supportive, environment. There is a realization of inner strength. There are very few failures because everything you do is something new. Even if you make a small step, it's an accomplishment.



BTS: *Are there many women who participate in outdoor physical activity or do you think there are obstacles to their participation?*

Carol: I think there are more and more women participating in outdoor recreational activity — certainly more today than five or ten years ago.

Generally, there has been a burst of interest in wilderness work and recreation in the past few years. In a rock climbing course I participated in last spring, there were five women and three men, and the Outward Bound group I was in also had five women and three men.

Although there are probably more women participating in outdoor recreation, there are still very few opportunities for women to learn new skills and share knowledge of the outdoors in a women-centred environment, with women as leaders.

There are still very few women leaders in the outdoors. I really respect women who are involved in outdoor recreation at the leadership level. You know it has been a struggle for them to get there. In an organization like Outward Bound, there are still very few opportunities for women to be involved at the top levels of management and therefore few opportunities to influence the direction of future Outward Bound programs.

I would love either to teach courses such as rock climbing or kayaking myself or to be in a women's group that does these things.

I think more women are becoming interested in the outdoors but they don't know how to get connected with other women or to find a course or a program that meets their needs.

It's still sort of scary for some people to go out, rent a canoe and go off for a weekend. More opportunities are needed for women to learn some basic skills and to build up experiences in the company of other women and women leaders.

BTS: *You said that women can and do participate but that they don't get a chance to participate with other women leaders. Why is that important?*

Carol: It's the idea of role models. I can use Outward Bound as a perfect example. I had done those kinds of physical activities before but a lot of the people there, especially the women, had never tried rock climbing and had never been on a canoe trip. Besides me, only one other woman would even try to carry the 75-pound canoe over the portages at the start of our expedition. As we (the women in the group) started to get to know and support one another, the other women wanted to try. It was great because we could try our hardest, but we always knew it was okay to say, "I've had enough," and to let someone take over.

Women can learn the skills needed to enjoy the outdoors. Enthusiasm, a willingness to try new things, love of nature and, in varying degrees, a sense of adventure, are all it really takes to master the skills that will help you enjoy the outdoors.

If you want to attack a white-water river, you're talking about something different. But anyone can learn how to paddle a canoe

and anyone can learn how to walk a trail or put a backpack on her back. I think women need more access to the opportunities for learning basic skills because it is important to understand the outdoors and to know what you're doing when you're in the outdoors.

But having a woman as a leader and a role model isn't enough in itself. It has to be a woman who is willing to share her knowledge and skills and be supportive of other women.



BTS: *Do you find that women experience outdoor physical activity in a particular way? Can you talk about groups of women and how they interact?*

Carol: Personally, when I'm hanging from a rock a hundred feet up in the air, I feel a real sense of being in touch with something very powerful. Women have an ability to really feel nature, to feel part of it if they are in an environment which is neutral and calming, without the rushing and pushing that men often tend to impose.

I think women have an intuitive feeling for the outdoors and I believe that if more women were able to experience the outdoors, they would find a strength within themselves that would enable them to survive and to live a lot easier in their day-to-day lives.

When women are in the outdoors together, there is a sense of supportiveness. There isn't the competition. There is a willingness to try things because there isn't a man present who is going to jump in and do things for you (like starting a camp fire or

setting up a lean-to for shelter). Women are on a more neutral level, in a neutral place.

Going back to the Outward Bound experience, for the women there was a real fear. It's only just recently that I've sort of understood that fear because I feel the same fear when I'm talking about a new career aspiration like opening an outdoor recreation school for women or disadvantaged groups. I have a fear of doing that. It's a fear of failure and I think that's a really scary thing for a lot of women, especially when there are men present. In a group of women, just women, there is a lot more support, encouragement and understanding.

BTS: *Can you talk about the feeling of empowerment you mentioned earlier?*

Carol: Being in the outdoors is always a new experience and you always gain something from it. That alone is really empowering. You develop self-confidence in knowing you can do much more than was ever imagined in terms of taking risks and overcoming fear.

Successfully completing a two-mile portage produces a great feeling of accomplishment. There are mosquitoes all over you and you're going absolutely crazy. On one of the portages we did on the Outward Bound trip, we were going through a swamp and I actually sank up to my armpits with a canoe on top of my head.

I think being in the outdoors is empowering because there is no one telling you that you're doing it right or wrong. You decide how you want to do it and if it works, fine; if it doesn't work, it's still a good experience because you've learned something about yourself.

When you're working with a group of men there is an expectation. You think, "I've got to do it right the first time." Women provide a supportive

environment that allows women to build upon their strengths instead of accentuating their weaknesses.

The outdoors is such an unknown environment to women that we have no preconceived ideas. Most women don't know what to expect because in the outdoors, they're totally removed from the things that go on in everyday life. In a group of women, I think women are able to open their minds and just let things happen. It's challenging and exciting for women to go through it together.

It's pretty hard for women to remove themselves from the male-dominated environment we all tend to live in from day to day. Nowadays there are so many things organized for us that we don't have any opportunities just to explore new things on our own.

In aerobics and fitness classes and other types of physical activities women tend to get involved in, there is an expectation to look good. I don't know about you, but if I walked into a fitness class I would feel pretty frumpy. I wouldn't feel comfortable because everyone is in these little glitzy outfits. I think that's changing a lot but in the outdoors there aren't those expectations. There is a freedom to do what you want. There's no perfect outfit to wear or a perfect way to be.

I'm interested in working with women but also with children in environmental awareness education. Using the outdoors as a therapeutic tool in rehabilitation programs for women who are victims of family violence also interests me. The outdoors offers such an opportunity for growing and realizing strengths you never knew you had and for transferring them to everyday life.

BTS: *How can interested women get involved in outdoor physical activity?*

Carol: In Canada, in terms of organized programs providing a women-only option, there is the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School. It has a nine-day women's program and its structure follows that of the usual Outward Bound courses. There is rock climbing, canoe tripping, backpacking and a solo. In fact, I will be leading a nine-day adult course for the Outward Bound School in September.

Outward Bound is piloting a new program in June 1988 for abused women. It will be offered in conjunction with the Family Service Association of Metro Toronto. Outward Bound also has a number of youth-at-risk programs for kids who have been in trouble with the law. There is another program for cancer patients.

Also, I would like to hear from other women who are interested in the outdoors. I'm always looking to take people out because I'd really like to share some of the opportunities I've had. I would also enjoy sharing my experiences with other women who might be interested in pursuing a career in the outdoors either as a trip leader or in other professions such as biology or forestry.

bts

Resources

For women interested in going on a trip:

Carol Rendell
1 Clegg, # 1
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 0H3

The Canadian Outward Bound
Wilderness School
P.O. Box 675, Station K
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 2H2
(416) 481-3304



Anne LaBastille, *Women and Wilderness* (Sierra Club Books, 1984). LaBastille explores the historical notes of women in wilderness living and activity and profiles 15 adventuresome contemporary women living or working in the outdoors. To all of them, wilderness means something different. By examining the experience of past and contemporary women, Anne LaBastille clearly shows how wilderness has changed women and how the wilderness inside them has emerged.

Arlene Blum, *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* (Sierra Club Books). In October 1978, two members of a women's expedition reached the summit of Annapurna I in the Himalayas. In this book, expedition leader Arlene Blum recounts this incredible journey, including the logistical problems, the team dynamics, the storms, the hazardous ice climbing, the threats of avalanches, the triumph upon reaching the summit and the sorrow at the loss of two members of the expedition who fell to their deaths.

Louise Guénette is an Ottawa feminist and writer who has been canoeing for recreation for the past three years. She is also a member of the BTS collective.

Pro Sport: Do women want in?

by Pamela Bentley

Design: Evelynne Guindon-Zador

Women's and girls' participation in sport is, at best, minimal and it often remains unnoticed by the sports world, the media and society in general. Because women's and girls' sports are underfunded, taken less seriously than men's, and given less media coverage, sport is not as empowering for women as it has the potential to be.

In the world of professional sports, women's low profile is apparent in several ways. Mark Naison has analyzed male sport ideology and points out that men's "major commercial sports — baseball, football, basketball, ice hockey and auto racing — allow women to participate only as cheerleaders, spectators, and advertising images."

In contrast, it is difficult to think of five major commercial sports for women — tennis, golf, figure skating, and ..., and ... equestrian events? Only these four come to mind. (For the purpose of this article, I will not include roller derby and mud wrestling as sports.) Men participate in these women's sports as coaches, sponsors and announcers, who often comment on a female athlete's physical attractiveness before commenting on her athletic skill.

Several observations can be made when comparing women's and men's commercial sports. With the exception of auto racing, the men's sports are all team

sports, while the women's activities are individual and, in two cases, largely aesthetic or artistic. The sports in which women can earn money are also what could be called "upper class" or "country club" sports which require a good deal of money for equipment and the facilities to pursue them. Tennis has become more accessible, though it began as a leisure activity for the upper classes. Neither of Canada's two most recent high-calibre women tennis players, Carling Bassett and Helen Kelesi, however, are from economically deprived families.

As well, "ladylike" sports such as figure skating, golf and equestrian events require "breeding" and "poise." They are not team sports. To participate in them, we do not have to leave behind the notion of other women as competitors for mates. Why is it that the sports in which women can conceivably have a career are those in which they do not interact with other women as teammates, and they can still be considered feminine while doing them? There is no physical contact in any of the four sports mentioned above. In the United States, there was one attempt at a women's professional basketball league, where some contact is unavoidable. Not surprisingly, the attempt failed.

Part of the feminist debate in the arena of sport is the ongoing

argument about women's participation in male sport, most recently publicized in the case of Justine Blainey. If we insist on girls being allowed to play in the more competitive boys' leagues, we will lose some of the best players to those leagues and the overall situation will not improve. Girls' programs should be kept separate but given equal ice time, gym time, funding, media coverage and recognition.

As with any other area where women are under-represented, the number of girls involved in sport will only increase with the number of women they can see as role models. The easiest remedy for a lack of role models would be to develop parallel programs to those of men — a large number of professional leagues where young women can see their sports played with skill, rewarded with fame, and in which they could aspire to participate if they wished. As more and more girls and women enter sports and new games crop up (such as ringette), and as existing leagues expand — women's hockey for example — it could be hoped that professional leagues and competitions would also spring up to give those highly talented female athletes something to which to aspire.

Unfortunately, it would not be enough, nor would it be possible, to establish professional leagues for women in baseball, football, or ice hockey. In the bottom-line



criteria of the professional sports world, they would not be economically feasible. People would not pay to see them, we are told, when they could go see male versions of the same sports where there would be more physical contact and possibly more violence. The connection between male professional sport and violence is undeniable.

I think it is more realistic and desirable to hope that women's influence will change the nature of sport itself. Perhaps the solution is not to have more professional sports for women, but to do away with professional sport altogether.

The exclusivity of professional sport denies women the camaraderie and empowering experience of sport at all levels. Whereas in the traditional socialization process, young teenage women become more and more alienated from their bodies, physical activity could go a long way in counteracting this alienation. Feminism must recognize this and make it a priority.

If we were to give up the idea of professional sport altogether, the evolution towards a more equitable participation of women in sport would be even more plausible. The money spent on professional sport yearly — on facilities, salaries, promotion, etc. — is phenomenal and could instead be used to fund programs for amateur sports of all kinds.

By emphasizing the amateur aspect of sport and the participation of all in physical activity, we strengthen the love of sport for mental and physical health and move away from the love of sport for money.

If sport were more widespread, it is conceivable that a larger number of people would, instead of watching their favourite sport on television, get out and try it themselves. In the long run, this would benefit not only women and girls, but also men who are not interested in the more macho sports or whose athletic abilities lie in other areas.

A woman could choose an individual sport over a team sport because she wanted to participate in that activity, not because it was one of the few acceptable activities for her gender. People would also not be limited to one sport to the exclusion of all others, an obsession with perfection that professionalism in sport requires.

Competition, of course, is a large component of sport and can be a positive aspect. There is always a point, however, where it becomes destructive. I believe this happens in male sport and particularly in professional sport.

A sense of competition can push us to play the best game we can, and to improve each time we play; it can also teach us to accept when others perform better and respect them for doing so. I

enjoy knowing the score in basketball as a measure of my team's performance, or in tennis so I can compare with the last time I played that particular opponent. But in an informal game of volleyball, it is refreshing to play with a group of women who encourage each other, do not keep score, and allow re-serves at random.

It is this positive sense of play that women and feminism can bring to sport.

At present, when we think of sport we think of watching men on television who are getting paid to be "real men." Sport becomes a game of winners and losers in which we can participate only as spectators. Sport as a whole might become less destructive, and more open to everyone, if women's increased participation influences the way sport is played. If we get rid of professional sport, we have nothing to lose but the malefactors.

bts

Pamela Bentley is a member of the BTS collective who is currently employed in the largely male, competition-oriented world of sales. She relaxes by participating in team sports such as football and basketball.

Finding Feminis

by *Holly Hoop*

The sport of basketball is dear to me because it was the medium through which I discovered my lesbianism and found and strengthened my feminism. It was the unlikely catalyst that forced me to examine feminist issues such as this society's dehumanizing hierarchies, racism, homophobia and unfair valorization of male activity over female pursuits.

Ten years ago, I began playing basketball in junior high school because my friends played, and it was the only sport I was able to do reasonably well. Two years later, when I enrolled at the high school across the street, I had become a "hoop" addict. The exciting, fast-paced, sprint/stop nature of the game, as well as the calculated finesse of running set plays or sinking a long shot, fed my growing enthusiasm.

The young women who were my teammates through junior high and high school became integral to my life. We spent six, sometimes seven, days a week together, practising and going to games and tournaments, or simply interacting in classroom situations.

As friends, we shared our secrets and our dreams. With one teammate, who was lithe and athletic, and who loved hugs and laughter, I shared my desires and my love. Our teammates' adolescent pessimism concerning young love caused them to tease

us sometimes, but our lesbian intimacy was neither challenged nor rebuked. It was simply accepted.

As a team, we were outstanding in our league, across the city as well as provincially. Despite our successes, however, each year we had to fight to get financial backing for our program. The school's athletic budget could not withstand the stress of supporting eight boys' teams, some of which required a lot of equipment (football and hockey, especially), and also support four girls' sports teams.

The boys' basketball teams received new uniforms annually, however, while we sewed and pinned their cast-off jerseys. The weekends that were not spent at tournaments were spent holding car washes or garage sales, or organizing raffles and bingo games. When we tried to line up sponsors, we were told we could not do that. After all, how could we represent the school properly while sporting the name of the local hardware store on our backs?

Enter phase one of feminism.

It was obvious to us that the financial obstacles we encountered clearly indicated the Board of Education's attitude toward girls' sports. Despite the many successes that were tangible proof of our hard work and dedication — successes which none of the boys' teams could begin to match — girls' sports were unworthy of

investment.

If lack of financial backing did not seem like valid proof of such an attitude, then evidence was also found in the game and practice schedules. The boys' teams received prime gym time. This meant that they practised or played games immediately after classes at 3:30 p.m., when students were still present to make

Illustration: Catherine Horgan



Design: Joan Selby

n Through Sport



up an audience of cheering fans. We practised in the mornings, or practised and played in the evenings, when the boys had finished using the gymnasium, and when few people were present to witness our progress.

In spite of such impediments, we continued to be successful and, as a result, we received more attention. Consequently, we were

able to get financial backing from provincial organizations that support amateur sports.

When it was time to go to university, I left a great deal of my heart in the dedicated and loving hands of my first coach and teammates. I also forsook the once affectionate embraces of a lover who had decided that she was not a lesbian.

But, oh boy! I was really looking forward to playing varsity ball. After all, I had been asked by the university coach to play with his team. I was very excited because at the much more competitive and serious post-secondary level, I was sure women's teams received adequate money and attention for their programs.

Well, I showed up, all bright-eyed, with orange ball in hand, and asked for Coach _____. I was told that Coach _____ had taken another job over the summer and I was introduced to the new coach. Apparently, there was a new coach for the women's team almost every year. Did this predictable turnover occur because funding for the program was just barely adequate, or because the team was ignored by the local press and regularly downplayed or insulted by the campus newspaper?

I decided, okay, I could handle a new face. After all, I had not chosen my university simply because I had been asked to play basketball there. That had been an important factor in my

decision, but I also had enrolled for an academic program. The new coach had never coached a women's team, however, and as a squad, we quickly discovered that he was loud, rude and generally offensive to us.

Alright, I really didn't need close interaction with the coach. I thought I could get close to my teammates instead. Only, I found, if I was willing to play their initiation games. Each veteran player was matched with a first-year player who then became her "slave." This "slave" was supposed to pick up after her "mistress" in the locker room and after games.

Enter phase two of feminism.

"No," I told them. "I won't participate in such a game!" They could not see the connection between my black skin and their white skin and the degenerate, repulsive nature of a "slave-mistress" game.

My refusal kept me at a distance from my teammates, so I decided to keep talking, in order that they might see that I was not such a "bad" person after all.

Enter phase three of feminism.

"Gee, you know what I discovered on campus today?" I ventured. "A women's centre."

"You shouldn't go up there," they warned. "There are dykes up there."

"Yeah, but I'm ... oh, never mind."

continued on page 28

Cutting Figures: Curves or Competence?

by Penny McCann

In ancient Greece, participation in and observation of the Olympic Games by women was forbidden on pain of death. In modern times, the male gaze is still privileged in the Olympics, albeit in ways more subtle than in ancient Greece. Through the co-production of spectacle by the sports industry and the media, all Olympic athletes become commodities. However, it is the woman athlete who is both commodified and objectified by this process — that is, constructed as an object of male desire.

The women's Olympic figure skating competition held in Calgary in February was a prime example of just how far the skating industry, the media and the skaters themselves are willing to go in their attempts to secure the proverbial male gaze. A genuinely exciting competition between fine women athletes was tarted up beyond recognition by the pseudo-seductive strategies of skaters like East German Katarina Witt whose antics were so insipidly reported by the media.

Granted, figure skating as a sport has traditionally been partially predicated on the physical appearance of the skater. Marks for artistic merit are based on the grace with which manoeuvres are executed — this grace is tied in part to the skater's physical beauty. Also, Olympic figure skating has always involved an element of spectacle. Only in synchronized swimming and gymnastics is the achievement of spectacle as important. Alone on the ice, the figure skater must maintain the *interested* gaze of the spectator throughout the

performance — be that spectator a judge, the live audience or the television audience. Maintenance of the gaze is secured through dramatic movement to music, sequined costumes and theatrical make-up.

It is precisely this attention to spectacle that makes figure skating so appealing as an Olympic event. Unlike other athletic competitions, figure skating acknowledges the performance element intrinsic to sport. By foregrounding the performance as spectacle, Olympic figure skating blurs the traditional lines between

entertainment and sport, art and physical prowess, and between sport as achievement and sport as commodity.

The problem with this year's Olympic figure skating competition was that the sports industry had quite apparently lost control over its own spectacle-producing apparatus. Appearance and objectification became everything, leaving little room for legitimate appreciation of physical prowess.

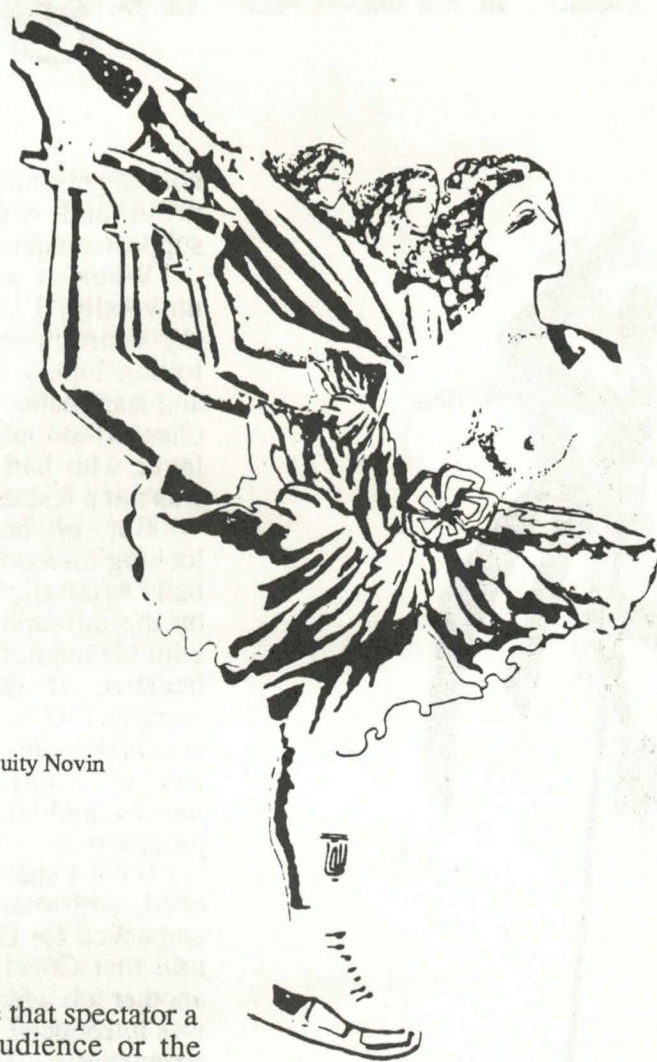


Illustration: Guity Novin

Design: Lucie Lafrance

It is hardly surprising, either, that it was during the *women's* figure skating competition that these problems arose. The tantalizing tactics of Katarina Witt to titillate the media (mock stripteases for the press and "naughty" leather outfits are two main examples) were largely to blame for the hype surrounding the event. To make matters worse, the credibility of the competition was undermined each time a female skater stepped onto the ice wearing an outfit cut down to her navel. Pantyhose netting up to the neck only served to add a touch of misplaced modesty on outfits meant to entice.

The consequent media coverage of this spectacle was equally mortifying. The competition between Katarina Witt and American Debi Thomas was termed a "catfight" and a "battle of the Carmens." References to Witt as a "dark-haired beauty" and a "seductress" (*MacLean's*, Feb. 29, 1988) effectively overshadowed the athletic competition among the three top skaters, Witt, Thomas and Manley. (Thankfully, Canada's Elizabeth Manley did not participate in the battle for the crown of "Skating Seductress." Instead, she focused her attention on the perfect execution of style and technique rather than on dress and spectacle, thereby allowing her skill to gain the medal she deserved.)

If the skaters, their coaches and the skating industry as a whole think alluring costumes and seductive spectacle will improve the aesthetics of their sport, they are sadly mistaken. Not only were the events in February demeaning to women, they were also insulting to the intelligence of figure skating fans who during the Olympics proved themselves to be considerably knowledgeable of the intricacies of the sport.

It is time women athletes took control of their own sport and,

more importantly, the way in which they are portrayed in that sport. Their refusal to dress and act as objects of male desire will help to pressure the skating industry to allow them to gain the respect they deserve as exceptional athletes. (Easier said than done, since such action will probably cost these women athletes their careers.) While this will not cure certain individuals in the sports media of their leering sexism, it will certainly not fan the fires of voyeuristic male desire

as it did in February. The notion of feminist figure skating may at the moment sound like a laughable alliteration. Hopefully, it will not always seem that way.

bts

Penny McCann is a graduate of the M.A. program in Canadian Studies at Carleton University. She has enjoyed relatively consistent employment as a cultural worker in Ottawa: recently with the Great Canadian Theatre Company and currently with the Festival of the Arts.



Blueprint for Participation



by Morena Mazzara

Illustration: Chris Tripp

I can stand what I know. It's what I don't know that frightens me.

— Frances Newton

This anxiety holds true for many young women confronted with sport as the unknown. The tiny word sport has picked up many negative connotations. When approached to participate, girls imagine failure, embarrassment, a time commitment and what they will look like in a pair of shorts. Very

few young women use the word sport in the same sentence as fun, feeling better, meeting people, and learning new skills. Instead, fear and poor self-esteem inhibit young women from participating.

Despite all this, there is always a way if there is a will. A positive, unique approach is needed, along with hard work, flexibility, and good listening skills, to change youth involvement in sport. In Ottawa, this change began in 1985, when City Council approved a two-year

pilot program focused on providing sport opportunities for young women 13 to 17 years of age. This program, called Women and Sport, is the only model in Canada — for now.

The program is inexpensive for the girls, group-oriented because they play in teams, and competitive in that the teams play against one another. The program, however, is not promoted as a competitive league. There are no try-outs or prerequisites for playing.

Since inactive or semi-active youth are often afraid of failure, the program is designed to be non-threatening: few skills are necessary and activities are directed to, and flexible enough for, the needs of the girls. Emphasizing the social aspects, such as being with friends and making new friends, is extremely important to the success of the girls and of the program.

Not surprisingly, the program philosophy fits into the findings of a 1985 joint publication by Fitness Canada and the Canadian Council on Children and Youth, "Marketing Fitness to Canadian Youth." It was discovered that youth aged 13 to 17 displayed unique qualities which separated them from the older youth aged 18 to 24. In reference to the younger group, the study found:

- their fitness and activity level begins to decline after age 14;
- they have strong needs for recognition, affection, and approval;
- their need for peer approval is greater than their need for parental approval;
- they strongly need independence and while friends are important, they don't appear to be as influential as was once believed;
- they are influenced by entertainers, celebrities and sport stars, as well as peers, parents and siblings; and
- almost all of them are still enrolled in school.

As well, a 1983 Canada Fitness Survey report, "Canadian Youth and Physical Activity," highlighted several important

differences between the sexes. There are more similarities between Canadian youth and adults of each sex than there are between males and females in the 10- to 19-year-old age group. For instance:

- Females attach more importance to watching their weight than do males. They regulate their diets more closely and eat more fruit, fewer fatty foods and less salt. Females also have fewer regular meals, especially proper breakfasts.

- Males are more likely to believe that regular physical activity is important to their health.

- Males have a wider range of physical activity choices and opportunities and are more encouraged to participate.

- Females are showing a greater interest in becoming more active. However, it appears that the types of activities they are seeking are often not available.

- Joint participation with a partner or supportive friends is more important to females than it is to males.

Because of these patterns, the programming design of Women and Sport has proven to be the crucial element in the participants' growth and involvement. Coordinated by staff with input from volunteer coaches, fellow colleagues and participants, the program puts into practice the theory that if youth and coaches are involved in the decision-making process, they will be more satisfied with and committed to the program. Women and Sport initially chose to offer volleyball,

basketball, and softball because these are not widely available to the girls in the community on a recreationally competitive basis. These sports proved to be good choices because the school boards offer them as part of their physical education curriculum; therefore the girls have at least some exposure to these sports.

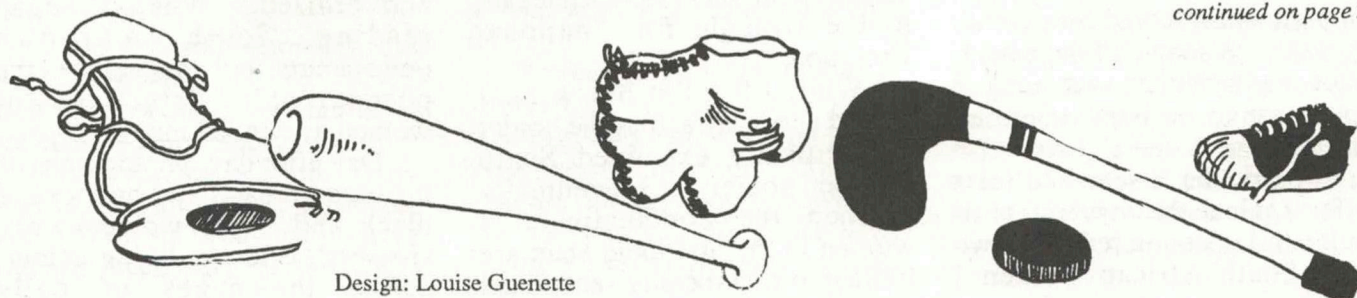
When designing and organizing programs for youth, using a universal approach is often ineffective. The differences in needs, values, attitudes, motives, past activities, histories, and also the barriers and myths that girls have been subject to, should be considered in order to ensure a successful physical activity program for young women.

This approach does attract inactive girls to participation in a league setting. The players enjoy the non-threatening and fun concept. Our success is evident at registration when the players come back for the next season. The program has also been successful in attracting young women from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds. The no-stress approach and skill clinics have provided a positive learning environment and have sufficiently increased the confidence of the participants for them to try out for school teams.

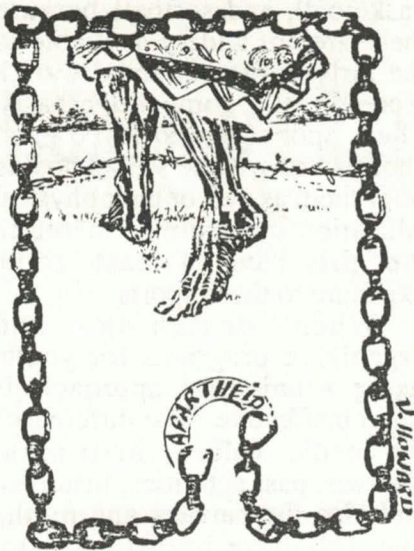
By attracting women at this age, many positive gains have been made: more "pied pipers" spread the news; participants come forth to act as role models; and of course there are more players for women's teams.

Women and Sport not only

continued on page 27



Design: Louise Guenette



EVIL EMPIRE

by d. i. huron

Two years ago, I lived as close to the Evil Empire as one can get without actually stepping on South African soil. For seven months, my home was Botswana's capital city, Gaborone, 15 kilometres from the apartheid state's border.

During my time there, I met numerous South Africans: black and white, men and women. They were courageous people, living in involuntary exile and dedicated to the overthrow of the South African government.

When I packed my cotton clothes and my sunglasses to go to Africa, I stowed my feminism, socialism and spirituality in a compartment reserved for psychic baggage. As soon as I unpacked, I knew my feminism was going to need strong, perhaps magical, protection.

In particular, I searched for a buffer against the virulent anti-feminism I encountered from two white South African women I

befriended. They were both passionately involved in the liberation struggle. We talked for hours about oppression and we argued a lot about feminism. Later, I was to see their views reflected in a number of "progressive" and "revolutionary" journals published in South Africa.

Their criticism of feminism was the standard one used by Marxists to dismiss it: namely, that only white bourgeois Western women have the luxury to be concerned about issues of gender discrimination or sexism. It would be divisive, they said, for



Illustration: Virginia Howard

black or white women in South Africa to focus on sexist oppression or to attempt to have it included on the "liberation agenda." South African men and women must fight together to overthrow the capitalist apartheid state, they said.

These women fervently believed the oppressive characteristics of the white and black patriarchy (reflected clearly in South Africa's war mentality and the endemic violence that cuts across racial lines) were irrelevant to the struggle for "national liberation."

While I lived in Botswana, I peered curiously across the border and critically examined South African society. I eventually reached the conclusion that women in the apartheid state are limited to two socially sanctioned

roles: sex object and mother.

The mother mythology is flagrantly peddled. Winnie Mandela, internationally famous as the wife of the jailed Nelson Mandela and an activist in her own right, is called "mother of the nation."

But in her autobiography, *Part of My Soul*, the mother of the nation recalls that as a girl she "had every reason to believe this (South Africa) was my fatherland, belonging to my father's parents ... our fight is simply the fight for our fatherland." Elsewhere in the book Mandela says, "The black man does not want his chains changed into gold and polished ... he is fighting for his total liberation and the total hacking off of those chains."

What do black women in South Africa want? Mandela does not address that issue in even one paragraph. One can only assume black women want simply what black men want: an end to apartheid and the birth of a free, non-racist country.

If the role of mother serves to glorify the struggle of South African women against apartheid (while somehow neutralizing



Design: Amina Nyamburah

women's need to struggle for their own rights), the role of sex object leaves them disembodied and bruised. When I began reading South African newspapers and magazines, the pornographic depictions of women astounded me.

Day after day, photographs of the bared breasts and buttocks of black and white women were splashed, often in living colour, across the pages of daily

newspapers.

A typical outline from Johannesburg's white-owned black circulation newspaper, the *City Press*, proclaimed: "Bouncy, bouncy bounce; that's what the sight of beautiful Busi Radebe makes one's heart do; she also makes other parts of one's anatomy do some strange things, too."

As I stashed examples of this demeaning material into a file folder, to show my women friends at home the kind of crap that was commonplace, I became convinced that South Africa was the most misogynist society I had ever experienced. Compared to Greece, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Nicaragua and Costa Rica — countries I had travelled to in years past — the South African Sunday papers and daily newspaper advertisements made their kind of macho seem subdued.

In a small circulation magazine called *Speak* (published by a women's collective in Durban), I saw the sordid statistic that reflects the lives of women in the apartheid state and gives credence to Andrea Dworkin's maxim "porn is the theory, rape is the practice." *Four hundred women a day* are raped in the Republic of South Africa. "We must start feeling angry toward the men who rape us and stop blaming ourselves for it," *Speak* advised its readers.

My friend, Thandie, a black South African feminist whom I met in Botswana, greeted my shock and disbelief with a more chilling assessment: "But those are reported rapes," she commented.

I knew if 400 women a day were being raped in South Africa, then most of them — maybe 98 per cent — were black.

White women in South Africa tend to lead sheltered, protected lives. They are protected because they are necessary to the white

patriarchy's continued domination of the black majority: the Afrikaaner elite has to stock the army with white Christian boys to continue killing blacks in the townships and in Namibia, Angola, and other frontline states.

On the other hand, black women in South Africa are unsheltered, and unprotected.

"The police in South Africa are not there to protect the people," Thandie told me. "They are there to murder them. So a woman who can even dare to go and report that this [a rape] has happened to her is a very brave woman. They are heroines or women with nothing to lose anymore."

Because her rapist might be a black policeman or a white soldier, it is impossible for large numbers of black women to report rape.

Thandie acknowledges that most rapes of black women are by black men. In the current state of war in South Africa — "war is even a nice word, it sounds clean somehow," she said — the overwhelming mentality is "if you oppress me, I oppress the next person who's weaker."

Sympathetic to the adversity black men suffer in South Africa (how could she not be?), Thandie is more sympathetic to the plight of black women:

It stands to reason that those frustrated men, they are just so depressed, they have been raped themselves, they have been castrated by their passes, they have been fired, they have been beat up, they are vagrants against their will, they are men who are destructive ... And you know the famous male ego, how vulnerable it is.

So they have to let it out on someone. If it's not child bashing, they just rape and they even rape children. So the woman, down, down, down, in the hierarchy, suffers the most because the whole system falls

down on her shoulders.

As a feminist, Thandie accepts that sexist oppression is interwoven with racism and class oppression to create the frayed fabric of black South African women's lives. But she also knows from personal experience that many of her black (and white) South African sisters refuse to confront — or even acknowledge — this kind of oppression. She has been derided and ostracized for saying that the struggle for national liberation must include women's liberation.

They say that our problem is the white man. They say we really don't have a problem with our men ... we can't handle a man who is already ego-bashed by the white man and tell him we also want more rights from him. Let's leave that man alone. He's okay.

And they tell me: we need lebowas — we need the bride price — to keep up our traditions. Something to cling to. We just don't need equal rights.

Thandie heard black women activists from Soweto, from other townships and from Durban express these views at a women's conference in Johannesburg, and it convinced her that *apartheid has robbed us of our identities so much we need to cling to traditional roles ... These same women shout down feminism because feminism is not necessary in the South African context because our men are very kind. We would realize how kind they are if they would be given back their land ...*

She was crushed by what she heard:

It was a window into my country that I would have denied had I not gone to that meeting ... I'm too scared to do what they say, having seen Zimbabwe and other countries (where blacks have liberated themselves from

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**Dear
Abby :**

An Open Letter on Lies and Distortions

by Alyson Huntly

Design: Lisa Woodsworth

I have always considered Dear Abby to be a largely innocuous, if conservative, mediator of petty squabbles. Not to be taken too seriously. So I was surprised to find a column that warranted a second look; surprised and outraged.

The letter that left me fuming was written by someone who called himself "Haunted" (*The Ottawa Citizen*, Mar. 5, 1988). Haunted?

Apparently Haunted had taken a night flight from Paris to New York. He ended up, so he says, sitting in a window seat beside a child whom he describes as "a pretty, precocious 10-year-old girl." The girl's aunt was seated beside her on the aisle seat and two other family members were also on the plane.

Haunted writes:

Shortly after take-off the lights were dimmed and blankets distributed. This seemingly innocent child proceeded to grope me beneath the blankets. Terrified, I turned on my side and assumed a fetal position. Eventually she abandoned her pursuit.

Haunted then asks Abby three questions, three "scary" questions, as he puts it:

"Who would have believed my version of what happened?"

"How many men are unjustly accused of child molestation?"

"What should I have done — if anything?"

Abby acknowledges the first two as "good questions" that she cannot answer. As to the third, she suggests Haunted should have talked to a family member so that the child can get the counselling she needs "before she gets herself — and possibly some other man — in trouble."

Haunted's letter reads a lot like a male fantasy — a seduction scene beneath blankets and dim lights. The words used are loaded: "seemingly innocent," "pretty," "precocious," "pursuit." My suspicion and ire were aroused.

Sexual fantasies involving airplanes (including "seductions," rape, intercourse and sexual harassment) appear frequently in popular entertainment and pornographic media. Movies like *Airplane* and *Emmanuelle* have airplane sex scenes. One has only to look at corner-store pornography to see how often airplanes, with their dim lighting, close quarters and seductive stewardesses, appear in "letters from readers" or fantasy sections.

I can't help but wonder if Abby wasn't duped by some twisted male invention designed to portray little girls as dangerous to grown men. But Abby chooses to take this letter seriously, and in doing so perpetuates some dangerous myths and distortions.

In using the phrase "seemingly innocent" Haunted

implies that this girl is guilty. And the sin is obviously sexual. In a sense this is little more than a recapitulation of an ancient myth — woman as evil, woman as evil because she is sexual; woman as evil because she seduces men! That's the same theme that appeared in witch hunts and Adam and Eve mythology. Men are afraid of "evil" (sexual) women.

This becomes even more distorted and dangerous when applied to a 10-year-old. The column implies that the child is attempting an adult sexual advance. This could not be the case. Children experience sexuality from a child's perspective, not an adult's. Unless they have been sexually abused, they do not have direct experience of adult sexual behaviour.

A 10-year-old would not act this way unless she had been sexually abused and required to practise such behaviour. (In rare instances sexually abused children have been known to attempt to replicate with other men the behaviour demanded by their original assailants. Even then the children's behaviour is not "sexual" in an adult sense.)

The interpretation of this child's behaviour as a sexual advance takes a possible "symptom" (of former sexual abuse) and turns it into a "cause" (i.e., that if abuse were to result,

she would have caused it). This leads to "blaming the victim" — a distortion that holds victims of abuse directly responsible for the crimes committed against them.

The juxtaposition of Haunted's question — "how many men are unjustly accused..?" with Abby's response — "before she gets herself or some other man in trouble..." reinforces the lie we have heard all too often about victims of rape or sexual abuse, that somehow the victim "brought it on herself." Something in her behaviour, her appearance or where she walked was responsible for what happened.

If we accept the column's assumptions, we come to the ludicrous conclusion that a 10-year-old child could lead a man on, and get herself, and some innocent man, in trouble.

This must not go unchallenged!

Sex between an adult and a child is a crime, a horrendous crime, an adult crime. Always. Whatever the child does, or does not do, she is in no way accountable for an adult's behaviour.

In suggesting that it could be otherwise, this column distorts the power relationships that exist between adults and children. It

reverses victim and assailant, powerless and powerful. The images used are significant — "terrified, I assumed a fetal position", which is what a child might do if assaulted. But Haunted is an adult male, and he has all the power in the world. He could stand up, change seats, go to the washroom, move the blanket, turn on his light, place the child's hand firmly in her own space ...

But he wants us to believe he is the victim, as Dear Abby and society in general would like us to believe. His purpose in writing this letter has nothing to do with concern for the child. His point is, "how many men are unjustly accused?" Men as victims, no doubt victims of pretty, precocious and seemingly innocent 10-year-olds!

Again, this is a distortion of reality. At least one girl in four is sexually abused before puberty and one in three by the age of 18 (1). We know that children who are sexually assaulted are usually too terrified to tell anyone, and that they are often not believed when they do. We know that girls and women frequently bury such "secrets" for many years — out of misplaced shame — and suffer the destructive consequences. We know who the



real victims are — those who are truly "haunted," left with lifetime scars. And we know that these victims are largely hidden. A single "false accusation" in the Ottawa area got weeks of media hype and attention, but little is said of the countless sexually abused children who live in daily terror.

That is why it is important to challenge the lies and distortions that Haunted and Abby, and the rest of the mainstream media, conspire to present. Because until the truth is told, that daily terror will continue.

bts



Notes

(1) Judith L. Herman, in Sandra Butler, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Trauma of Incest* (Volcano Press, 1985), frontispiece.

Resources

Fraser, Sylvia. *My Father's House: A Memoir of Incest and of Healing*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1987.

Alyson Huntly is an Ottawa feminist and a member of the BTS collective.

R E V I E W S

Pumping Iron II: The Women *Dir. George Butler* U.S., 1985

reviewed by Wendy Gordon

Pumping Iron II: The Women is a film about female strength and male power. This documentary asks the difficult question, what is femininity?

Historically, "feminine" characteristics have changed to suit society's needs. Ever-changing health fads aimed at women are no different. Along with cosmetic and fashion advertising, health fads reinforce the message that women must strive to become sexually attractive. Physical activities geared to women, such as the *20-Minute Workout* and *The Jane Fonda Workout*, have one clear message. The end product of physical activity is that we should *look good*. Of course standards of beauty have changed through history as well. Hence it is disturbing to many people to see women building up their bodies, because a strong muscular body on a woman is not in keeping with our society's myth that women should be soft and feminine, not outgoing and athletic.

Pumping Iron II investigates what happens when women become physically strong. All the women in the film are contestants in an international body-building contest; the two main characters are Rachel and Bev. Rachel is an American who has "sculpted" her body to fit the "feminine ideal." Her antithesis is Bev, an Australian power weight lifter who has gone further than simply accentuating her feminine shape through body building. In the eyes of one male judge she has gone too far.

Throughout the film we are reminded that society and the media uphold an idealized view of the female body. Neon signs advertise dancing girls, and mock Greek statues surrounding a fountain reinforce a patriarchal definition of female beauty.

Bev forces us to question this naturalized view of femininity. She is a sensuous, humourous woman who has worked hard to develop her strength. Because she is so strong Bev threatens the assumption that men are in power because they are stronger, and that women remain powerless because, in a world measured hierarchically, they are considered the weaker sex.

Carla, a woman of colour, voices what she feels is at stake in the whole contest. She points out the patriarchal refusal to acknowledge that women come in all shapes and sizes. The accepted ideal is not real. Her views are echoed by someone in the audience who wonders how the judges can compare the women when they are all so different.

The film represents women of many different nationalities coming together to share their strength. The contestants are all supported by sisters, mothers, friends and lovers, as well as by each other. The evening before the competition, the group meets for a swim. As the women talk about their hopes and fears for the following day, there is a genuine feeling of collective support and respect amongst them. The collective support is undermined, however, by the way the women are treated by the male judges, who constantly referred to them as "girls" and routinely check their bathing suits for padding.

Although the film's director is critical of an outdated definition of femininity, he falls into the trap of pitting the women against each other. By structuring the film around Rachel and Bev, two women who are almost polar opposites in their appearance and in their attitude towards the sport of body building, he undermines the power of the collective spirit displayed by the women. This collective spirit is most evident after the contest when the women salute each other with heaping spoonfuls of ice cream as a playful gesture of mutual respect. With this sentiment, *Pumping Iron II* becomes a celebration of our strengths and our differences.

bts

Wendy Gordon is a member of the BTS collective and a graduate of Carleton University's Film Studies department.

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My injury opened up a whole new learning situation for me. I had to learn what my body's limitations were and whether or how I could extend myself beyond my present capabilities. I did learn to listen to what my body was telling me; I also learned that when I ignored what my body said, I did so at my peril.



Another thing I have learned over the many years I have been physically active is that my interest level in one specific activity fluctuates. At one time I ran regularly in road races, but not now. I seldom swim competitively anymore either. I hardly ever cross-country ski now, but I have taken up alpine skiing. In recent years short-distance triathlons have been attracting me, but I don't often compete in them.

I don't even like to compete against my own time, preferring to look at each event in its own light — whether I was well conditioned, what the weather was like, how I felt on race day. I no longer worry about the details of times and placements. I know that I have enough internal motivation not to require continual competition to keep me interested in physical activity.

Perhaps the most important thing I have learned is the

difference between participating, training and racing with men as opposed to women. Although it was a man who sparked my interest in physical activity as an adult, I ran my first several road races in women-only events. I felt less pressure to perform beyond my capabilities in races set up for women.

Men, I have found, like to assume the role of teacher, pacer, mentor, whatever. Consequently they urge me to go faster and further than I might otherwise. If running, they tend to run ahead, perhaps even half a step; or they sprint ahead at the end of the run, both of which drive me wild. I enjoy doing this only if I agree in advance that I want to run hard or "train" to go faster.

If I want to have an enjoyable time, I much prefer the company of women. The women I run with move at the pace of the group, whatever that is on a given day.

We decide on a distance by consensus and we chat while we run. In fact, running is an important occasion for conversation. Women tend to bare their souls while running, especially while labouring long distances, even with strangers. The physical activity becomes a shared intimacy, a form of bonding.

Luckily the world has come to accept physical activity for girls and women as normal and healthy, so that young people today do not face many of the unfortunate restrictions that held back women of my generation.

Before we start thinking the problem is solved, however, a glance at Olympic sporting events will dispel any illusions. Women enjoy only half the opportunities to compete in Olympic events that men do. In almost all sports, women still compete in shorter, supposedly less physically exhausting, events than those available to men.



Yet there is absolutely no anatomical argument to support limiting women's physical activity and sport participation. Sometimes I think about the number of girls and women who may never experience the joy, strength and confidence that comes with having a fit body and I wonder just how far we've come after all.

bts

After a career in Ottawa that ranged from historical research and freelance writing to sport administration and coaching, Carol Judd has recently returned to Victoria, B.C. At this moment, she is running, cycling or being a feminist activist in her new community.



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Needless to say, I did not make it through an entire year with that team. Five months of offensive remarks from the coach; cold, indifferent responses from my teammates to my advances of friendship; and lonely weekends spent in new cities, playing games during the day and being dragged to heterosexual bars in the evenings — all this was much more than I was willing to stand.



Today, I still play basketball, but I do so with a group of wonderful women who have rekindled warm memories of my initial passion for the sport. We are either lesbian or lesbian-positive, and thus united not only in our love of basketball, but also in our affection and respect for women.

As a means of ensuring that we have enough money to participate in a women's league, we are supported by one major sponsor, whose name we sport proudly on our variously sized chests. As well, we contribute our own funds in order to play.

Regardless of whether we win or lose, I look forward to being with these women once or twice a week because we have not had to weave our way through strange, dehumanizing hierarchies to accept one another as teammates. Most important to me, however, we have not sacrificed any of our dignity or honesty in order to be friends.

bts

Holly Hoop is a pseudonym for an Ottawa feminist.

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organizes sport leagues, it looks at the total impact of sports on women. An important part of the program is the telephone referral service, which started purely by accident. By linking individuals with sport organizations, this service is vital to the sport bodies as well as to the clients. The program also provides certification for women interested in coaching or officiating. This component is crucial to meeting the demand for female coaches.

Women and Sport also has contacts with many sports associations so that we may assist in problem situations, or just exchange information and ideas. By this process, we ensure that a duplication in services does not occur. The program staff are also diligent in raising co-workers' awareness at every opportunity.

The Women and Sport program was not developed overnight. It began in 1982 when the idea of a committee made up of representatives from municipalities and school boards was conceived. Over the next year, the committee grew,

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was formalized, and conducted an extensive study on male/female participation ratios. The format of Women and Sport was developed as a way to address some of the discrepancies uncovered in that study.

A similar approach could be tried in other areas. The success of the program will depend on many factors: the size of your municipality; the facilities available; support; enthusiasm. The key to change is to get involved by becoming a participant, a coach, and organizational committee member and/or by advocating equal opportunity for women and sport. Please contact the City of Ottawa Women and Sport office at (613) 564-1096 if you want further information or if you just want to bounce your ideas off someone.

*Morena Mazzara works in the
Ottawa Women and Sport
Program.*

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white colonial governments), to hope that our men will be kind.

The inspired writings of Bell Hooks, an American black feminist, echo Thandie's perspective. Hooks's book, *Ain't I A Woman*, examines the lives of black women in America as slaves, as members of black liberation movements in America and as feminists who have been shunned by the white women's movement.

"The question we must ask again and again is how can racist women call themselves feminists?" she writes. Much of what Hooks reveals about black women's oppression as slaves in the United States is pertinent to understanding male/ female, black/ white relationships in South Africa today. The way black American women reacted to and were treated as part of the black liberation movement in the 1960s in the States also has relevance to the liberation struggle in South Africa.

"Like black men, many black women believed black liberation could only be achieved by the formation of a strong black

"Unfortunately, they did not foresee the strength of black male resistance to the idea that women should have equal status with men."



In the same discussion of black women and black power, Hooks comments: "Racism has always been a divisive force separating black men and white men, and sexism has been a force that unites the two groups."

I believe women unwilling to recognize this fact are helping to

perpetuate it. And I believe, as Thandie does, that "liberation movements need liberated women within them to do something about the oppression of women."

bts

d.i. huron is an Ottawa feminist and writer who springs from a Métis/ Spanish-Canadian background. One day, she would like to soak up the sun on Capetown's beaches. To that end, she fervently hopes that during her lifetime the people of Azania will succeed (with the support of the international community) in freeing themselves from the tyranny imposed by the richest police state in the world.



patriarchy," Hooks writes. "Those black women who believed in social equality of the sexes learned to suppress their opinions for fear attention might be shifted from racial issues.

"They believed they should first support freedom for black people, then later, when that freedom was obtained, work for women's rights.

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RESOURCES

Depo Provera: From Stories to Struggle is a booklet published by Women's Health Interaction. The booklet describes the use of Depo Provera, an injectible contraceptive with many dangerous side-effects, on women in the Third World. According to WHI, the drug is also administered to Canadian women in institutions for the mentally and physically disabled, to women in prisons and on Native reserves, and to "problem" teenagers, often without the woman's consent. *Depo Provera* presents the stories of women in Canada and Namibia who have been subjected to Depo Provera. It highlights two organizations, The Disabled Women's Network (Canada) and Namibian Women's Voice (Namibia), that are among a growing number of international women's organizations attempting to stop the drug's use and give women reproductive freedom. A copy of the booklet can be obtained for \$5.00, plus \$1.50 for mailing and handling, from WHI (see address below).

Lesbian Writers! Women's Press is looking for manuscripts for a second anthology of writing by Lesbians about Lesbian experience. This includes fiction, non-fiction, poetry, experimental work and erotica. Send to Women's Press, Lesbian Manuscript Group, 229 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4.

In Fertile Ground: Popular Education Guide, another booklet published by Women's Health Interaction, aims to help women become actively involved in exploring their reproductive lives and is designed to accompany WHI's other resource material. The booklet outlines

exercises that can help groups of women learn about population control, family planning and new reproductive technologies, and how all of these affect their lives. A copy of the booklet can be obtained for \$5.00 plus \$1.50 for mailing and handling from Women's Health Interaction, 58 Arthur Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 7B9. Tel: (613) 563-4801.

Sports, Sex Roles and Sex Identity, by Ann Hall, analyzes many angles of the femininity-sport conflict debate. It is published by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. To get a copy contact CRIAW at 151 Slater Street, Suite 415, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3.

Women, Sport and Physical Activity: Research and Bibliography, by sport researcher and activist Helen Lenskyj, summarizes and evaluates literature about all aspects of women and physical activity from a feminist perspective. Topics covered include feminist theory, psychological and physical aspects of sport, and sport and culture. Because the literature has expanded so much while this edition was in production an updated second edition is already slated for release in spring 1989. Single copies available free of charge from: The Manager, Fitness and Amateur Sport Women's Program, Room 1106, 365 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0X6.

Canadian Association For the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS). A national organization with local chapters, CAAWS aims to advance the position of girls and women, and to improve the quality of sport and physical activity by defining, promoting

and supporting a feminist perspective. For more information: CAAWS, 323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7Z2. Tel: (613) 233-5204.

Women and Reproductive Technologies is a 20-minute VHS video produced by Women's Health Interaction. The video focuses on women's reproductive health issues in Canada, in the context of population control around the world. A copy can be obtained by contacting WHI at the above address.

Surviving Procedures After a Sexual Assault, by Megan Ellis, is an up-to-date resource book for survivors of sexual assault, and for those working with survivors. The 1988 edition incorporates substantial changes to the Criminal Code concerning sexual offences against children and young people. The concerns, fears and questions most often raised by survivors of sexual assault form the basis for this book. It is clear, concise, empathetic and easy to understand. Look for it at your local bookstore, or send pre-paid orders only to Press Gang Publishers. The cost of the book is \$8.95. Please add \$2.00 for postage and handling for one book; add .50 for each additional book.

1988 Directory of Women's Media. This year's edition lists 603 women's periodicals as well as 474 media women and media-concerned women interested in networking for a more effective media connection among all women. Also included are listings of women's broadcasts, film groups, multi-media and music groups, writers, bookstores and more! To order a copy, send \$12.00 to Women's Institute of Freedom of the Press, 3306 Ross Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., U.S.A. 20008. Tel: (202) 966-7783.

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